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# DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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## NEWS IN CHINA

- Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang undertook an inspection tour in the China-Myanmar border area on Tuesday. In what comes as a rare visit to the region located in Yunnan Province, Qin encouraged local political and civilian bodies to contribute to the maintenance of boundaries and stability. Additionally, he called for a crackdown on cross-border crime; the border is notorious for smuggling drugs into the China, from Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. On a more positive note, the minister called for cooperation with Myanmar in order to advance a cross border economic zone, and create the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. Qin is set to travel to Myanmar next, and then proceed to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in India.
- The Central Meteorological Observatory predicted large-scale heavy rainfall across the country's central and eastern regions. Considering this and the flow of returning travellers from the holiday period, it has launched a four-level emergency response. The risk of mountain torrents and similar geological disasters are being considered in areas such as southern Hebei and eastern Hubei. The probabilities of weather-induced traffic and other road hazards amidst the peak travel period are also high. The forecast expects heavy rainfall from the 2nd to 6th of May- the public have been instructed to make travel plans accordingly.
- Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu unveiled the new plan for overhauling the city's district councils. Lee who belongs to the pro-Beijing camp, stated that the aim of the reform was to advance the sentiment of "only patriots governing Hong Kong"- marking a decrease in the number of directly elected seats. The new District Council will now consist of 470 seats overall; 179 appointed seats, 176 mutually elected seats

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alongside district committees, and 88 directly elected seats. This quantitative overhaul is accompanied by the introduction of a vetting committee which will confirm candidate candidacy, irrespective of the electoral route taken. Lee framed the rehaul as a corrective measure to remove facilitators of 'black violence' from the administrative system, referring to the 2019 Hong Kong protests.

- Qin Haying broke the Asian record for the men's 100m breaststroke by clocking in at 57.93 seconds, at the 2023 Chinese National Championships. He secured the championship held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province with Yan Zibei- the former record holder, and Sun Jiajun bagging the silver and bronze medals, respectively. Qin had recently set the new record for the men's 50m breaststroke record, at the Chinese National Spring Swimming Championships.
- According to the Guizhou provincial government, the state-backed Guiyang Global Big Data Exchange has facilitated PRC's first sale of personal data. As part of Chinese authorities' experiments with data as a production factor to boost the country's digital economy, this pioneering sale was spearheaded by local tech firm Hao Huo. Hao Huo developed a personal data product out of the resumes of consenting jobseekers. As per government statements, participants in the trial will receive a share of the exchange's earnings; Guiyang Global Big Data Exchange, however, did not respond to media queries enquiring about the range of individual earnings. This market venture is a step forward in the commercialisation initiative,

even against an indeterminate background of legal consensus on personal data norms.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Workers who remain steadfast at their posts during the holidays, trend on Weibo:** Continuing with the slew of holiday-related trends on social media, Chinese netizens posted discussions under the hashtags #假期依然坚守岗位的劳动者 and #光荣属于劳动者, on Weibo. Users shared pictures of workers who continue to work throughout the five-day holiday period to pay tribute; numerous posts featuring medical staff, traffic police, firefighters, and other professionals hard at work flooded the platform. One user with the id @花房禅意 shared pictures of elderly volunteers at Zhengzhou Railway Station, who assisted passengers on holiday. The post describes them as retired railway workers over 71, who handed out hot water and helped navigate train routes- and thanked them for their efforts.

## INDIA WATCH

- For the longest time, India and China have been touted as the data centres of the world; thanks to the intersection of their voluminous internet-user bases with their respective service sectors. The demographic trend of India's population surpassing that of China's would provide the former a competitive edge, but only if a comprehensive consensus on the circulation of personal data is reached. India simultaneously also needs to consider the legalities of data privacy, if it wishes to balance itself vis a vis China. The
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developmental trajectory of the market for, as well as legislature on personal data in China as a competitor, is then worth noting for the Indian state; for both structural and softer notions of policy. India scrapped its first version of the personal data protection bill last year, after nearly five years' worth of deliberations and replaced it with the new Digital Data Protection Bill. While the bill does extend the right of data privacy to individuals, critics argue that its effect is largely nullified as it simultaneously enhances the jurisdiction of the state. The bill if passed would grant absolute power to the government, exempting it from the prescriptions of the law for broad reasons including, sovereignty, integrity, and security. The legal landscape is suspended between providing legal protection to individuals and designing provisions for the state to benefit from instead. A somewhat similar situation plagues the Chinese landscape as well. The only exception is that commercial innovations in data are spearheaded by the Party-state itself. As part of Xi's Digital China Initiative, Beijing has been steadfastly working on engineering a commercial market for data. Alongside land and labour, it has focused on commodifying data. The recent sale of personal data in Guizhou, and China's numerous other state-backed data exchanges- in Shenzhen and Shanghai for instance, have proceeded even as the Chinese legal framework refuses to reach a consensus on data sharing. Local experiments through the embryonic social credit system, has fashioned the party-state's peculiar relationship with personal data; which mostly at this point seems to suggest that data can be instrumentalised to the commercial benefit of the

Communist Party of China (CPC), as in other spheres. These lessons could be taken up and adapted in multiple ways- whether as a positive model to emphasise the primacy of the state or as a modified antithesis to present a more protectionist India that protects privacy.

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