
Pan-Chinese top newsmakers of 2020

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Fourteen news media personalities are included in the 2020 LIVAC Pan-Chinese Newsmaker Roster released by the Department of Linguistics and Translation at City University of Hong Kong (CityU). From 2015 to 2019, the newsmakers on the Roster were all politicians, but this year in addition to lawmakers, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation Tedros Adhanom was added as was the last-minute inclusion of the late footballer Diego Maradona.

Six of the newsmakers are from mainland China. President Xi Jinping is one of the top newsmakers in the 2020 Pan-Chinese Newsmaker Roster. Also, Zhao Lijian, nick-named “Wolf Warrior” from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Han Zheng, who is responsible for Hong Kong affairs, are among the top newsmakers. Donald Trump and Joseph Biden, who won the US presidential election, as well as the current Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has been making critical comments on China, are high up on the Roster. Pompeo’s appearance on the Rosters for three consecutive years since he took office in 2018 reflects his profile.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation Tedros Adhanom has received both positive and negative comments from different sectors in the world. Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, Chief Executive of HKSAR, has made her third appearance on the Rosters since the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. It is noteworthy that she has appeared on the Rosters more than any of her predecessors. It is also noteworthy that some newsmakers are found high up on the Rosters of two of the three regions, but not in the Pan-Chinese Roster. Examples are Apple Daily’s Jimmy Lai Chee-ying and Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen in the 2020 Roster, and the first Chinese astronaut Yang Liwei in the 2003 Roster.

On Beijing’s Roster, influential Chinese politicians including President Xi Jinping, Le Keqiang, Li Zhanshu and Wang Yang make appearances. Also, an unusual appearance on the 2020 Newsmaker Roster is a grassroot cattle dealer. It is surprising that Dr Zhong Nanshan is not in the top 25 though he has contributed a lot to fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. The appearances of athletes, such as Lin Dan, break the tradition of previous Rosters that all celebrities are politicians.

On Hong Kong’s Roster, the Head of the Centre for Health Protection’s Communicable Disease Branch Head Dr Chuang Shuk-kwan has stood out. Her natural and calm deportment is highly praised by all sectors. Some newsmakers who passed away in 2020 are noted: the American basketball player Kobe Bryant, the “King of Gambling” Stanley Ho Hung-sun, and, as noted above, Argentine football legend Diego Maradona have been in the spotlight.

On Taiwan’s Roster, the former mayor of Kaohsiung Han Kuo-yu was unseated by impeachment, a first for a Chinese community. The Premier of Taiwan Su Tseng-chang has also aroused controversies, as well as Taiwan’s Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung, who is responsible for hosting the pandemic press conferences, are also on the Roster.

The 2020 Pan-Chinese Newsmaker Roster is based on the LIVAC Synchronous corpus developed by **Professor Benjamin T’sou Ka-yin**, who is Emeritus Professor of CityU’s Department of Linguistics and Translation. The corpus has filtered 2.5 billion characters of news media text from representative Chinese speech communities, such as Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Macau, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Singapore, Taipei, and analysed nearly 600 million of them since its development in 1995, and has therefore built a large Chinese corpus with nearly 2.5 million entries.

The LIVAC Newsmaker Roster was launched in 2001 and the newsmakers in the Pan-Chinese regions have been compiled and analysed every two weeks. The top 25 newsmakers with the highest appearances in newspapers are listed on the “Bi-Weekly Celebrity Rosters”. The LIVAC Pan-Chinese Newsmaker Roster is based on the annual summaries and statistics of the bi-weekly rosters.

Media enquiries:

Karen Cheng, Communications and Public Relations Office (Tel: 3442 6805 or 9201 8895)

Professor Benjamin T'sou Ka-yin, Department of Linguistics and Translation (Tel: 5487 5662)