

Baby names with Chinese characteristics



Names reflect a nation's changing cultural trend. [Shanghai Daily]

New-born babies bring joy, of course, but also troubles with how to name them. Names matter, Chinese agree, and that is why parents go to great lengths to devise auspicious and fitting names for their children.

"It is better to teach your children a craft, than to give them a thousand pieces of gold; it is better to give them a good name than to teach them a craft," said an advertisement for 99qumingzi.com, a popular website providing naming services for new parents.

Decades ago, Chinese parents cared less about names.

"Probably because their parents did not go to school, some used numeral or 'dog' as given names," says Hu Weining, head of household registration in the Honggutan New District of Nanchang, capital of eastern China's Jiangxi Province. Her team, part of the city police, deals with registration documents for new babies, and she has worked there for 20 years.

She says that in the last two decades better-educated parents have started to care about names and even pay for names for their children.

According to Chinese custom, names that have been used by elder people in the

family cannot be used for babies. Young parents do not like their children to share their names with others.

"Uniqueness is the new standard. Many people use complex Chinese characters to differentiate from others," Hu says.

Trying to avoid repeating someone else's name is a difficult task. Since January 1, 2016, China relaxed its one-child policy to allow all married couples to have two children.

Last year, millions of babies were born, and how to name them became a sweet headache.

"It can't be tacky, or strange. It should sound nice, but first and foremost it must be different from others," says Wang Chunhua, a 30-year-old mother who gave birth to a boy in November last year. Her older daughter is seven.

Wang spent weeks going through Chinese dictionaries, looking for a proper and nice enough name for her son. She consulted with her husband and her relatives, and asked them to vote. Finally, she said: "Let's name him Yuxuan (having an imposing appearance), nice meaning, and not common around me."

As it turns out, according to a December report by Qimingtong, a naming service company, in cooperation with Tsinghua University, Yuxuan is a common name. It ranked fourth as the most common names for boys in 2015, according to the report based on the data of 5.4 million babies born that year.

New trend

"Names reflect a nation's changing cultural trend," Hu says.

Thirty years ago, babies were given names like Wei (greatness), Aiguo (patriotism) or Xiuli (gently beautiful), now Chenxi (sun rays) and Haoran (righteousness) are more popular.

In 2015, 4,034 new babies were born in Honggutan, where Hu works. From January to November 2016, there were 4,695 newborns, up 16.38 percent year on year.

Some police districts in China have developed computer systems for registrants to search whether a name has been used and by how many people. Hu's department does not offer such services, but she gives her advice.

"I have repeatedly told parents not to use extremely uncommon characters. Such names are unscannable in banking or social security systems," she says.

Zhang Ruxin, who led the report on names, says people used to have only one Chinese character as a given name, but two-character names were now preferred, mainly to avoid duplicates.

According to the report, 299,025 people, about the population of Iceland, are called Zhang (surname) Wei (given name), the most-used name. The second-ranking Wang Wei is shared by 290,619 people.

Younger parents are more influenced by pop culture, including romance novels and popular TV series. Zixuan, a name which probably has roots in heroines and heroes of TV series, is remarkably overused. It comes in different Chinese characters.

“My boy Zixuan was admitted to the hospital, and there happened to be four Zixuans in the same ward,” a mother said.

In Tibet Autonomous Region, repetition of names is also being shunned. Doje Drolma, a college student from Tibet, said several of her friends had longer names, like Tenzingendenlesh.

In Tibet, babies are often named by high monks, living-Buddhas or the elderly in their families.

Good business

With the second-child boom, business has been good for naming services companies. Duan Lingang, 58, a self-professed name expert based in Jiangxi, founded his business five years ago.

“Back then, there were no orders for months,” he says.

Duan improved his proficiency after learning from a master in “I Ching,” or “Book of Changes,” in Beijing. He charges 600 yuan (US\$92) for a name, and writes up to 24 options for parents to select from.

“My reputation spreads through word of mouth. Now I get two to three orders every week,” he says.

