

29.03.22

*DAILY*  
**CONVERSATIONS  
IN CHINESE  
MEDIA**



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**ORGANISATION FOR RESEARCH ON  
CHINA AND ASIA**

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## I. Social Media Chatter in China

- **A video of an alleged fire near Forbidden City goes viral on social media:**  
On Friday, 25th March, videos and photos of an alleged fire near the Forbidden City in Beijing did the rounds on social media platforms such as Weibo. However, a few hours later, no results could be found revolving this incident and Weibo and other similar platforms had also deleted photos, videos and articles on this.

## II. News in China

- China inaugurated a comprehensive smart platform which will deliver a wide array of education-based public services. The Ministry of Education announced that, the platform will fuse existing platforms for primary and middle school, higher and vocational education as well as the platform for employment services for university graduates. The Minister of Education, Huai Jipeng further emphasised that this would pave the way for creating an online classroom in the face of battling COVID-19.
- A report published by the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, a think tank based in Beijing, argues that US presence in the South China Sea has expanded in both width and depth over the years. The report also stated that it had documented operations being carried out for 419 sea days by the US maritime surveillance ships and survey vessels. The US has also urged its allies in the Pacific such as Australia and Japan to flex their own military capabilities in the region. Furthermore, according to the dean of the Institute of International and Public Affairs at Tongji University in Shanghai, Xia Liping, the US has not decreased its ventures in the South China Sea, despite the Ukraine crisis.
- Chinese tech giant, Huawei released its 2021 Annual Report on Monday, 28th March, reporting a decrease in revenue, but witnessed improved profits. This coincided with the return of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou last year to China, after being detained in Canada for almost three years. According to the report, Huawei recorded a net profit of 113.7 billion yuan in the year 2021, up nearly 76 percent, despite revenue recording a 29 percent decline to 634 billion yuan. Huawei is also still deliberating on its operations in Russia, given the Ukraine crisis and if it will impose any sanctions on Russia.
- The National Health Commission in its report on Tuesday, 29th March reported 1,228 new locally transmitted COVID-19 cases. Given the high transmissibility of the COVID-19 variant, numerous Chinese cities have attempted to push for more efficient and effective anti-epidemic approaches while simultaneously trying to juggle its dynamic zero-COVID strategy with minimal economic and social costs. Shanghai leads by example, with its novel approach of enforcing closed-off management in areas east of the Huangpu River from 28th March to 1st April and

from 1st April to 3rd April in the areas west of the river, to carry out nucleic acid testing. With this approach, modes of transport and communication will continue to work normally so that economic, trade and financial activities aren't hindered.

- In the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Regular Press Conference held on Monday, 28th March, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin stated that more than 4,600 Chinese citizens had been evacuated safely who had previously been relocated to the neighbouring countries of Ukraine. This marked the interim end of China's evacuation operation amidst the Ukraine crisis.
- Post his six-day tour of South Asia, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi gave an interview on Monday, 28th March. According to him, the visit was important as it was necessary to maintain peace and security in the region, speed up economic recovery and strengthen mutually beneficial ties of each country with China. He noted that the visits were highly successful and that mutual trust, understanding and consensus on development and cooperation were imperative for a fruitful friendship between China and the countries Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal and India to prosper.

### **III. India Watch**

- While Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's South Asian tour reaped satisfactory results, certain sensitive issues are still a concern for both parties involved. For instance, Nepal's ratification of the US-funded grant of \$500 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact Agreement is a cause of concern for China, which views this as increasing US presence near Chinese borders. While Wang Yi's presence at the 48th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Islamabad showcases China's all-weather friendship with Pakistan, it does little to assuage New Delhi, especially given that despite numerous meetings, little progress has been made over the Sino-Indian border dispute. Nevertheless, both China and India's positions on the Ukraine crisis does seem favourable for engaging in further dialogue. However, perhaps the need of the hour is for more informal talks between the two countries in the near future.
- The burgeoning US presence in the South China Sea can be perceived as part of its Indo-Pacific strategy and the US's desire to maintain its naval and maritime dominance in the region. US's allies Japan and Australia are also trying to expand their influence in the region, since the South China Sea is of immense geopolitical and geostrategic importance. This can be viewed by China as a threat to its national security and making China look like a threat in the Asia-Pacific region.