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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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NEWS IN CHINA

- Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang will travel to the Philippines on Friday at a time when the relationship is already complicated due to the South China Sea dispute. It will be Qin's first visit to the Southeast Asian nation since his new appointment. During his visit, Qin Gang is expected to discuss cooperation on agriculture, trade, energy, and infrastructure with his Philippine counterpart Enrique Manalo and pacify the recent situation of Chinese coastguard using army grade laser on a Philippine coast guard ship without any cause, that blinded the Filipino crew for few minutes. The South China Sea and Taiwan are likely to be high on Qin's agenda since Manila is looking forward to allowing the US navy to open four more naval bases in the vicinity of Spratly islands in order to securitize their territorial boundaries from such occurrence again in the future. During recent visit by the Philippines President to China in January, both countries signed 14 agreements covering different aspects.
- The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has released a plan to issue and revise Party regulations for 2023 to 2027. The plan points towards increasing the power of the Central Committee by reinforcing the existing hierarchies of the core committee of the CPC, though no mention has been made of what concrete changes will be made. The narrative behind increasing the power of the Central Committee as mentioned in this plan, is to "unify leadership" that upholds the core position of the Party's top executive head Xi Jinping. Other than that, refining of electoral regulations will be done for selection and appointment of Party leaders and their training system will also be improved. One of the unique features of this document is the mention of improving "Intra-Party Democracy" implying, that there is existence of democratic decision making within the CPC leadership positions at provincial and local levels.

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- China's Ministry of Education announced on Wednesday that it has approved 26 new disciplines for undergraduate programs. The new majors encompass a range of fields, such as biometrics, robotics, national parks, rural governance, and family education, among others. These newly approved majors are in addition to the existing 792 majors in 93 categories designated for undergraduates at China's higher education institutions. Furthermore, the education ministry and other authorities have released a reform plan stating that about 20 percent of disciplines and majors at higher education institutions in China will be modified. Outdated disciplines and majors will be replaced with new ones that keep pace with new technologies, emerging sectors, and new business modes.
 - 10 provinces in China published economic data for the first quarter of 2023 and revealed some interesting trends about China's domestic economy. As per the available data, all 10 provinces showed positive economic growth compared to last year, ranging between 4-6%. Amongst these provinces, Jilin has registered the highest year-on-year GDP growth of 8.2%, which is 3.7% higher than the national average. Other than Jilin, 7 other provinces – Tianjin, Chongqing, Liaoning, Qinghai, Zhejiang, Hainan and Inner Mongolia - have registered growth rate higher than national average of 4.5%. Amongst these provinces, Zhejiang has the highest GDP of 1.8 trillion Yuan, showing a Y-O-Y growth of 4.9%. The remaining two provinces are Beijing and Hunan, which grew at 3.1% and 4.1% respectively, which were not far away from the national average. These figures

have shown signs of post-pandemic economic recovery in China and the picture will get clearer when other remaining provinces will release data in the next few days.

- The bumper harvest of wheat in North China led to government carrying out farmland management in the areas. The areas covered are Xingtai city of Hebei province includes Zhangxiang village and Heguo Township within the Nanhe District area. Modern instruments such as vehicles for pesticide spraying, drones for irrigation, and crop harvesters are being provided by the agricultural departments of the Hebei province to local farmers as a part of government policy to increase Chinese agricultural productivity. China had 600,000 wheat harvesters as on June 2022, mentioned in the data of the State Council. This comes in the backdrop of the increasing consumption of the population in the rural areas of China that has a potential of per capita consumption of 16,600 yuan as per the 2022 data.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Weibo Neitzens heartbroken over death of a female Panda under mysterious circumstances.** Chinese experts to investigate the cause: China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Wang Wenbin regrets death of the giant panda "Lin Hui" in Thailand. It was found in a coma with nosebleed on the evening of 18th April, 2023 and passed away the very next day. Wang Wenbin expressed his sorrow and condolences for the loss of this precious animal.
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He said that Chinese experts will travel to Thailand to find out the cause of its death. The hashtag #中国对旅泰大熊猫林林惠感感# has been a trending on the platform where users have expressed their condolences and demanded thorough investigation behind the cause of the death of China's national animal. Lin Hui was a female Panda who was born on September 28, 2001 at China Conservation and Research Center for Panda in Wolong, Sichuan province. She died at Ching Mai Zoo, Bangkok. Lin Hui was sent to Thailand under a loan program as a goodwill ambassador and was due to be returned to China this year.

INDIA WATCH

- In China, farmers receive government support through a variety of programs and policies aimed at promoting agricultural development and rural livelihoods, as seen in the recent farmland management techniques in North China. The Chinese government provides subsidies to farmers that include direct payments, as well as support for inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and machinery. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has launched a big data platform for agriculture, which provides information on factors such as weather, soil, and pests to help farmers make informed decisions. The Chinese government has also encouraged the use of agricultural drones to increase efficiency and reduce labor costs in farming. On the other hand, Indian government has also adopted similar policies to improve use of technology in agriculture. Recently, the Union Agriculture Minister of India released a Standard Operating Procedure

- for the use of drone technology in farming by formation of Farmer Producer Union and the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund. The drones were used for the first time during a locust attack in 2021. Keeping that experience in precedence, such activity can be adopted for everyday farming. The government can also leverage the existing farmer producer unions that can access modern equipment such as drones, harvesting machines, soil testing kits, irrigation systems, and make it available for the local use for the farmers at a nominal price. All other equipment can also be provided to such unions at the Panchayat level and made accessible to the farming communities. These unions can also leverage digital platforms and e-commerce to connect with buyers and sellers directly, bypassing intermediaries. The government has already invested heavily in rural electrification, rural infrastructure and increasing the irrigation network. Support in farming technology can go a long way to increase the quality of farming produces and raise standards for the agriculture sector.

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