Duan calculates the baby’s five elements – metal, wood, water, fire and earth – from the date and time of birth, before giving names accordingly.

“A baby’s name can make up for the element he or she lacks from birth, bringing good fortune,” he says.

Names matter so much that Chinese parents are not settled with buying only Chinese names; they are also buying English names.

Beau Rose Jessup, from Britain, established the website Specialname.cn to give new Chinese babies English names. The website claims it has given names to 295,379 babies.

“The English name you give your children will change their future,” the website proclaims.

Classic library restored to its former glory



Restoration of the former Shanghai Library in Yangpu District has been completed. [Shanghai Daily]

Restoration of the former Shanghai Library in Yangpu District has been completed.

Officials said yesterday that expansion work would continue to realize the original vision of its architect Dong Dayou (1899-1973).

The exterior of the 80-year-old library on Heishan Road was damaged by decades of weathering and has now been cleaned and repainted.

The yellow glazed tiles on the roof were restored in Yixing in neighboring Jiangsu Province where they were originally manufactured, an official with the district culture bureau said.

Experts have also renovated the iron gate at the library's main hall, known as "the peacock gate" due to its elegant patterns.

The paintings on the ceiling of the 156-square-meter hall have also been restored, helped by finding details of the works in a hidden cabinet in the library.

The paintings on many 1-square-meter panels have traditional Chinese double happiness and lucky symbols as well as intricate corner designs, said Ma Lili, the lead restorer.

A further expansion work will extend the 3,900-square-meter library to 15,000 square meters, following the original design charts created by Dong, who studied at the University of Minnesota and Cornell University. Dong was also renowned for his works on an earlier Shanghai city hall in 1931 and many Spanish-style houses on Wukang Road.

Upon its completion, the restored and expanded building in the Jiangwan area will serve as the Yangpu District Library with about 650,000 book and seating for 650 people.

“If the expansion goes smoothly, the new library will open to public by the end of the year,” an official with the culture bureau told Shanghai Daily yesterday.

It will serve the 1.24 million residents of the district and include an exhibition hall on the history of the library.

The library was built by the then Kuomintang government in 1930s as part of the “Greater Shanghai Plan” to bring the city government and major facilities to the area. It was expected to form part of a new city center along with government buildings, a museum, a stadium, a hospital and TV and radio stations.

The Jiangwan Stadium is still in use today.

However, construction on the library was suspended in 1935 with the start of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Although only partially built, it still opened, before closing a year later.

In its heyday, the library had more than 20,000 books, including 1,300 foreign titles. Most were lost during the war.

After the war, the library was used to detain Japanese prisoners of war. It was then converted into a military headquarters by the Kuomintang government in 1946. Traffic police were later based in the building.

It also served as the school library and dormitory of Tongji Middle School until 2000. Then it lay empty until renovation work started three years ago.

[Plans reinforce medicine, food safety](#)



Police officers in Linyi, Shandong province, help migrant workers get payment that had been withheld by their employers last month. [Zhu Wutao/for China Daily]

The State Council, China's Cabinet, approved two important five-year plans on Friday to enhance supervision of food and medicine safety amid the government's efforts to better protect public health.

The two plans, passed at an executive conference presided over by Premier Li Keqiang, outlined the government's blueprint for ensuring food and drug safety during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20).

According to the plans, the government will keep a close eye on key areas such as schools and roadside vendors to ensure that the food they sell is safe. The authorities will enhance supervision guarding against excessive pesticide use and misuse of food additives.

The government will speed up the establishment procedures to make sure that all phases of medicine production and sales are retraceable, and the production and sale of counterfeit medicine will be severely punished.

Sample testing will cover all kinds of food, blood products, vaccines and essential medicines to improve risk surveillance and assessment, according to the plans.

The government will also speed up the amendment to the national standard on food safety and raise the safety standard of food, medicine and cosmetics.

The executive conference announced strict measures to protect the legal interests of migrant workers who were not paid by their employers.

Provincial governments will be held accountable for ensuring the timely payment of migrant workers. Provinces that produce large numbers of migrant workers are urged to help workers get their pay on time.

