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# DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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## NEWS IN CHINA

- [The second plenary session](#) of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee was held in Beijing from February 26 to 28, 2023. The meeting adopted a draft plan for the reform of Party and State institutions, which will be submitted for deliberation to the first session of the upcoming 14th National People's Congress. The meeting also reviewed and adopted a list of proposed candidates for the leading positions of State institutions to be recommended during the NPC session. The meeting underlined the need to ensure the success of the two sessions (两会) and deepen institutional reforms to promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capabilities. The meeting also emphasised on efforts to boost domestic demand, ensure the public's well-being, improve the policy system to encourage childbirth, and continue opening-up reforms. The plenary session called for continuous efforts to tackle corruption and prevent officials from becoming corrupt.
- China has expressed its dissatisfaction with the United States' recent move to compel all federal agencies to remove the [Chinese short-video platform TikTok](#) from their phones and systems within 30 days. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, urged the US to respect the principles of market economy and fair competition and provide an open, fair and non-discriminatory environment for companies of all countries to operate in the US. TikTok, owned by ByteDance Ltd, has repeatedly denied allegations of personal data theft. In this regard, TikTok CEO Shou Zi is set to testify before the US House Energy and Commerce Committee on March 23. The

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app had more than 1 billion users globally in January, with 113.3 million users in the US alone. Meanwhile, the US House Foreign Affairs Committee is set to vote on a bill that would give President Joe Biden the authority to ban TikTok from all US devices. Earlier, Canada had also announced the removal of the TikTok app from all federal government-issued mobile devices effective February 28, 2023. Many Chinese scholars have criticized the behaviour of western countries to use political excuses for driving out competition.

- The Chinese economy has seen upward trends in the last two months, and is heading towards a recovery. Government's "pro-growth" policies are said to be the instrumental reason behind this fast growth, and the waning impact of Covid-19, which led to a quicker return to normal production levels and market activity. The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for the sector rose to 52.6, up from 50.1 in January, indicating a faster economic recovery. The production index saw an increase of 6.9 percentage points to 56.7, while the new orders index reached 54.1, up 3.2 percentage points. The PMIs for large, medium-sized, and small enterprises were all above 50.
- China has provided Pakistan with a \$700 million loan, to boost its foreign exchange reserves with a potential \$1.3 billion in new loans on the horizon. This has increased Pakistan's Forex reserves to US\$ 4 billion which is still insufficient to support one month of imports. The loan came as Pakistan negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$1.2 billion tranche, which has been delayed.

Pakistan's reluctance in reaching an agreement with the IMF by making structural reforms has led Moody's to downgrade its long-term foreign debt rating by two levels to a historic low of Caa3. Pakistan needs \$35 billion in external financing for each of the next three years to cover debt repayments and imports. "History attests to the fact that a narrow oligarchic elite dominates Pakistan's politics and economy, and has long been averse to structural reforms, which is the only way Pakistan can extricate itself from regular financial crises," said Maleeha Lodhi, a former Pakistani ambassador to Britain, the United Nations and the United States. Delays in IMF loans have also stalled inflows from Saudi Arabia, UAE, World Bank and Asian Development Bank worth billion Dollars. Pakistan's inflation rate is expected to average more than 30% in the first half of 2023.

- As per Weibo's 4th quarter and 2022 annual report, its revenue has decreased by around 20% to US\$ 448 million in 4th quarter. Several macroeconomic factors including caused by the pandemic have affected Weibo's business in the last year. In 2022, Weibo's annual revenue decreased by 15% to US\$ 1.84 billion. As Weibo's revenues from membership and live broadcasting services continue to suffer, it has pinned its hopes on social e-commerce business in 2023. In 2022, revenue from membership business declined for the first time in history which coupled with huge increase in operating costs. From 2nd quarter in 2022, Weibo had begun to cut down on its staff and also on marketing expenses, results of which are expected to be visible in 2023. In 4th quarter, Weibo's userbase reached 586 million with 252
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million daily active users, mainly operating Weibo through mobiles. Despite such drawback, Weibo was recently listed on Hang Seng Technology Index.

- In a video released on Monday, the People's Liberation's Army has hinted at the development of a new carrier-borne combat aircraft. Song Zhongping, a military affairs commentator and retired PLA officer said that judging by the features in the video, the "new jet is the J-35". The stealth aircraft has folding wings, a typical feature of carrier-based planes, and appears to have a conventional aerodynamic design. The J-15, currently deployed on Chinese aircraft carriers and built by AVIC Shenyang Aircraft Corporation, is not considered sufficient to confront stealth aircraft, and the development of a new type has been anticipated for long. Military observers suggest it is a new-generation carrier-borne combat plane, the new fighter jet is speculated to be nearly ready for delivery.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- A man from Henan province, surnamed Liu, has turned to social media for help after doctors were unable to find a solution for parasitic worms that have grown inside his left eyelid. Liu posted a video online showing his lumpy and uneven eyelid, which revealed curve-shaped parasites. Although Liu initially thought the sensation of movement in his eyelid was a common neural reaction, the symptoms continued and became more painful. Several doctors from leading hospitals said that no treatment was available, and they couldn't operate on Liu's eyelid because the

the parasites would move to another area once it started bleeding. Liu turned to social media for help, and his story has since gone viral on several platforms where people have expressed concerns about his health and his unhygienic surrounding.

- A Chinese pet owner Zhang's search for her missing cat, Mantou, led to the discovery of a truck full of stolen cats in Guangzhou, more than 1,600 kilometres away from her home in Zhejiang. Zhang traced the cat's tracking device to Guangzhou and sought help on social media when police refused to investigate the matter as there was no conclusive evidence of kidnapping. Local cat rescue volunteers set up a WeChat group to help her find Mantou. The driver of the truck claimed that all the cats were given to him by a friend, and he was not arrested due to a lack of evidence. Volunteers believe the cats were on their way to a slaughterhouse for human consumption. The incident has renewed public concern about China's dog and cat kidnapping chain, and many people have called for better pet protection laws in China.

## INDIA WATCH

- China has tossed another US\$700 million to Pakistan to keep its economy afloat. This move comes as a surprise to Pakistan, as it wasn't anticipated until the IMF releases its tranche. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif welcomed the funding and thanked China for the unforgettable help. Pakistan's economy is in a deep pit with huge outstanding external debt and liabilities that amount to approximately USD 130 billion, which makes up 95.39% of its GDP. The country is facing financial difficulties,

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as it has to repay nearly USD 22 billion in the next year, and a total of USD 80 billion in the next three-and-a-half years. However, Pakistan's reserves are currently at only USD 3.2 billion, and its economic growth rate is just around 2%. India needs to cautiously monitor situation in Pakistan as to not allow these developments to influence India's strategic interests. Recently, a certain section of people in India have urged the government to be a little empathetic towards Pakistan's condition and help them out. The Indian government has to figure out the cautious approach moving forward. China's surprise funding will certainly boost Pakistan's confidence in their bilateral relations. One line of thought has also argued that providing aid to Pakistan during times of distress could be a goodwill gesture that may lead to improvements in India-Pakistan relations and prevent Pakistan from leaning too heavily on China. Further, as China accounts for almost 30% of Pakistan's foreign debt, China's continued support to Pakistan could strengthen its foothold in India's western neighbour and may prove detrimental to India's interests.

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