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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Chinese tech giants are massively investing in virtual reality and in the technologies that are building up the Chinese metaverse:** In the year 2021, the term '[metaverse](#)' started gaining attention. In March of last year, the hugely successful online multiplayer game and game creation system Roblox went public with a market value of over \$41 billion at the time, earning its reputation as the world's first metaverse IPO. The 20th Party Congress was by no means the first time for China's leadership to stress the country's focus on the latest digital innovations. In October 2021, President Xi Jinping also spoke about evolving China's digital economy during the 19th CPC Central Committee. He asserted that one of the focal points within the development strategy of China's digital economy is the further integration of digital technologies and real-world economies. This idea was further clarified in the outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan issued by the State Council at the end of 2021, which listed VR and AR as one of the seven key industries of China's digital economy along with cloud computing, IoT, AI, and others. Subsequently, many local governments incorporated metaverse and related relevant terms into their respective 14th Five-Year Plans. For example, Shanghai authorities stated it will focus on the further developments of industries related to quantum computing, 3rd-gen semiconductors, 6G communications, and the metaverse. As one of the leading artificial intelligence (AI) and internet companies in the world, Baidu specializes in internet and AI-related products and services. Baidu is mostly known as China's number one search engine, but its ambitions go far beyond that. "We want to be

like Amazon Web Services (AWS) for the metaverse,” Ma Jie, vice president at Baidu. As one of the biggest venture capital firms and investment corporations in the world, Alibaba struck several deals with prominent XR companies including Magic Leap and Nreal to gain footing in the Extended Reality industry.

NEWS IN CHINA

- Libraries too are joining the metaverse bandwagon. The [Lingang Digital Technology Library](#) would be the world's first metaverse library to start operating by the end of 2022. The library would be operated by Xinhua Media. The library aims to “offer a seamless connection between real and virtual reality and an immersive interactive reading experience” using various technologies. In China, many companies from real estate to virtual idols are betting on the prospects of the metaverse. The local authorities are rolling out a series of subsidies and initiatives to attract metaverse-related businesses and talent. In May 2022, Xinhua Media said it planned to create a digitized version of the library in XiRang, a virtual platform launched by internet giant Baidu to support the development of the metaverse. Users can create avatars to enter the library building virtually, engage with others face-to-face or through voice calls, and get access to available resources. Liu Wei, deputy director of Shanghai Library said it focuses on the digitalization of the library. There were few applications of the metaverse concept in domestic libraries despite the hype.

- China to approach leaders in the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) block this week about accelerating the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area '[Version 3.0](#)' in a potential boost to the stability of Beijing's manufacturing supply chains amid mounting rivalry with the United States. Chinese officials have informed the state-run media about this approach. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is in Phnom Penh this week to meet with the bloc's 10 members during a series of summits. China is looking to upgrade its ASEAN trade ties as the US government squeezes it economically through tariffs and curbs on its hi-tech sector while bypassing Chinese involvement in its own trade deals. At the ASEAN-China Summit in October last year, the two sides released a statement saying they had agreed to a joint feasibility study on making the trade area more “comprehensive” and “responsive to contemporary global challenges”. ASEAN countries will be welcoming an upgrade as they look up to China as their source of development as they sell their manufactured goods in China. Trade between China and several Southeast Asian nations grew by double-digit percentages in the first nine months of the year, Chinese customs data show. Exports to Singapore rose 41 percent, for example, and 30 percent to Malaysia.

- In Airshow China, a [turbofan engine](#) with 2D thrust vectoring control nozzle was displayed for the first time. This engine could provide aircraft, particularly fighter jets, with enhanced maneuverability and stealth capability, and it reflects the rapid development of China's aero engine sector overall. Five variants of the Taihang series turbofan engines are on display at the air
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- show.
 - China Electronics Technology Group Corp, a radar developer and research institute, exhibited a giant space monitoring radar, which is believed to be the "most powerful radar". The SLC-18 radar can detect satellites from afar, and identify and catalog satellites to form a radar database, so as to guide other equipment to respond accordingly. It can also send satellite data to the command center to help make decisions. The radar has such outstanding advantages as all-weather, all-time, multi-target, large power, and large search areas, which can detect LEO targets in a wide range of airspace and cover a large number of LEO satellite targets.
 - The US and China started unofficial conversations on climate-related issues during the COP-27 summit in Egypt, and China's climate envoy Xie Zhenhua met his US counterpart John Kerry for talks. Xie has said the US must take responsibility for the breakdown in talks between the two countries, calling on the US to "clear the barriers" for talks. He also called on wealthy nations to offer more support for developing countries that have the most to lose from climate change, including compensating poorer nations for damage linked to global warming, according to media reports. The Chinese and US climate envoys have maintained informal communication on climate change, and China's position on the China-US climate change talks has not changed. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Thursday, that China has been unswervingly and actively responding to climate change and hopes that developed

countries will fulfill their funding commitments as soon as possible.

INDIA WATCH

- ASEAN hopes that India will help maintain the balance of power in the region amid the US-China trade-off. "The sharpening superpower rivalry between the U.S. and China has direct implications for all of us," Singapore's foreign minister, Vivian Balakrishnan, at the special gathering in New Delhi in June. ASEAN countries are heavily dependent on China because of the trade links developed over the last few decades. India, the other major economy in the region, the ASEAN hopes that India will help maintain the regional balance of power and slowly wean the group off its trade dependence on China. ASEAN is not satisfied as India itself is still heavily stretched and preoccupied with the Chinese threat. The Indian navy is well short of its target of 200 ships, currently possessing only 130, while China is expanding its presence in Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific concept is a strategic one for India-ASEAN relationship; the AOIP (ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific) and joint statement are functional. They are about peace and stability, but focus on prosperity. There is a commitment to support the ASEAN community building using development cooperation; it mentions grasping opportunities from current and future regional and global events. The exploration of cooperation between the AOIP and the IPOI (India's Indo-Pacific Policy) include the four priority areas of the AoIP, which are maritime cooperation, connectivity, the SDGs (sustainable development goals), and
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economic and related cooperation. The SDGs and the non-strategic maritime cooperation are within the domain of socio-cultural cooperation while the connectivity and economic aspects are cross-cutting.
