

Charter flights to Sansha make trips easier



Passengers get off a charter flight at Yongxing Airport in Sansha city of south China's Hainan province on Thursday, January 26, 2017. [Photo: hnews.cn]

A charter flight linking China's southernmost cities of Haikou and Sansha is taking Chinese home to their loved ones in Sansha for the upcoming Chinese lunar New Year.

"Eventually I can see my daughter during Spring Festival," said Li Chang'an who arrived at Yongxing Airport, Sansha, Thursday morning, together with 112 other passengers.

He came to Haikou from his home in central China's Henan Province to catch the flight to Sansha. His daughter is a civil servant at Sansha's industry and commerce bureau.

The charter flights started five weeks ago from Haikou, capital of Hainan, to Yongxing Island, one of the Xisha Islands and the administrative base.

Li could have joined his daughter last Spring Festival by sea but never made it, fearful of a voyage of more than 10 hours.

An air ticket to Sansha might be the best gift that Jin Honglian has ever received. Wife of a soldier stationed in Sansha, Jin previously had to lay in bed for more than 10 hours because of seasickness when she visited her husband. With the charter flight, her trip is much shorter and more

comfortable.

"I'm planning to spend more time here with my husband," said Jin, who also enjoyed a discount for military families.

Sansha City was officially established in 2012 to administer the Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha Islands, and their surrounding waters in the South China Sea.

The daily charter flight has carried more than 3,300 passengers since Dec. 22.

Snowfall disrupts Spring Festival travel in NE China

Snow disrupted the trips of Spring Festival travellers in northeast China on Thursday, causing multiple accidents and temporary closure of an airport and expressways.

Two people were killed and three injured in collisions which damaged more than 40 vehicles on a section of the expressway linking Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang, to Suihua City on Thursday, due to sudden snowfall, local government sources said.

At least 74 inbound and outbound flights were delayed at the Longjia international airport in Changchun, capital of Jilin, due to the snowy weather.

Thirty-two flights were forced to land in alternate airports. The airport started a red alert and closed for about three hours before reopening at 6 p.m. Thursday.

Most expressways in Jilin and 13 expressways in Liaoning imposed traffic control measures. Some flights were delayed at the Taoxian airport in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning.

Spring Festival, or the Lunar New Year, is the most important occasion for Chinese, who have a weeklong holiday period, placing a tremendous strain on railways, airports and expressways.

This year's Spring Festival falls on Saturday. About 3 billion trips are expected to be made during "chunyun," the travel rush that lasts this year from Jan. 13 to Feb. 21, the National Development and Reform Commission said.

China pledges enhanced livelihood for people in difficulties

Chinese government has pledged enhanced efforts to ensure the basic livelihoods for people in difficulties.

A circular issued by the General Office of the State Council and published on Thursday said the work to guarantee basic livelihoods for people in difficulties matters to fairness, morality and harmony in society, noting that there should be no decline or weakening in help.

The circular called for intensified efforts to identify people of such groups and streamline policies for assisting those affected by natural disasters.

The document said housing problems should be solved by the end of this year for those who were resettled in temporary residences last year due to floods and other disasters.

Also, program will be launched to help rural residents who are caught in difficulties by serious illnesses.

The assistance efforts for those who are in extreme need, disabled people, left-behind children, orphans and vagrants will also be strengthened, according to the circular.

The Theresa and Donald show

The US briefing is very positive for the first Trump/May meeting. They have happy memories of President Reagan's achievement, and fond recollections of the part Margaret Thatcher played alongside the US. Together they pursued and won the Cold War. Together they faced down the opposition of many Europeans to the Star Wars initiative which brought the USSR to the conclusion they could not longer compete without major reform. Together they cut taxes and promoted growth.

I remember well the day I took a translation of one of Mr Gorbachev's speeches to Margaret Thatcher. At first she could not believe that Gorbachev would have made statements in favour of free enterprise economics in the way he did. Once she accepted the source, she realised the opportunity that dialogue might bring. It was the reward for the strong stance she and the President had taken in earlier years, as the failing USSR strained every sinew to try to keep up with the space and arms race. It did so only at the

expense of a huge expenditure of resource from its relatively low income per head. It fell behind when computer and digital technology and its related creativity came to the fore.

The UK will want to argue that today is a different global agenda and Mrs May and Mr Trump are different people from the then Prime Minister and President. Where Reagan and Thatcher had to deal with the cold war, the armed threat to the west from the USSR, and the plight of the countries of Eastern Europe under Soviet control, President Trump and PM May have the complex threats of terrorism and aggressive movements in several countries around the world. Where the Soviet Union prevented the movement of people in Eastern Europe under threat of death for those who tried, today we have the worry of excessive movements of people fleeing economic failure and civil war elsewhere.

There are some similarities. In the USA Mr Trump like Mr Reagan does want to cut and simplify taxes on a large scale. He does want to pump up the US growth rate as Mr Reagan did. All US Presidents are persuaded to say the US/UK relationship is special, but only a few mean it. Ronnie did. I think Mr Trump will too.

Fairer funding for schools

On Wednesday we debated the government's proposals for fairer funding for schools. The Conservative Manifesto drew attention to the large gap between the best financed and worst financed state schools and promised action to provide fairer and more balanced levels of funding. The scheme includes a higher individual pupil amount that will be the same across the country, with continued additional payments for areas of deprivation, rural areas and other matters increasing the costs of education.

I raised with the Minister the question of how far the rebalancing would go. The Wokingham and West Berkshire schools have been short changed for many years by the old formula and need several years of increments to put things right.