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26 May 2011

Business in China: Dragon Boats on the Horizon

To illustrate the need to consider multiple aspects when evaluating an opportunity, a relationship, or a situation in China, Blue Heron Holdings presents this one-minute quiz:

This year on June 6th, China will take a collective vacation day to celebrate Dragon Boat Festival. The holiday is recognized on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar and so is on a different date each year, as is Chinese New Year.

While the origins of the holiday are rooted in South China ceremonies to honor the Dragon God and to ensure a good rice harvest, later Chinese culture overlays the story of Qu Yuan to provide moral guidance and history to live by.

Qu Yuan was a poet and advisor to the Chu Kingdom in the 3rd century BC. After being banished by the corrupt and immoral king for advising against war, he learned that the kingdom had been destroyed (by war) and despaired. He eventually threw himself into the Milo River in Hunan and drowned. Popular legend says that local people got into boats and raced to find him. They beat the water with paddles and beat drums to scare away fish and evil spirits. Realizing he had drowned, they threw rice into the river as an offering and to keep fish from eating the body.

Qu Yuan is regarded as one of China's first patriots, and a model intellectual. The boats, drums, noise, and rice are elements of traditional Dragon Boat Festival celebrations. This year the holiday falls on a Monday and combines with the weekend to form a three-day official vacation.

QUESTION: What is the significance of Dragon Boat Festival?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

- A. A celebration of Chinese history, tradition and moral values
- B. A chance to create unity with Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, where the holiday has been celebrated more regularly and visibly
- C. A three-day opportunity to drive consumer travel and domestic spending
- D. A way to obscure observance of a previous popular uprising
- E. All, some, or none of the above

HINT: There is no right answer.

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