

24-25 DECEMBER 2022

DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Man makes sexist post about girlfriend's "stupidity":** The Hong Kong Discuss Forum drew criticism from a sexist post that became popular around Christmas time. The post was made by a man about his girlfriend, who he said could not distinguish between different types of electrical batteries. Since she could not buy the right kind of batteries for their Christmas tree, he made a post mocking her for her stupidity. Many others joined in the comments, one saying, "girls are only liked if they are stupid."
- **Weibo hosts a survey about the COVID-19 pandemic:** The Peking Union Medical College said that they were analysing results from a survey conducted on Weibo about COVID-19 infections in China. A second round of the survey began on Weibo on Sunday evening. Around 47,000 people participated in the first survey, which will be used to estimate the epidemic situation in the country and design management measures.

NEWS IN CHINA

- On Sunday, the Chinese National Health Commission stopped publishing data on daily new infections of COVID-19, assigning the job to its subsidiary Chinese Center for Disease Control. As infection toll continued to mount across China, the Commission said that it was no longer relevant to publish daily case count as mandatory testing was no longer required. Meanwhile, the city administrations of Qingdao and Dongguan released official estimates of the surge in new

infections, expecting transmission to rise rapidly over the weekend and the following weeks in anticipation of the Chinese Lunar New Year. Public health facilities continued to experience strain due to increase in cases, making it difficult for patients to secure hospital beds. Chinese government agencies and pharmaceutical companies initiated efforts to ramp up domestic supply of anti-gen test kits and fever drugs, which are in short supply amidst the epidemic.

- The Chinese national postgraduate entrance examination was conducted over the weekend. As many as 4.7 million graduate students had enrolled for the exam, which is a requirement to enter postgraduate studies in China. The test centres contained separate halls for students with positive nucleic acid test results for COVID-19. Students who stayed in provinces different from their test centres likely found it difficult to travel to the centres and were allowed to apply for nearby centres.
- Train bookings for travel during the Chinese Spring Festival opened on Saturday. Internet searches for the bookings jumped on Saturday morning and trains from Beijing to some nearby city centres were sold out for the 7th of January. The festival lasts from 7th January to 15th February 2023, with the Lunar New Year falling on 22nd January. Travel is expected to peak around mid-January, as migrant workers return to their hometowns from large cities for the festivities. Some local governments have advised manufacturing companies to offer incentives to encourage workers to stay

back and ensure steady supply to cater to increasing demand as the economy opens up.

- A special task force of the Hong Kong government met on Sunday to discuss reopening of its borders with mainland China. The task force, containing ministers from all 15 bureaus of the government, is reportedly considering the reopening of borders by mid-January. Allowing travel to the mainland will further open the Hong Kong economy after the loosening of COVID-19-related restrictions. On Friday, Chinese President Xi Jinping had met the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, John Lee, and expressed his admiration of the government's work. Xi had also met Ho Iat Seng, Chief Executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region. On the same day, Macao had eased nucleic acid testing requirements for travellers from the mainland and Hong Kong.
 - The construction of a central park began in Beijing's international airport area. The park will be planted with environment-friendly and water-saving plants. Elsewhere, the construction of the final section of the Chengdu-Kunming railway line was completed and tickets opened for the same on Saturday. The final section runs from Emei to Mianning and is 240 kilometres in length. The line will begin full operations on Monday. Earlier, the line was in partial operations as it was opened in phases to cope with difficult geological conditions in the area.
 - A gold mine in Xinjiang collapsed late Saturday night, trapping 40 workers
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underneath. On Sunday, 22 of the workers were rescued while another 18 remained trapped. The provincial government set up a rescue headquarters in response to the incident. The trapped workers were located and made safe while rescue efforts were being made using drilling and communication channels.

- Chinese technology firm Huawei announced the renewal of its patent agreement with Finnish firm Nokia. In light of backlash from the US government over data security concerns, Huawei has been seeking partnerships with major firms to secure its presence in the industry. The company has secured patent agreements with Samsung and Oppo, the latter of which was announced earlier this month. This year, the company has signed or renewed more than 20 such deals in various technology-related domains.
- The 4th Hainan Island International Film Festival (HIIFF) concluded at Hainan bay in the city of Sanya in South China on Sunday. The 2022 HIIFF Golden Coconut Awards were announced during the closing ceremony of the Festival. The title of Best Film went to the Argentine film 'Trenque Lauquen', while the award for the Best Artistic Contribution went to the Chinese film 'The Cord for Life'. This year, the HIIFF showcased more than 3,700 films from 116 countries.
- The People's Liberation Army of China conducted a military exercise in the sea and airspace near Taiwan on Sunday. The Army's Eastern Theater Command conducted the exercise, saying in its statement that it will take "necessary

measures to [...] safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity." On Saturday, US President Joe Biden signed the National Defence Authorisation Act for the financial year 2023-24, which provided a grant of \$10 billion to Taiwan for procuring defence equipment. Experts opine that the military exercises were in response to the US authorisation, as the Chinese foreign ministry said that it has registered objections over the Act with the US government.

INDIA WATCH

- The Taiwan Strait, long a strategic battleground between the US and China, has in recent years become the centerstage for larger strategic issues in the Indo-Pacific. With the more aggressive tactics of the Chinese government, turbulent geopolitics in the region and the China-US trade escalations, the Republic of China (Taiwan) was forced to redefine its political strategy. Taiwan's New Southbound Policy recognised these realities, creating a larger window of cooperation with other regional players including India. Although India has not given formal political recognition to Taiwan, it has recently initiated deeper engagement through economic and cultural exchange. In particular, Taiwan's prowess in technology and manufacturing is complemented by India's advantage in human resources in the tech industry. Such a partnership opens up avenues for sharing of research and development, among other areas. India's growing affinity towards the US is also favourable for cooperation with Taiwan. However, India must tread the path carefully in light of China's
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apprehension for Taiwan-India relations and recent escalations in India-China territorial issues. Alienating China is not in India's strategic or economic interest, while supporting Taiwan is likely a deterrent to Chinese military aggression. A synergistic strategy in tune with that of other partners in the region, along with deepening diplomatic and cultural ties with China itself, can provide a balanced way forward for India.