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# DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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## NEWS IN CHINA

- French President Emmanuel Macron and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen travelled to China to demonstrate the unity of the European Union (EU) and persuade Beijing to do more to end the war in Ukraine. In Beijing, they met with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, who expressed China's appreciation for its relationship with France and expressed the expectation that their discussions would result in a comprehensive agreement that would strengthen bilateral ties. Major global issues and challenges like the circumstances in Ukraine, Iran, Syria, and North Korea are among the topics Macron said he wished to discuss. In order to create a shared agenda, he emphasized the significance of having a shared vision and knowledge. Additionally, he expressed an interest in discussing trade and investment matters with China, particularly in relation to pressing problems like the environment, the digital economy, and health. Li and Macron were anticipated to talk about ways to improve China-France collaboration and how to demonstrate to the outside world their dedication to peace and stability.
- Shanghai has put 20 policies into place to promote foreign investment, one of which promotes the establishment of new offices by foreign financial institutions. Additional measures include tax breaks, financial aid, intercultural exchanges, and commerce facilitation. Shanghai wishes to develop into a significant financial centre and attract more foreign investment as China's economy recovers. Sanofi, a French pharmaceutical firm, and the Pingshan District administration of Shenzhen have decided to collaborate in order to advance the biopharmaceutical industry. In Pingshan, a production centre and a facility for research and development are to be built, according to the agreement. Sanofi is one of the numerous international companies that has increased its financial involvement in China's high-tech and service sectors. China's foreign direct investment (FDI) increased 6.1 per cent

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year over year in the first two months of 2023 to 268.4 billion yuan (\$38.94 billion), with these industries making up more than 80 per cent of the total.

- Five Chinese institutions investigated how the human microbiome affects longevity. Mendelian randomization, a statistical technique that has been used by researchers infers causal relationships between variables by using genetic variations as natural experiments. The research discovered that some microbes were more or less prevalent in individuals who lived longer, indicating that they may have contributed to their longevity. For instance, the researchers discovered a correlation between higher levels of *Bacteroides fragilis* and *Prevotella copri* and lower odds of longevity and a correlation between higher levels of *Bifidobacterium longum* and greater odds of longevity. According to the experts, monitoring the transfer of advantageous microbes from one body site to another could promote longer and healthier lifestyles for people.
- Concerning trends in the departure of civil employees in Hong Kong have begun to raise questions about the stability and effectiveness of government operations. The government has acknowledged that losing knowledgeable personnel might make it more difficult to implement policies and programs, particularly during the COVID-19 disaster. Low pay, a demanding workload, few opportunities for promotion, and personal reasons are just a few of the reasons provided by government servants for leaving their positions. However, some analysts also believe that

Hong Kong's political climate may play a role. The introduction of the national security law, which has increased political pressure and restricted civil freedoms, is just one example of the major political changes the city has experienced recently. One illustration of the effects of resignations is the Department of Health's dentists, who have experienced a 40 per cent rise in exits since 2019. This could make the public sector's physician scarcity worse, lengthen patient wait times, and put additional strain on the healthcare system, which is already under duress as a result of the pandemic. To ensure the efficient operation of government services, the government must take action to address the reasons behind resignations and keep experienced civil employees. This might entail giving better pay and benefits, more chances for career advancement, and addressing issues with work-life balance and job security.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Hainan reveals independent customs plan; becomes viral on Weibo:** The hashtag "Hainan prepares to establish independent customs" has generated over 330 million views on Weibo, as the island province announced plans to establish an island-wide, independent customs system by 2025. This means that Hainan will be able to set its own tariffs and regulations for imports and exports, separate from the mainland China Customs. One of the main benefits of this policy is that it will significantly boost Hainan's duty-free retail industry and promote local consumption. Hainan already offers duty-free shopping
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for visitors, with a quota of 100,000 yuan (\$15,200) per person per year. However, under the new system, the entire island will become duty-free, and the quota will be lifted. This will greatly unlock the spending power of its residents and encourage visitors to extend their stays. Hainan's duty-free retail sector is expected to increase from 60 billion yuan (\$9.1 billion) in 2020 to 300 billion yuan (\$45.6 billion) by 2025. The announcement has generated over 330 million views on Weibo, with many netizens speculating on the impact of the move on their future visits to the island. Some expressed excitement about the prospect of buying more goods at lower prices, while others expressed concern about the quality and authenticity of the products.

## INDIA WATCH

- The strategic alliance between France and India covers a wide range of areas, including cyber defense, maritime security, aerospace, and counterterrorism. The improvement in India-France defense cooperation can be seen in the recent visits by the defense ministers of both countries to the Indian aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and their participation in joint naval exercises. India can advance its relationship with France by participating in the 2+2 Defense Dialogues that India holds with QUAD members. The inclusion of the defense and external affairs ministers in these discussions ensures consistency in the formulation of foreign policy. Furthermore, India and France's support for an inclusive multipolar order and shared concerns over China's role in the Indo-Pacific region, enable the two

countries to deepen their strategic relations and check China's hegemonic tendencies in the region, while pursuing their own national interests. Given that India currently purchases a significant amount of French aerospace products, such as the Rafale, participating in similar 2+2 Defense Dialogues with France could create opportunities for joint production of such products and give India access to the technology needed to develop essential defense components, such as jet engines. This will help India achieve its goal of being an independent defense producer as well as strengthen the defense collaboration between the two nations.

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