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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

Prepared By: Ishina Das | Research Intern



writetous.orca@gmail.com

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **‘Digital Minimalism’: How China’s tech minority is shaping a new lifestyle:** According to a recent [study](#), China has the highest rate of smartphone usage among 24 countries. As China ascends the pillar of technology advancement amidst the dynamic digital revolution, some people are switching out of the smartphone-led ‘inconvenience way’ and to a digitally minimized lifestyle. A 29-year old from Wuhan, has [shifted](#) from all his modern tech gadgets to various minimalist options like the Light Phone 2 and the Punkt MP02 minimalist phone to carry out basic tasks of calling and sending messages. While it might seem like a hassle to most people, many Chinese have voiced their support for a digital cleanse on social media apps like WeChat and Douban. Several ‘digital minimalism’ platforms on Douban have become a space for many practitioners to share their experiences and anecdotes from a life without any smartphone-induced distractions. Despite the raging pandemic posing an urgent need for smart-technology to follow the strict digitized virus prevention track system to target contaminated zones and receive the auto-generated health codes needed to enter all public spaces, the movement has a popular following of more than tens of thousands.

NEWS IN CHINA

- On Wednesday, Vietnam's Communist Party Chief, Nguyen Phu Trong, culminated his three-day visit to China with the release of a joint declaration with Chinese President Xi Jinping, promising to elevate the bilateral friendship of

"comrades" to a new level. The two leaders have pledged to "properly manage" the South China Sea as well as collaborating in handling external challenges – including "color revolutions" and criticism of their human rights records. Although tensions over the sea have eased since 2019, it continues to be a challenging issue between Beijing and Hanoi, as both claim a large part of the waterway. Xi took the floor to exchange candid views on maritime issues with Trong and they both agreed upon the necessity to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea while refraining from taking any actions that aggravate differences. Talks ended with vows of cooperation between the two countries.

- On Wednesday, Chinese Media Group reported the loading of 46 Chinese-manufactured high speed railway coaches in North Tianjin port to be shipped to Pakistan on Thursday. This is the first time that Chinese technology for constructing coaches capable of speeds of 160 km/hr will be exported to the South Asian country. The export of manufactured goods and advanced technology is significant of the Belt and Road Initiative, aiming to further elevate technology and infrastructure development in Pakistan. The first batch of coaches was completed by the CRRC Tangshan Co. in August and incorporated an innovative design that is lightweight but has a large passenger support capacity, built to meet Pakistan's operational needs. Another set of 184 units is set to be shipped in the coming months.
- According to a Wednesday news report, last Sunday saw the Standing Committee

of the Chinese Communist Party pass the revision to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women at the 13th National People's Congress during its 37th session. The revisions are aimed to come into effect from January 1, 2023. The new revisions give more importance to women's characteristics, the protection of their special rights and interests and giving importance to their special needs. It provides special protection in medical care, health examinations, public facilities, and maternity services, prevention of sexual harassment and elimination of gender discrimination in employment. It lays down the termination of gender-based stigma during pregnancies such as sex selection and fetal sex identification while ensuring medical institutions provide women the agency to choose for themselves. The revision obliges government institutions to "report, rescue and rehabilitate" women who were victims of trafficking and kidnapping. Lastly, the new law provides improvisations on labor and social security rights for female workers, specifying that gender discrimination in employment should be eliminated. The revision comes as a respect for the protection of human rights and a strong support for the development of women in China.

- On Wednesday afternoon, Yi Gang, governor of the People's Bank of China announced that potential growth is expected to remain in a reasonable range. Despite ongoing challenges and low economic growth, the economy has managed to remain broadly on track, said Yi at the Global Financial Leader's Investment Summit held by the Hong
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Kong Monetary Authority. The bank has taken several initiatives including utilizing structural monetary policy tools, provision of financial support in key areas of production— agriculture, small enterprise and green development to help stabilize the economy. According to Yi, current trends have helped the RMB exchange rate to be stable against many currencies, this is expected to continue till the next fiscal year. The housing sector, which had faced a huge slump during the pandemic, has seen Government support through cut mortgage rates, lowered down payments and the ongoing urbanization in China is expected to boost growth in the sector. Yi also mentioned stable growth in Hong Kong, and the island territory will continue to be an integral part of connectivity for the mainland and will remain a recipient of financial help as and when required.

- The ongoing pandemic situation in mainland China continues to worsen despite strict protocols. On Wednesday, Beijing reported new cases at the community level, speculating the existence of hidden transmission risks. An addition of 17 new locally transmitted cases were reported as of 3 pm on the day, five of which were detected at the community level. The authority reports highlight the strengthening of control and management of people and places with high infection risks, as well as the provision of supplies and services for citizens stuck in mandatory quarantines.

INDIA WATCH

- China's eponymous Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been a target of major critics since its inception in 2013. Often a

a target of hinging neocolonialism on third-world and developing countries, Western media have often flouted China's claims of prosperity and development under the project. India, a long critic of the initiative upon its neighbors, has recently come in the news for openly discouraging China's efforts to trap countries in debt and infringe upon their sovereignty and integrity in the name of development. Recently, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have come under much attention for being victims of China's debt-trap diplomacy game under the BRI. On Tuesday, External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar in a virtual meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation expressed his concerns for the multinational project and refused to join the project. India continues to voice its concern for the development in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that traverses occupied Indian territory of Kashmir at Gilgit Pakistan as a threat to national sovereignty. Recent developments in Pakistan and growing bilateral ties between Islamabad and Beijing might pose a lingering threat to India's neighborhood diplomacy and its borders and only diplomacy can help mediate current border tensions with the two countries.