



China makes three traditional festivals holidays, scraps one golden week

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BEIJING, Dec. 16 (Xinhua) -- The Chinese government on Sunday officially announced the scrapping of one of the country's three "golden week" holidays and introduced three new one-day public holidays.

The new national public holiday plan adds three traditional festivals -- Tomb-Sweeping Day, Dragon-boat Festival and Mid Autumn Festival -- to the list of public holidays.

The plan, which comes into effect on Jan. 1, also increases the total number of national holidays from 10 to 11 days.

Each of the three traditional festivals will be a one-day holiday, according to the plan unveiled by the State Council, or China's cabinet.

The Spring Festival remains a three-day public holiday, but it will start one day earlier from the eve of the Lunar New Year, China's most important traditional festival.

The May Day holiday is shortened from three days to one day, while the three-day National Day holiday and one-day New Year holiday remain unchanged.

The government will continue to move the weekend days adjacent to a national holiday to form a longer holiday period so that people will have three days or seven days off in a row.

The New Year Day, Tomb-Sweeping Day, Dragon-Boat Festival, May Day, and Mid-Autumn Day then become holidays of three days each. The Spring Festival holiday and National Day holiday remain seven-day holidays.

An unnamed spokesman with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said the new plan would uphold Chinese traditions, make public holidays better distributed and, with more people traveling on new public and paid holidays, ease overcrowding on the golden weeks.

The three week-long holidays -- Spring Festival, May Day holiday and National Day holiday -- were introduced in 1999 to boost domestic demand amid efforts to promote China's economic growth.

But hundreds of millions of Chinese traveling at the same time made transport and tourist destinations very crowded, making these holidays far from an enjoyable experience.

Many netizens have complained that the revised May Day holiday will make the remaining two golden weeks even more crowded and that deprives people working far from their hometowns of the chance to go back home for family gatherings.

They have even voiced their worry that a lot of company employees will not be off on the newly-added traditional festival holidays.

The spokesman said the revision could not satisfy all the people, whose interests might vary, but did respect the opinion of a majority.

Citing government figures, he said that 75 percent of the people were in favor of the whole plan and that 60 percent of the netizens agreed to the way the May Day holiday was revised.

Also on Sunday, the State Council announced regulations on paid holidays, saying all employees of government agencies, enterprises and public-service institutions were entitled to take paid holidays after serving the same employer for one year.

Employees who have worked less than ten years will have five paid days off a year, those who have worked for ten to 19 years will have ten days and those who have worked for 20 years and above would have 15 days.

National holidays and weekends will not be included as paid holidays.

The regulations also stipulate that employees should have their full daily salary guaranteed during paid holidays and that those who keep working should be paid three times as much.

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