

5 MAY 2023

DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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NEWS IN CHINA

- On Friday, the China Harbour Engineering Company signed a deal with Kampot Logistics and Port Company, a Cambodia-based company, thereby securing the deal to construct the multi-purpose Kampot Logistics and Port, located in southwest Cambodia. Apart from representatives from the two parties, the Cambodian Minister of Public Works and Transport, Sun Chanthol, was also present during the signing. The project, spanning 600 hectares, will cost around US\$ 1.5 billion, and is a 15 m deepwater port. It will be able to accommodate vessels weighing upto 100 thousand tonnes, and capable of handling 6,00,000 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units by 2030. Once completed, this port will become the third largest port in Cambodia, behind Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh.
- A new export channel recently opened between China and South Africa, with the latter sending out a shipment of feed corn to China. The 53000-tonne batch was imported by the agri-business firm COFCO Corporation, and it arrived at Machong Port in southern China on Thursday. The new export corridor follows in the footsteps of the one opened with Brazil in January. Post inspection and quarantine, the feed corn will be distributed to domestic companies. South African corn is ranked among the best in the world in terms of quality and export production. With this new export corridor, a pattern of circulation will be established, linking corn-producing regions in the northern hemisphere with those in the south. This will help not only the Chinese consumers, but also in stabilising the global supply chain for corn.
- The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the China Consumers Association, recently launched a campaign related to safe practices in off-campus training. The objective of the campaign is to curb malpractices and deal with problems such as: excessive fees and profit-seeking, difficulty in

obtaining refunds, lack of quality assurance and safety, etc. The campaign has six target action areas: standardising training fees and curbing profit-mindedness, strengthening the supervision of pre-fee funds, speeding up dispute resolution, strengthening safety inspection, strengthening consumption awareness, and dealing with illegal activity such as invisible mutation training in disciplines without quality assurance, qualifications, and safety guarantees.

- Chinese Premier Li Qiang presided over an executive meeting of the State Council on Friday to review suggestions on development of advanced manufacturing clusters, charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, and rural development. With regards to advanced manufacturing clusters, during the meeting it was emphasised that these clusters would lead to the improvement of the resilience and security of the industrial and supply chain. Besides that, they would promote talent and collaborative innovation, along with being more efficient and cost-effective. Hence, the development of such clusters was prioritised, and to that end, the upgrading of traditional industries and promotion of emerging industries was stressed upon, along with technological innovation, strengthening top-quality enterprises and constructing a modern industrial system. With regards to infrastructure for electric vehicles, it was highlighted that the demand for such vehicles was high in the rural areas, and that they could help in stimulating rural development. For this purpose, it was argued that charging infrastructure should be constructed in the rural areas, and other

factors which curtail the use of electric vehicles should be dealt with expediently, like lack of technicians, vehicle acquisition, low fleet, and safety supervision.

- The Foreign Minister of China, Qin Gang, recently attended the SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting, which was held in Goa this year. During the meeting, Qin exhorted the countries of South and Central Asia to maintain 'strategic autonomy' by keeping a safe distance from the United States. During the meeting, Qin said, "We should adhere to strategic autonomy and strengthen solidarity and trust. We should firmly support each other in safeguarding sovereignty, security, and development interests, and oppose external forces meddling in regional affairs and staging 'colour revolutions.'" Qin also talked about the importance of fighting the evils of terrorism, ethnic separatism, and religious extremism, as well as calling for support to Afghanistan in its fight against drug trafficking and transnational organised crime, and resisting any acts that affect the international economic order and industrial supply chain. The summit concluded with a joint statement, wherein the SCO members agreed to "further strengthen security cooperation and jointly combat terrorism, separatism, drug production and trafficking, and cybercrime."

SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Netizens celebrate the official end of the pandemic:** The World Health Organisation has recently declared that the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, is no longer a
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public health emergency, thereby bringing a symbolic end to the pandemic, which ravaged the world for over two years. People from all across the world welcomed this news with delight, and it was no different in China as well, which had been badly affected by a series of lockdowns and the Zero Covid Policy. Netizens on social media platforms like Weibo were passionately discussing this new development, and the hashtag #新冠病毒对世界健康控制不收起 was among the top trends on Weibo. At the same time, there were many others as well, who advocated exercising caution, and following the COVID protocol if one contracts the virus. After all, the virus has not completely disappeared, and there had been a slight spike in infections following the May Day Golden Week holidays. It is just that the threat of the virus is not that significant enough to shut down normal life. Hence, it can be said that the images of cities and countries shutting down are a thing of the past, and that people have adapted to live with the virus.

INDIA WATCH

- This year, India has assumed the rotating presidency of the SCO, and recently chaired the foreign ministers' meeting of the SCO member-states. With India handling the presidency of both the G20 and the SCO simultaneously, it is a golden opportunity for the country to enhance its soft power and emerge as a leader of the Global South. With regards to the SCO, Central Asia has been a blind spot in Indian foreign policy for quite a long while, and this year's SCO presidency offers New Delhi an opportunity to correct that gap,

keeping in mind the present geopolitical challenges of that region. Although India does not fully view itself as a part of the American bloc, it has strategically engaged with Washington, in the form of groupings like Quad and I2U2, which Beijing in turn, finds somewhat disconcerting. Also, Sino-Indian relations have been in a state of complete freeze, since the Galwan Valley clashes of 2020. Hence, the Chinese Foreign Minister's statement about strategic autonomy, while targeting the United States, also had certain implications for India. According to Wang Dehua, from the Institute for South and Central Asia Studies at the Shanghai Municipal Centre for International Studies, "Qin's remarks underlined Beijing's concerns about New Delhi's strategic pivot towards Washington." India has unequivocally made clear its stance on terrorism and can look to take the lead in the main SCO summit in July, by looking for solutions to pressing problems in the region, such as the crisis in Afghanistan, and the threat of religious extremism and separatism. By performing its role as a responsible regional actor, India can present itself as an attractive partner state with whom other countries would like to rationally engage, under conditions of strategic autonomy. Not just that, India will be able to have enough leeway in terms of having the discretion to engage with other global powers. Overall, India will be able to counter China's anti-US 'strategic autonomy' push by taking the initiative in the SCO, and thereby encouraging other states in the region.

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