

Speech: PM's Chinese New Year speech

Good evening everyone, welcome to Downing Street, and a very happy Chinese New Year to each of you.

It's an honour to have you here this evening to celebrate not just the start of the Year of the Dog, but also the deepening links between the UK and China.

As many of you know, I have recently returned from an important trip to China, strengthening the Golden Era of relations between our countries.

I had the privilege of visiting three wonderful cities: Wuhan, and Beijing, and Shanghai.

I had fruitful discussions with President Xi and Premier Li.

And I saw first-hand the growing strength of the trade and investment relationship between our two countries.

And I was delighted to take a 50-strong business delegation with me, and I think the visit helped to secure more than £9 billion of commercial deals that will benefit people here at home and in China. Those deals will create 2,600 jobs in the UK.

But the ties that bind our two countries are about more than just business.

They're also about people. The 150,000 Chinese students currently studying in the UK. The growing number of young British people studying or working in China.

The hundreds of thousands of tourists who travel between our countries each year.

And of course the thriving Chinese community in the UK, who do so much to make the UK the country it is today.

Confucius wrote that "Virtue is not left to stand alone – he who practises it will have neighbours."

I think it's a powerful message for all of us seeking inspiration for the year ahead. And it exemplifies the contribution made by so many Chinese people in this country.

I'm thinking in particular of people like James Wong from Birmingham.

James chairs the committee that runs one of the UK's largest Chinese New Year festivals, bringing tens of thousands of people together every year.

And he's also an absolute pillar of his local community, combatting loneliness by bringing elderly people together to enjoy free meals in the

restaurant that he runs.

And last year James was officially voted “Brummie of the Year”, which speaks volumes about the face of modern Britain and the contribution and integration of the UK’s Chinese community.

And in January James also received a ‘Points of Light’ award to recognise his work.

And he’s here with us today to help celebrate. Many congratulations James!

Now, when I was in China President Xi, quoting Shakespeare, said of UK/China relations that “What’s past is prologue”. And I, like him, am committed to building on the progress of recent years to deepen our relationship yet further.

For many years, many people have worked hard to bring the UK and China closer together – indeed, many of them are here with us tonight, including the Chinese ambassador.

The result of their work is the Golden Era we are living through today.

And, when I look around this room, when I see the passion, commitment and enthusiasm of so many people, I know for sure that the next 12 months will be another auspicious year for our businesses, for our governments, and above all for our peoples.

Have a very happy and prosperous new year.

Xin Nian Kuai Le.