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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Montmorillonite powder topped Weibo's trending search list:** Montmorillonite, an antidiarrheal drug, sold out in China after it was widely circulated on social media platforms that the contagious Omicron subvariant XBB causes gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The mass buying came after a screenshot was spread on social media platforms, which said that "XBB1.5 strain has topped other variants in the US, and people should stock up on montmorillonite powder and norfloxacin".
- **In search of jobs, young Chinese are heading to Africa:** For young Chinese, moving to Africa is becoming a trendy choice. With China's youth unemployment hitting record highs, millions of graduates are struggling to find decent jobs at home and are increasingly looking overseas to find work. Many of them are trying their luck in Africa. Working for a Chinese company operating on the continent has disadvantages, chief among them are the security concerns; however, high salaries, generous vacations, and a less frenetic pace of work look enticing to a generation that has come of age amid China's pandemic-stricken economy. Some graduates also value the opportunity to see the world, develop their foreign language skills, and experience new cultures. It's unclear exactly how many Chinese graduates are moving to Africa, but there has been a noticeable uptick of interest in the topic on Chinese social media.

NEWS IN CHINA

- According to statistics released by the China Film

Administration (CFA), China's box office revenue exceeded 30 billion yuan (approx \$4.4 billion) in 2022, with 85 per cent coming from domestic films. Though much less than the previous year's 47 billion yuan, the amount still shows the advances made by domestic films in terms of improved quality and genre diversification. In 2022, despite the COVID-19 impact, said industry observers. 2022's top earner was the domestic patriotic hit "The Battle at Lake Changjin II" grossing 4.07 billion yuan. The sci-fi comedy "Moon Man" came in second, grossing about 3 billion yuan. Other hits include, "Nice View", "Lighting Up The Stars", the animated film "New Gods: Yang Jian" and the patriotic action film "Home Coming".

- According to China's Culture and Tourism Ministry, China has seen about 52.7 million domestic tourist visits during the three-day New Year holiday, up 0.44 per cent year on year. The tourism revenue generated over the holiday has reached over 26.5 billion yuan (about US\$ 3.8 billion), up 4 per cent from the same period last year. As per the ministry notification, China's cultural and tourism market has remained stable and orderly during the holiday, which ends on Monday. The ministry noted that short-distance tours are especially favored by travelers during the period, with sustained popularity for ice and snow activities, camping, and role-playing games among young people. The data also shows a steady recovery in the country's medium- and long-distance travel, the ministry said, adding that some online travel agencies reported a marked increase in ticket bookings for cross-provincial and cross-border tourism during the holiday.

The 18th China International Cultural Industries Fair (ICIF) in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong Province came to an end on Monday. The fair attracted huge participation from various provinces and regions to display traditional Chinese handicrafts, culture and creative products, as well as to promote ecological tourism products and routes, along with key cultural and tourism projects. The ICIF also set up an international pavilion to display domestic and foreign cultural products online, showcasing the achievements of Chinese and foreign cultural integration and innovative development. Every year, the fair showcases more than 100,000 cultural and creative exhibits from China and abroad, with some 4,000 cultural investments and financing projects displayed.

- The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security released minimum pay standards for 31 provinces, cities and autonomous regions. According to the chart, the minimum wage for full time employees in Shanghai is 2,590 yuan (\$375) per month, the highest among all provinces. However, Beijing tops China for minimum pay for part-time jobs with 25.3 yuan per hour, followed by 23 yuan per hour in Shanghai and 22.6 yuan per hour in Tianjin. The minimum wage for full-time employees in Tianjin is 2,280 yuan per month. Unlike Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin have citywide unified minimum pay standards. The minimum pay standards vary regionally, according to the different economic situations.
 - The Chinese Billiards Association (CBA) announced that it would suspend all
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domestic billiards tournaments qualification for Zhao Xintong and Zhang Jiankang. The 2021 UK Championship winner Zhao Xintong and Zhang Jiankang are the latest Chinese players to be suspended from the World Snooker Tour. The World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA) have sanctioned the players as part of a match-fixing investigation. A total of 10 players from China have now been suspended. A [statement](#) from the WPBSA said the suspensions are “part of an ongoing investigation into allegations of manipulating the outcome of matches.” It added that it believes the investigation will be finished soon and potential charges could be made.”

INDIA WATCH

- Chinese movies such as “The Battle at Lake Changjin II” and “Home Coming”, released in 2022, were widely discussed on social media, both within China and outside. These movies had patriotic undertones which paid tribute to the nation’s military force. According to [Box Office Mojo](#), out of the top ten highest grossing films in the world, two were from China. It is clear that China has captured the imaginations of audiences worldwide. Such movies are part of a national trend which aims at promoting patriotic films with the goal of strengthening China’s soft power, giving importance to domestic voices rather than international opinion. Although, India produces the largest number of movies in the world annually, it still fails to utilise its soft power through the means of entertainment. Another Asian country, South Korea, has been successful in harvesting this power. In comparison to

China, India’s cinematic influence is limited to Indians and the Indian diaspora outside India. For instance, the Chinese superhit film “The Battle at Lake Changjin II” [earned](#) six times the amount than India’s highest grosser “RRR” worldwide. This shows a clear deficit of interest amongst foreign audiences. India has not yet been successful in generating similar influence through art. While it has a natural soft power appeal manifested through its cultural assets like yoga, food and Bollywood. India lacks a structured approach to translate these resources into effective outcomes. India needs to rethink its soft power and public diplomacy strategy to build on the untapped potential that its diverse culture offers. The state needs to be in sync with various cultural stakeholders such as the Indian film industry, the music industry, literary figures, and so on to exert its influence globally and influence opinions abroad.