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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Guangdong movie theatre offers separate tickets for COVID-positive customers:** This week, Chinese social media users noticed a movie theatre in Foshan, Guangdong, providing Covid-positive attendees different tickets and auditoriums. After several netizens found that the online booking screen indicated distinct time slots for "positive" (Yáng) and "negative" (Yīn) Avatar 2 movie viewings on Thursday, the hashtag "A Movie Theater in Foshan Is Said to Divide Auditoriums into Positive and Negative" trended. On Friday, the movie theatre declined providing special tickets for Covid-positive attendees and said they embrace the notion of isolating at home. Weibo users posted screenshots of additional cinemas' Covid-positive/Covid-negative movie ticket selections, despite Chinese media's denial. Some Weibo users advocate for separate auditoriums for favourable and negative moviegoers. One commentator said, "Avatar 2 is going to make us all positive for Covid."

NEWS IN CHINA

- A reporter asked the Ministry of Commerce's World Trade Department head about the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) 15th US trade policy assessment on the 17th of December. According to the report, the US violates economic laws and market rules due to its protectionist policies. China's WTO Permanent Representative to the WTO Li Chenggang spoke during the review meeting. In line with WTO regulations, China has sent the US 312 written questions in two batches, aggressively voicing concerns and representing company

requests.

- Han Wenxiu, Deputy Director of the Office of the Central Financial and Economic Commission, stated that while economic growth so far this year has fallen short of the goal set for it at the beginning of the year, many other indicators have remained on track. There is an expectation that this year's economic output will be more than 120 trillion yuan. This year's successes in poverty reduction have been further solidified. Low-income areas saw faster rates of disposable income growth than the rest of the country and they did not see a widespread relapse into poverty. Industrial upgrading has made progress, and the job market has shown stellar growth. New energy vehicle production, sales, and exports are unprecedented. He said that due to these indicators and a stable price level despite global inflation, good economic performance is expected in the future.
- As China adjusts COVID-19 rules, international trade enterprises have increased their attempts to win overseas orders in the past two weeks. Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Guangdong provinces have hired planes to send business delegations abroad. In a move to improve the Chinese market and economic recovery, Alibaba Group, a worldwide e-commerce and retail company, is helping Chinese enterprises increase orders. Alibaba, based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, intends to assist online and brick-and-mortar companies, particularly small and medium-sized ones, manage finance, raw material sourcing, and logistical issues to increase orders. In the next three months, eligible micro,

small, and medium-sized enterprises will receive credit loans worth over 10 billion yuan (\$1.44 billion). Taobao, one of Alibaba's flagship e-commerce portals, is offering 38-day interest-free credit loans of up to 3 million yuan for production material purchases. During this year's December 12 shopping extravaganza, Alibaba's business-to-business platform launched the Digital Hybrid Trade Show. Alibaba will transport Chinese items to at least 100 international shows in the US, Germany, India, and Brazil to enable Chinese foreign trade firms to interact with prospective overseas clients and grow their overseas markets at minimal cost.

- Chinese researchers discovered that diseased crops emit compounds to alert other crops about the striped stem borer, a severe paddy pest. In mid-October, New Phytologist, a plant science publication, suggested that the results may increase the widely planted crop's resilience to one of its most deadly pests. Herbivore damage produces complex herbivore-induced plant volatiles (HIPVs), which influence plant-insect interactions, according to experts. According to the research undertaken by a Swedish researcher and Chinese agriculturists, plants pre-exposed to stem borer-induced HIPVs may better respond to future assaults by producing a torrent of jasmonic acid and defensive proteinase inhibitors that are harmful to the pest's larva. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said that the striped stem borer and other severe paddy pests and diseases devastated about 57 million hectares of rice in 2017.
 - On December 18, 2022, China's first deep-
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water scientific research wharf "Haiyang, Dizhi No. 2" arrived at the Guangzhou Marine Geological Survey Bureau in Nansha, Guangzhou. It is a multi-functional new science research ship to be used by the China Geological Survey. Being the biggest domestic scientific research wharf, it will assist China's deep-sea exploration bases. The wharf was built by the Bureau and the Nansha District Government of Guangzhou City.

- The Ministry of Transport issued a "Notification on Speeding up the Resumption of Work and Production of Road Passenger Transport to Maintain the Safe, Wholesome, Smooth, and Comfortable Trip of the Citizens". This was mandated by Party Central Committee and State Council's to control and prevent the new crown pneumonia epidemic. It also adheres with the "New Ten Rules" of public health management issued at the time of reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic. Transportation bureaus and committees of all provinces, autonomous territories, and municipalities directly under the Central Government were all ordered to adhere to the new notification.
- Argentina dismissed hopes for Chinese JF-17 aircraft purchases, announcing that it won't be purchasing any new military aircraft. The Chengdu FC-1/JF-17 "Thunder" were reportedly top contenders in the earlier Argentine plan for purchases. Last year, the country had declared a budget allocation of USD 664 million for the acquisition of fighter jets. However, Argentine Prime Minister Alberto Fernandez Prensa recently declared that the country had other priorities, since

"there are no war problems on the South American continent." JF-17 are fourth-generation multirole jets developed jointly by China and Pakistan.

INDIA WATCH

- Becoming a net arms exporter in the last decade, China has emerged as a major supplier of arms to over 50 countries today, most of its sales being to Asian nations. The strategic significance of this for India cannot be understated. Recently, the Indian government, too has begun efforts to increase India's arms sales. Over the last five years, India's defence exports have grown by 334%. The growing China-Pakistan defence partnership is another cause of concern for India. In this context, Argentina's announcement of effectively foregoing Chinese-Pakistani aircraft is a welcome decision. However, it should not be overestimated. The JF-17 have earlier faced technical issues, most notably in Myanmar. Moreover, given the current economic situation in Argentina, the move should not come as a surprise. This event signals a diplomatic opportunity for India. While arms sales and hard power must be projected, the Indian emphasis has always been on soft power. The complex strategic and economic realities of the day call for strengthening cooperation over new challenges and in new regions. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Indian defence is growing, expanding opportunities for production partnerships. An effective Indian answer to Chinese-Pakistani arms can be shaped through a two-pronged approach of cutting-edge indigenous technology development and diplomatic partnerships beyond defence.
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