

## 2025 LIVAC Pan-Chinese Newsmakers Roster – *Unusually Short, Now Include the Mythical Ne Zha 哪吒*

This 26-year roster provides an annual check on global matters of common interest in the Pan-Chinese context. The 2025 roster shows only a slight increase from the historically low threshold of 7 persons recorded in the 2024 roster. While the rise to 10.5 is modest, it is encouraging as it reverses a disquieting downward trend. However, the total remains notably low compared to the 26-year average of 18.8 persons, and far below the peak of 29–30 persons reached in 2001 and 2002.

Several figures have been retained from the 2024 roster: Donald Trump, Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, Lai Ching-Te, Li Qiang, and Wang Yi, representing sustained common interests. Three individuals from the 2024 roster did not remain on the 2025 roster. They include France's Emmanuel Macron and Singapore's Lee Hsien Loong, both of whom played important mediating roles between China and the world at large through their visits to Beijing. The third is Ma Ying-jeou from Taipei who was a pivotal figure in Taiwan's party politics. However, as expected, he was replaced on the 2025 roster by Cheng Li-wen, the new head of the Kuomintang (KMT) Party in Taiwan, which is sympathetic to reunification with China. These developments show that party politics and reunification issues remain paramount concerns in cross-Taiwan Straits matters.

A very important new figure is Sanae Takaichi, who became the new Prime Minister of Japan at the end of 2025, because of her stance toward China is

drastically different from her two predecessors. In contrast, the President of South Korea, Lee Jae-myung was also new on the roster for visiting Beijing to improve relations between China and Korea. Furthermore, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent came onto the roster in addition to Trump, and together they highlight the increasingly serious tussles between the USA and China on multiple fronts and foreground economics and realpolitik as the underlying causes.

The most thought-provoking figure is Ne Zha, the Chinese mythical pseudo-human figure, well known for his behaviour as an *enfant terrible* who may be a naughty cherub at times and who had a mind of his own, and was determined in his actions. The film by the same name was the biggest box office draw for animated films in a single market worldwide. It has also popularized his defiant declaration: "My fate is in my own hands, not the heavens!". According to Benjamin Tsou, Emeritus Professor of the Department of Linguistics and Translation at the City University of Hong Kong and originator of LIVAC and this roster, Ne Zha is seen by many people in China, especially the younger generation, as the embodiment of the new confidence in China as she marches on to reach her dream destiny.

This Roster is based on the large database, LIVAC (Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LIVAC\\_Synchronous\\_Corpus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LIVAC_Synchronous_Corpus)) launched in 1995 by Professor Benjamin Tsou, Emeritus Professor of the Department of Translation and Linguistics, City University of Hong Kong. Since 1995, the LIVAC corpus has processed over 7 billion characters of newspaper data from the Pan-Chinese region. Follow-up analysis has produced a

comprehensive Chinese dictionary with 2.5 million entries. The LIVAC Newsmakers Roster began in 2001, based on the frequency of appearance of prominent individuals in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Beijing, and other Chinese-speaking regions biweekly. The top 25 individuals from these biweekly lists are featured in the "Biweekly Newsmakers Roster," and form the basis for the "Annual LIVAC local and Pan-Chinese LIVAC Newsmakers Rosters." This methodology has been found to provide useful monitoring of the shared focus and consensus across Pan-Chinese region over the last 25 years.

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