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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Anger over Urumqi fire incident escalates, sparks nationwide protests:** Over the weekend, Chinese social media was flooded with sadness and anger as people around the country spoke up against the stringent 'Zero Covid' policy. Videos of protestors in the streets surfaced as multiple locations witnessed gatherings in part to mourn the victims of a recent fire accident in Urumqi, and in part as dissent against the draconian anti-Covid restrictions. It was claimed that the videos were filmed in [Urumqi](#), [Nanjing](#), [Guangzhou](#) and at least five other cities. Urumqi local authorities [announced](#) on Saturday that they had achieved 'Community-level Zero Covid' and would thus be permitting a phased opening up from the lockdown. People reacted strongly to this: "They say it's cleared, so it's cleared. The Party secretary's word will do!" wrote a blogger.
- **Anti-government protests intensify on university campuses and the streets:** Videos of university students protesting on campus also circulated rapidly on social media. On Saturday night, videos from Xi'an Jiaotong University (Institute of Communication Studies) and Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts [showed](#) students holding out smartphones with their flashlights on. On Sunday, videos of more student protests surfaced, including those at the prestigious [Tsinghua University](#) in Beijing. Many protestors talked about establishing democracy, questioning: "Are the people still in power?" Student protestors were hailed as "warriors" in the comments. In many places including [Shanghai](#) and Beijing, people gathered to mourn the deaths in a fire in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi. The gatherings soon turned into protests as

citizens clashed with the police or shouted slogans including “We want democracy!” and “Xi Jinping, step down!”. Dissent continued throughout the day as people marched with blank sheets of paper, which was nicknamed the “A4 revolution” by netizens. The outrage was sparked by a series of events beginning with an anonymous article viral on social media. The article had created a stir by asking questions about the National Health Commission’s response to Covid-19. Later, on Thursday, fire had broken out in an apartment building in Urumqi, Xinjiang, killing at least 10 people. It is alleged that the victims could not escape due to a strict lockdown policy which forced them to stay inside their houses, which caused unrest.

NEWS IN CHINA

- In Taiwan’s local elections held on Saturday, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party suffered a major defeat against the main opposition party of Kuomintang. As a result, Tsai Ing-wen resigned as Chairwoman of the ruling Party while continuing to be the Taiwanese President. Experts say that the ruling party’s defeat is attributed to citizens’ dissatisfaction over the government’s poor handling of Covid-19. Commenting on the election results, a Chinese mainland spokesperson said that the results reflected the Taiwanese people’s support for peace, stability and a good life. He also said that the mainland will continue to work towards cross-strait peace and security while firmly opposing “Taiwan independence”.
 - The Chinese government announced the extension of its comprehensive pilot zones for cross-border e-commerce in order to boost foreign trade. With 33 newly added cities and regions, the total tally of such zones in the country is now 165. The aim of the zones is to facilitate the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, contributing to China’s growing e-commerce trade.
 - China sent four coast guard ships to patrol the islands of Diaoyus (Senkakus) which are also claimed by Japan. The incident occurred days after the leaders of the two countries agreed to deepen their maritime dialogue and resolve territorial issues. One of the Chinese vessels was reportedly carrying the largest cannon ever spotted on such a ship. The ships left the area upon coming across Japanese coast guard vessels. Japan has lodged a complaint with China regarding the occurrence through diplomatic channels.
 - The Shenzhou-15 crewed space mission was declared ready for launch on Sunday morning as it completed a pre-launch rehearsal, according to the China Manned Space Agency. The procedure was coordinated by the Beijing Aerospace Control Center and involved the Xi’an Satellite Control Center, the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center and other facilities. The mission will take three taikonauts to space and bring back another three from the Shenzhou-14 mission who are currently in space. This mission will involve the operation of two Shenzhou spacecraft simultaneously for the first time, enhancing Chinese capabilities.
 - The 9th edition of the Wuzhen Theater Festival kicked off in the ‘water town’ of
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Wuzhen in Zhejiang on Sunday. Featuring 63 performances of 22 different plays, the festival will run for ten days. It showcases the theater culture in China through stage and street performances, a theater market, carnivals and other immersive experiences for visitors. The festival also holds a competition for emerging theater artists, offering them a platform for recognition. The theme for the 9th edition of the festival is abundance (丰), representing the creativity and warmth of people despite the current challenging circumstances.

INDIA WATCH

- Chinese people's dissent against the Zero-Covid policy has numerous advantages for India. This is because India stands to gain the most from the toll that the policy is taking on the Chinese economy. Data published by Chinese authorities on Sunday shows a 3% reduction in the profits of major Chinese business companies; growth forecasts of the Chinese economy are lingering around 4% while those of India are touching 6%. Although protests are gaining momentum around China, it is unlikely that the government will change its policy, which opens up economic as well as diplomatic opportunities for India. The incidents at the Foxconn factory are direct signals of the ongoing supply chain disruption. As a competing emerging manufacturing hub, India has been among the major investment destinations for foreign businesses relocating from China. The Indian government's efforts to create an investor-friendly regime ought to bear fruit in this climate. However, challenges remain: India lags behind in the availability of infrastructure, skilled workforce and pro-business domestic laws. In this context, the

Chinese disruption may initiate the improvement of India's weaknesses by forcing investors to come to India. Diplomatically, India can exploit the Chinese protests in the context of similar issues of contention between the two countries. Be it China's overt and covert protection to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism on India's northern borders, or accusations of human rights violation in both the countries, India can now assert its position better. The ongoing protests have exposed the rift between the Chinese public opinion and the government, possibly weakening the CCP's mandate as perceived by other nations. India has been trying to establish itself as a dominant player in the region, if not globally. China's moment of weakness can help India gain more ground on that front.
