

Welcoming the year of the Pig
Happy Chinese New Year

Living in Singapore you get to enjoy various kinds of cultured celebrations. However, the population in Singapore consists of roughly more than 70% Chinese. Thus, holding the largest percentage of the population, the Chinese New Year Festival is one of the celebrations practically all Singaporeans are familiar with, regardless the various races.

In the Corporate World, during the Chinese New Year Festival (this year falling on February 18th, 2007), regardless the culture of the Company, we're giving a chance to take a break and spend the time with our families.

At ObTech Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, though being a Japanese-based company, as we're a subsidiary of NEC, we too follow the Chinese customs and celebrate this happy occasion. During a celebration like such, decorations within the office premise is definitely something we do not overlook.



Here at *ObTech Asia Pacific Pte Ltd* we wish you a **Happy and Prosperous New Year!**



A bit of the history of Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year Festival is the most significant holiday for Chinese people around the world, regardless of the origin of their ancestors. It is also known as the Lunar New Year Festival because it is based on the lunar calendar as opposed to the Gregorian calendar. The holiday is a very jubilant occasion mainly because it is the time when people take a break from work to get together with family and friends.

The origin of the Chinese New Year Festival can be traced back thousands of years through a continually evolving series of colorful legends and traditions. One of the most famous legends is that of Nien, an extremely cruel and ferocious beast, which the Chinese believe, eats people on New Year's Eve. To keep Nien away, red-paper couplets are pasted on doors, torches are lit, and firecrackers are set off throughout the night, because Nien is said to fear the color red, the light of fire, and loud noises. Early the next morning, as feelings of triumph and renewal fill the air at successfully keeping Nien away for another year, the most popular greeting heard is kung-hsi, or "congratulations."

Even though Chinese New Year celebrations generally only last for several days, starting on New Year's Eve, the festival itself is actually about three weeks long. It begins on the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth lunar month, the day, it is believed, when various gods ascend to heaven to pay their respects and report on household affairs to the Jade Emperor, the supreme Taoist deity. According to tradition, households busily honor these gods by burning ritualistic paper money to provide for their traveling expenses. Another ritual is to smear malt sugar on the lips of the Kitchen God, one of the traveling deities, to ensure that he either submits a favorable report to the Jade Emperor or keeps silent.

Next, "spring couplets" are hung up around the house. Spring couplets are paper scrolls and squares inscribed with blessings and auspicious words, such as "good fortune," "wealth," "longevity," and "springtime." The paper squares are usually pasted upside down, because the Mandarin Chinese word for "upside down," tao, is a homonym of the word "arrival." Thus, the paper squares represent the "arrival" of spring and the "coming" of prosperous times.

On lunar New Year's Eve, family members who are no longer living at home make a special effort to return home for reunion and share in a sumptuous meal. At that time, family members hand out "lucky money" in red envelopes to elders and children and stay up all night to welcome the New Year. Chinese people have long believed that staying awake all night on New Year's Eve would help their parents to live a longer life. Thus, lights are kept on the entire night--not just to drive away Nien, as in ancient times, but also as an excuse to make the most of the family get together. Some families even hold religious ceremonies after midnight to welcome the God of the New Year into their homes, a ritual that is often concluded with a huge barrage of firecrackers.