Companies that fail to pay wages promptly will be put on a blacklist that will be published at regular intervals. Their market access will be limited in the future.

“China has made impressive progress largely thanks to the effort and contribution by our migrant workers,” the State Council said in a statement.

Huang Leping, director of Beijing Yilian Legal Aid and Research Center of Labor, said that Li has paid attention to the legal interests of migrant workers, showing the central government’s concern over the suffering of the grassroots.

Those who refuse to pay the migrant workers should face tougher punishment in keeping with the Criminal Law, which rules that employers can face up to seven years imprisonment if they maliciously delay or refuse to pay workers, said Huang, whose NGO has helped more than 140,000 employees, mostly migrant workers, to protect their rights.

Compared with employees in many other occupations, such as teachers, migrant workers are more vulnerable to the infringement of their rights because they have little knowledge and few channels to safeguard their rights, he added.

Beijing to invest US\$4.85B in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei development

Beijing will invest 33.31 billion yuan (US\$4.85 billion) this year in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development, according to the municipal finance bureau.

2017 will see the city rein in administrative operation funds while focusing on major missions planned to promote Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei integrated development.

The main expenditure policies incorporate efforts to guarantee the package policies made for “Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei Joint Development Plan”, speed up sub-center construction, increase support for Hebei Province, and give partner assistance to Xinjiang and Tibet, according to Han Jie, spokesman and deputy director of the bureau.

Details of the investment tell that 11.09 billion yuan will fund the new airport construction in an effort to boost the transport network in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

A total of 11.81 billion yuan will be allocated to ensure trial operation of the new Tiantan Hospital and advance project II in Yizhuang branch of Tongren Hospital as well as new campus construction of Beijing Film Academy, Beijing Technology and Business University, etc.

Moreover, 4.25 billion yuan will be used for facilities establishment in administrative areas in the city's sub-center, and for upgrading of the green landscape along inner ring roads.

Beijing will use 5.7 billion yuan to assist oriented areas including Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia and Badong, support Hebei and advance collaboration work of the South-to-North Water Diversion project.

Another 470 million yuan will be put into ecological forests construction.

Civilians face 'dire' situation amid ongoing hostilities in eastern Ukraine, UN warns

3 February 2017 – An immediate pause in fighting is needed in Ukraine to prevent more people dying and repair essential services, the United Nations human rights office said today following another night of shelling in the east of the country.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres also expressed deep concern about the ongoing tensions and intensification of the fighting in eastern Ukraine, according the UN chief's spokesperson, who said he appealed to all parties to fully observe the ceasefire and allow for immediate humanitarian access.

In the last week, aerial attacks have killed seven people and injured at least 40 more in heavily populated areas, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

"Reports suggest that two hospitals, a polyclinic, a dental clinic, three schools, and a kindergarten were damaged by shelling in Makiivka and Donetsk city, which are controlled by armed groups," OHCHR spokesperson Liz Throssell told reporters at the regular bi-weekly news briefing in Geneva.

She said OHCHR staff in Donetsk heard explosions over five days, from 29 January through the night of 2 February, and on 2 February, "saw a clearly marked ambulance in Donetsk that had been damaged by shrapnel."

Latest data shows that at least 9,800 civilians and members of armed forces have been killed since the conflict began in mid-April 2014 according to the

UN Human Rights Office.

It also warns that sub-zero temperatures have also left civilians even more vulnerable amid the destruction of power lines and disruption to water, electricity and heating networks.

Ms. Throssell explained that critical civilian infrastructure has been damaged, including near Avdiivka, where power lines have been destroyed, disrupting water, electricity and heating supplies. Gas and electricity supplies were also reported to have been affected in Makiivka and other areas under the control of armed groups, including Irmino and parts of Donetsk.

“Both Government forces and armed groups must take all feasible measures to protect the civilian population in the areas under their control, she said, adding: “We remind them that the protection of civilians must be considered the utmost priority and those committing violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law must be held accountable.”