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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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NEWS IN CHINA

- Xie Feng, [China's new ambassador](#) to the United States addressed the media when he arrived at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. He was quoted as saying, "I have come here to safeguard China's interest. This is my sacred responsibility." Feng, 59, has rich experience in diplomacy as he takes up office as Ambassador. Feng was previously the vice foreign minister charged with supervising foreign policy towards the US. Feng has garnered a reputation for his sharp retorts against US action. He is also a fluent English speaker and has previously denounced Washington on its claims that it shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon in February. Matthew Miller, US State Department spokesperson said that the United States welcomes Xie's arrival. He was quoted as saying, "We remain committed, as we said on a number of occasions, to maintain channels of communication with the PRC."
- In China, maternity insurance coverage has expanded to include long-term health insurance benefits. This move came as part of the National Healthcare Insurance Administration's efforts to combat a rapidly [aging society](#). Ever since China revamped its policy that now allows couples to have up to three children in 2021, efforts have been made to mitigate its falling maternity rate. Li Tao, Deputy Director of the Administration stated that, since last year 240 million people have since enrolled in the insurance programme that funds maternity-related expenses worth 89.1 billion yuan. Hu Jinglin, Director of the Administration said that as part of the insurance scheme pilot programmes were commissioned in 49 cities across the country. The pilot programmes have been effective in relieving financial burdens related to childcare significantly. Moreover, the programme has also helped in reducing disabilities-related costs as well, which is a subsidiary of the maternity insurance coverage. It has also helped in job creation for primary healthcare providers, the

number of caregivers in pilot regions has risen to 330,000.

- The Jinfeng Wujiang River Bridge underwent static load testing in the southwestern province of Guizhou. The bridge is estimated to be 1473.5 metres in length and is part of the main project on the Guiyang-Jinsha-Gulin Expressway. Static load testing comprises of symmetrical and asymmetrical rounds of testing that tests the endurance of the bridge. Moreover, the trucks were loaded with heavy-weight materials such as sand and gravel to test the strength and coordination of the bridge. The trucks moved in an orderly manner to ensure safety measures were in place. Aerial photos indicated that the river spans all the way across the river and has been specifically designed to reduce the travel time between the cities.
- Taiwan's bid for membership in the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer country has been rejected. Taiwan had observer status till 2016 for seven years. Since 2016, China has consistently revoked its attempts at sending in a proposal. The proposal was rejected at the General Committee and Plenary Session of the 76th WHA meeting. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian stated that certain countries have attempted to encourage the move behind the scenes. Moreover, the spokesperson also commented on the blatant violation of international rules and norms by sending a proposal in the first place. He was quoted as saying, "By the time the assembly commenced, nearly a 100 countries had sent letters to the WHO or issued

statements to express their commitment to the one-China policy and opposition to Taiwan's participation in the WHA." This was coupled with statements related to China's commitments to health measures, specifically against COVID-19.

- The Forum on Development of Tibet opened, marking another iteration of the developmental forum. President Xi Jinping extended congratulatory remarks on the commencement of the forum's proceedings. The so-called "2023 Forum on Development of Tibet" is another step in the direction of integrating the Autonomous Region within the folds of the Chinese state. This year's theme revolves around "New Era, New Tibet, New Journey: New Chapter in Tibet's High-Quality Development and Human Rights Protection". It is being hosted by the State Council Information Office and the government of Tibet Autonomous Region.
 - Hainan took centre stage at the third Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Media and Think Tank Forum. The theme for the third meeting this year was "Jointly Build the World's Largest Free Trade Area." The meeting was jointly organised by the Publicity Department of the CPC, along with China Daily and the China institute for Reform and Development. The significance of Hainan must be highlighted as the province is poised to become an important centre for strategic cooperation. Given its geographical proximity to ASEAN countries, Hainan is an essential window of communication for China with the rest of the region. Moreover, the Hainan Free Trade Port also stands to reap the benefits
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of RCEP cooperation in terms of bolstering competition and economic growth. Wang Bin, member of the Standing Committee of the CPC of the Hainan Provincial Committee has stated that, "Hainan will make ASEAN a high priority in its cooperation agenda to promote bilateral trade and upgrade the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area."

SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Debate on 'what is the appropriate age for marriage?' trends online:** Chinese netizens debated marriage ages as Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) streamlined marriage process for its students. The University unveiled this initiative for young student couples to get married while still in college. This has sparked debate among debate among users on Weibo with some criticising the initiative and others saying it is a personal decision. The related hashtag #520 – sounds phonetically similar to that of the phrase "I love you" in Mandarin. The number remains a popular marriage registration number among youngsters. The hashtag has been viewed 150 million times. Moreover, with declining birth rates, several universities and public service forums have launched programmes that encourage marriages, which have also noted a sharp decline in recent years.

INDIA WATCH

- With US-China relations hitting a record low since diplomatic relations were normalised in 1979, it remains to be seen how India and other countries might react to the appointment of the new Chinese ambassador, Xie Feng, to the United States

(US). Historically, the American and Chinese ambassadors and diplomatic envoys have had a tumultuous relationship with their respective counterparts, with both sides usually locked in a battle of claim-making, assertion, and denial. With the appointment of new ambassador there is a possibility that diplomatic relations will begin to thaw soon as the US and China look to engage further in dialogue. Moreover, the new ambassador's appointment also comes amid the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan. Quad members have constantly been making thinly veiled threats against China as the summit has progressed, specifically calling for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and the Indian Ocean maritime spheres, the latter of which has remained a contested area for both India and China. Juxtaposing the ambassador's appointment with the Quad's statements showcases a sense of groupism that India and the US have mostly favoured. However, if history is any indicator, this delicate support may very well deteriorate as India attempts to carve its own niche in the international sphere.

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