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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **New Year Wishes and humour trend on Weibo:** On Thursday, Weibo users were in a good mood as they discussed all kinds of new year wishes and humour posts. The top trending hashtag seemed to be “My Happy New Year Wish” ([#我的新年欢乐祝愿#](#)) with nearly 78 million views. People posted wishes ranging from having a cute little brother to granting one’s dog his wish to be praised for his hard work. The hashtag “Weibo Annual Humour Awards” ([#微博幽默年度大赏#](#)) ranked a close second, featuring puns in various dialects, role-plays to annoy one’s mother and funny snippets from movies and TV shows.
- **4.5-day work week attracts netizens’ attention:** There was a great [discussion](#) on Weibo regarding a recent announcement by entertainment company LeTV to introduce a 4.5-day work week for its employees. Following the example of many successful European companies, LeTV recently allowed its employees to take half of Wednesday off without incurring any pay cuts. While many on Weibo praised the decision and joked about applying for a job at LeTV, many were also sceptical of the company’s financial position. The critics said that reducing working hours is not viable, except for companies who are already suffering from reducing business.
- **Donation appeal for paying legal compensation creates controversy:** Chinese social [media](#) was recently taken by storm due to a high-profile murder case involving Chinese citizens in Japan. A Chinese woman, who was held liable for

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- the murder of her friend by her boyfriend, recently made a Weibo post seeking donations to help her pay the compensation mandated by the courts. After this created a controversy, the post was taken down by Weibo.
 - **Sony's Weibo account banned:** Japanese technology company Sony's official Weibo account was banned on Wednesday evening, citing non-compliance to the website's rules. Although the exact reason for the ban is still unclear, Sony has previously been warned and supervised by Chinese authorities over advertisements that go against the rules.

NEWS IN CHINA

- China continued to relax restrictions on travel and communications in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chinese authorities announced on Thursday that nucleic acid testing will no longer be required for travel out of the Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions. Although a negative PCR test is still required, vaccination or other tests are not. Travel pathways through land, air and sea from Hong Kong and Macau to the Chinese mainland are set to reopen for travel next week. Around 250,000 Hong Kongers have already registered to travel to the mainland, according to authorities.
 - The Chinese National Medical Product Administration approved the first domestically developed extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) product for adult patients with predictable risk of death due to COVID-19. The authorisation comes as an effort to increase medical supplies in the wake of surging demand due to rising Omicron infections in the country.
 - The People's Bank of China (PBC) conducted reverse repo operations worth 2 billion yuan (about 290 million US dollars) in the Chinese market on Thursday at an interest rate of 2 per cent. The operations were aimed at maintaining an optimal amount of liquidity in the market. The PBC also conducted the 2023 People's Bank of China Work Conference on Thursday morning. Key points in the discussions included maintaining liquidity to support nominal growth rate, supporting enterprises by lowering financial costs and maintaining a stable Chinese renminbi exchange rate.
 - Chinese cola brand Tianfu Cola urged consumers to consume rationally amid rumours of its bankruptcy. Due to these rumours circulating widely on social media, sales of the coke product had skyrocketed, increasing 17 times on Wednesday alone. The company denied the rumours on Thursday. Tianfu Cola, China's popular drink in the 1980s-90s, had previously gone bust after a failed partnership with PepsiCo. The brand returned to the national market in 2016.
 - China Post on Thursday released new stamps depicting the year of the rabbit. The stamps, released along with a booklet, represented the 'Guimao Year' (rabbit's year). The stamps were designed by Huang Yongyu, a famous artist. The postal authority had earlier released a draft version of the stamps, which had attracted
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attention online as most people found it “too ugly” and “weird”. In Chinese tradition, each year is represented by one of twelve animals.

- The Shanghai Shenhua football team defeated the Cangzhou Lions in the quarterfinals of the Football Association Cup organised by the Chinese Football Association. Later, the Shanghai Port team defeated the Chengdu Rongcheng team on Thursday. Also in the quarterfinals, the Hangzhou Greentown team defeated Jinan Xingzhou. The matches are being held at the Suzhou Olympic Sports Center in Suzhou. The final match for the Cup is scheduled for 15th January 2023.
- China expressed strong objections about the Taiwan visits of eminent South Korean politicians including the Vice Speaker of the South Korean National Assembly Chung Woo-Taik. A spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in South Korea said that the visit was provocative to China and that South Korea should abide by the One-China principle. Meanwhile, China also protested the travel restrictions on Chinese citizens imposed by various European countries. In recent days, while the European Union has strongly recommended member states to require negative test certificates from inbound Chinese passengers, France announced similar requirements on Wednesday. Chinese authorities protested these restrictions as a “double standard”.
- Philippines’ President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. concluded his three-day visit to China on Thursday. Marcos held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Chinese Premier

Li Keqiang during this visit. A joint statement released by the two countries on Wednesday noted that the leaders had agreed to enhance cooperation in various areas including oil & gas exploration, the Belt and Road Initiative, agriculture and fisheries, infrastructure, finance and tourism. President Marcos signed 14 agreements with Chinese entities, including 4 loan agreements. Marcos and Xi emphasised that the visit celebrated the historic legacy as well as futuristic outlook of China-Philippines relations. Analysts highlighted the role of strategic talks between the two countries as it was announced that communication channels will be opened between China and the Philippines to discuss territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

INDIA WATCH

- ‘Coca-Colonisation’ is a term often used by critics of modern consumerist culture. It is argued that global brands including carbonated soft drink brands such as PepsiCo and Coca Cola endorse American values, indoctrinating other countries with these values and at times appropriating local culture for profit. These claims are debatable; however, globalisation may lead to certain unfavourable outcomes. The Tianfu Cola story illustrates some of the disadvantages of the free market: a price war, intense competition or mergers leading to powerful international brands erasing local or even national brands. After the failure of their merger, Tianfu failed to get production rights back from PepsiCo after announcing separation. When the company made a comeback after around 20 years in 2016, it had to offer prices slightly higher than those by the PepsiCo-
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Coca Cola duopoly. Tianfu advocates the use of Chinese traditional medicine in its beverages, advertising it as a healthy drink. However, its market share and distribution continues to remain low. When India underwent liberalisation in the 1990s, it made a bid to protect its industry by restricting foreign investment or mandating partnerships. Yet, it is argued that Indian globalisation has failed to spur enough growth, partly because it is too protectionist. Today, China has achieved successful economic globalisation due to a robust investment regime and an ambitious vision for business growth. This requires a balance of protection and liberal policies. Instead of creating regulatory bottlenecks for investment, India should and has begun supporting innovation, particularly among the youth. However, some more steps are required: robust banking and finance sectors should be built to ensure enough funding for viable startups. Regulation should promote healthy competition among all firms, prioritising the interest of the consumers. The government can also run campaigns to encourage ambitious initiatives and improve systemic factors such as literacy and access to technology. Accelerating these efforts can boost India's potential for economic power while reaping the full benefits of free trade.
