

Ang pow tradition goes digital

For this CNY, get ready for a different kind of red packet

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PETALING JAYA: Under the new norm during these times of Covid-19, electronic red packets or e-ang pow will gain currency when Chinese New Year comes next month.

Given that the pandemic has intensified the use of e-wallet and the need for physical distancing, it won't be surprising to see the tradition of ang pow-giving going cashless more widely than in the past couple of years.

Federation of Chinese Associations Malaysia (Huazong) president Tan Sri Goh Tian Chuan said the coming Spring Festival is going to be different because of the pandemic and the high number of cases in the country.

"If the situation continues, Chinese New Year celebrations at all levels and home visits will be scaled down or none at all.

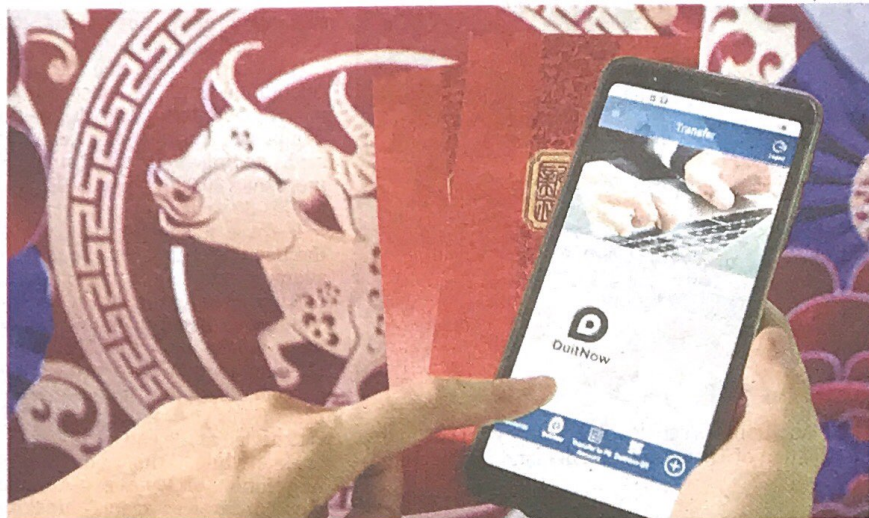
"Some people may then opt to issue e-ang pow instead," he said.

In fact, Goh feels that e-ang pow should be encouraged as a new norm since people will still need to practise physical distancing and hold no gatherings, if possible.

"It's the heart that counts when it comes to giving ang pow.

"The Chinese society gives out red packets containing money to children, family members, friends and employees as a symbol of good luck and shared blessings in the new year.

"Whether it's physical or digital,



Starting a new trend: With physical distancing being a norm now, e-ang pow may be the start of something new.

the significance behind the age-old tradition remains," he said.

Che Sang Khor Moral Uplifting Society president Datuk Seri Teh Meng Huat said festive joy could still be enjoyed among family and friends through the delivery of gifts and hampers.

Teh, who has 10 siblings, also said his annual family gathering of some 100 people will be scaled down with his wife and their three children only.

"We will not have the big gathering this year as some of my siblings who are overseas or outstation are not coming back.

"I think giving e-ang pow will cheer up the younger generation," he said.

He, however, noted that the practice might not catch on with the older folk who are less tech-savvy.

For others, despite the popularity of e-wallets, e-ang pow may not replace the physical red packet.

Christine Koh, a mother of three from Melaka, still holds dear the tradition of giving and accepting ang pow in person.

"I'd rather sanitise every ang pow my kids receive under the UV light, instead of receiving e-wallet ang pow," she said.

Koh, 37, said the virtual red packet is not as special as giving ang pow in person when there will be an exchange of good wishes to each other.

"Also, the amount in the ang pow

is not known until the recipient opens it later," she said.

She added that she will consider giving e-ang pow when the e-wallet app is made more interactive in future.

For Nur Basirah Chu, 37, from Ampang, Kuala Lumpur, ang pow will only be given to close family members this year when they meet for Chinese New Year.

"Then they could bring the ang pow back for their kids and grandkids.

"There will be no ang pow for others whom we don't see," she said.

It's a form of savings too, she added, as the pandemic has caused job and income loss.