



中国传媒大学  
COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA



Institute for a Community  
with Shared Future  
人类命运共同体研究院



## China and the Spirit of the Fire Horse:

### A Defining Year Begins



By Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director,  
Pakistan Research Center for a Community with  
Shared Future (PRCCSF), Islamabad

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The Chinese New Year 2026, the Lunar Year, marking the Year of Fire Horse, has begun and not only Chinese families but the people across the Asia have welcomed the new beginnings with zeal and enthusiasm. These new beginnings are filled with hope, opportunities, traditions and celebrations. The Chinese New Year is also called the Spring Festival. It's the time when a major portion of Asian population takes a break from work to travel, creating one of the world's largest migrations. Apparently, it seems like a cultural festival but for the Chinese people, it is a symbol of renewal, advancement, progress, and unity. What I am observing from past few years is that each Chinese New Year has a novel story to tell; story of a nation that has come so far that the world sees it as role model, a story of a nation that has completely transformed itself through determination, pragmatic approaches, forward-looking leadership, and cooperation with the world. Similarly, the Year of the Fire Horse 2026 also has some stories to tell about China's achievements, it will also give China a chance of self-reflection and promises new opportunities for the wider region also.



Every new year is important but the hype of the Lunar New Year 2026 is real. It is because of the reason that 2026 ushers in the Year of the Fire Horse—a rare, blazing return that only comes once every 60 years. Once every 60 years, the fire horse is created by pairing the



horse with the fire element. 1966 was the last Fire Horse year. It was when China's Cultural Revolution began. It was a time of political and social upheaval. With the beginning of the Chinese New Year, the focus has turned to the Chinese zodiac. The year 2026 carries great significance because it combines Horse with Fire element. In Chinese astrology, Horse symbolizes freedom, adventure, and unbridled energy while Fire represents passion, confidence, and strong determination. When Fire and Horse come together, it creates a lethal combination. In Chinese culture, the Fire Horse is often regarded as spirited and intense. It reflects both opportunity and challenge. In this context, experts say that the Fire Horse year is widely expected to bring intense, fast-paced change on a personal and global level. It is the year associated with bold action, ambition, and dramatic change. Hence why, it can be said that 2026, the Year of the Fire Horse, is a very powerful year for China. It represents momentum and fast-paced development.

China has come a very long way. In the contemporary world, China is seen as a role model. For some, it is a model of rapid growth and development. For others, it is an example of how focused policies and strong direction can reshape a nation. Many governments view China's development model as a blueprint that they want to study, adapt, or learn from. China's economic successes in the past few decades can be described as the one of the most remarkable and commendable ones in the modern history. A country which once used to be an agrarian economy has now become a global manufacturing hub. Products labelled as "Made in China" are found in every corner of the world. In the same vein, small towns have developed into modern urban centers with advanced infrastructure, high-speed rail

networks, and thriving industries. China has lifted millions of people out of poverty. Living standards witnessed a dramatic shift. The same people who were once below the poverty line are now living the lives which most of us dream of. This transformation shows that if a country plans with far-sightedness, invests in education and sticks to its national goals, it can grow steadily and sustainably.

The Chinese New Year is a time when families sit together, have meals, share stories, celebrate their past achievements and make new plans or set the goals for the new year. This is really like what China's all about. If we take a closer look, we can find that in many ways, this tradition reflects the larger philosophy behind China's development. China's growth never signaled unilateral actions. It always emphasized collective progress, stability, patience, and shared prosperity. These very elements have helped the country move forward step by step. In today's era, most of the people want quick gains but, every now and then, we can see China highlighting the importance of gradual growth and strategic planning. The industries, modern infrastructure, technological innovations, and all other achievements can be attributed to this approach.



Now the question is how this Year of Fire Horse will be important for China as well as for the broader region? The answer is very straightforward: shared development. As I discussed earlier that China believes in shared growth. It believes in multilateralism. This

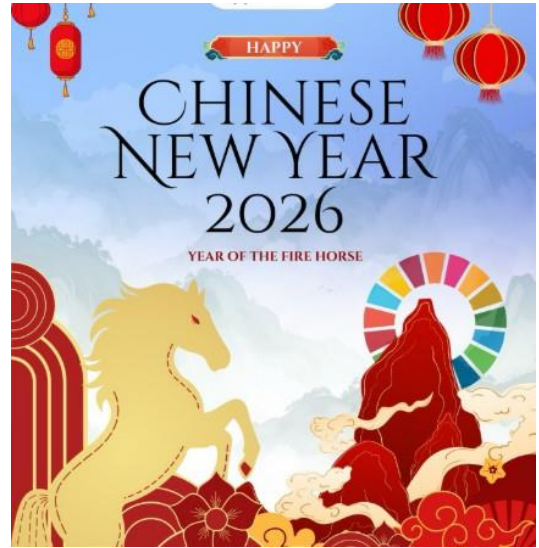


concept is very important particularly for the developing regions. Even today, there are many countries facing the problems of poor or limited infrastructure, energy crisis, lack of investment, and so on. Thus, by supporting cross-border projects and promoting regional connectivity, China has helped address some of these challenges. China has also shown desire to make such investments and support more projects even in future. This way, China is not only improving the infrastructure, it will also facilitate trade, movement of locals, boost tourism industry, and accelerate economic growth as well. With growth of tourism industry, local businesses will also grow, more and more employment opportunities will be created and this will in turn improve the living conditions for local communities.

We are living in a digital world and with the rise of new dawn, new technologies are being introduced. Against this backdrop, in this New Year, China's continued focus on technology and innovation is expected to play a major role in shaping global progress. China has already excelled in many areas like renewable energy, AI, digital finance, and telecommunications. These innovations are helping China modernize its economy, no doubt, but they are also providing chances to other countries to learn and gain from technological advancements.



The Chinese New Year is not limited to economic or digital progress only. It also highlights the growing cultural exchange and people-to-people connections. A major portion of the world is celebrating the Year of Fire Horse. The dragons, red envelopes, Chinese lanterns, Chinese dresses, are now in vogue and people love them too. So, during the celebrations of the New Year, we can see the growing influence of Chinese culture, cuisines, and traditions. In this way, the New Year is strengthening the soft image of China also. It gives a clear message that people are trying to get to know about China, its culture, and its traditions. It is a reminder that development is not measured only in terms of economics, the world respecting and adopting your values, traditions, and culture are also huge achievements.



China's growth has paved the way for new trade opportunities in many Asian countries and even beyond Asia. Increased demand for goods, services, and raw materials has helped boost regional economies. Similarly, improved connectivity through transport and digital networks has made international businesses more accessible. Thanks to China that developing countries can easily access the global markets. Since, China is expanding its markets and investing in new technologies, so these opportunities will surely grow further in the coming years.



In conclusion, the Lunar New Year 2026 is more than a moment to celebrate economic successes. It is the time to think about future. Since, this is the year of Fire Horse, so China should focus on utilizing this rare energy to its fullest. It is a time for reflection, responsibility, and planning for a better future. When families are planning for a new chapter, China's dedicated leadership is preparing to enter a new stage of development. They are working on sustainable growth, improved living standards, environmental protection, and long-term progress that benefits all. The New Year should be a fresh start full of passion, confidence, bold steps, and determination.