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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Chinese citizens react to major policy changes related to COVID-19 on social media:** Chinese social media has witnessed discussions related to China's major policy change regarding COVID-19. Chinese authorities initially announced ten new rules which eased the stringent Zero-COVID-19 measures but later these rules were abolished too. People now need not go through lockdowns, mass testing, quarantines and so on. For some this change came all of a sudden, who took to Chinese social media platforms to express their shock. People were not ready to adjust to the new changes. This sudden change has been attributed by few to the current outbreak of COVID-19 cases. It was also seen that there was no national level module for people to follow about the dos and don'ts with respect to the recent upliftment of all restrictions. Rather than feeling relief, people are yet to come to terms with the new changes and it is difficult for them to adjust to it.

NEWS IN CHINA

- The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) issued "Opinions on Strengthening Water and Soil Conservation in the New Era". Within it, the emphasis is put on soil and water conservation as it is fundamental for river protection. Furthermore, focus has been put on ecological priority and protection as well. Major goals related to water erosion, soil erosion and man-made soil erosion are supposed to be achieved by 2025. The target for soil and water conservation is set at 73%. The Chinese government's target is to fully form coordinated and efficient soil and water

conservation systems and mechanisms by 2035.

- The Chinese State Food and Drug Administration approved 13 new coronavirus infection symptomatic drugs. Among the added thirteen drugs are Acetaminophen and Vitamin C effervescent tablets. This approval process has been fast tracked due to the current outbreak of COVID-19 cases in China. The National Medical Commission said that four of the drugs are varieties of medical oxygen and nine of them are in common usage as symptomatic drugs which have been recommended to be used at home to deal with the new coronavirus.
- Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang expressed an optimistic view about U.S. and China relations. Gang has served as Chinese Ambassador to the United States (US) for seventeen months. In his capacity as an Ambassador he has engaged with the US at multiple levels such as government agencies, Congress, think tanks, enterprises and schools to quote a few. This is being considered as a thaw in strained US-China relations. In 2022, President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping met at the G20 forum, wherein they both had a warm meeting. Qin said in his tweet that he will continue to care about and support the growth of China-US relations, encouraging dialogue, mutual understanding between both nations. Qin also spoke to his US counterpart over a phone call that he would work closely on taking the US-China relations forward.
- The Chinese Armed Forces were busy training at the beginning of the New Year.

Especially to India's interest, some of the training drills were held on 3rd January, this year. Drills were conducted in the Tibet Military Region. Various types of attack and transport military helicopters from a brigade of the Tibet Military Region started their drills at Lhasa at an altitude of 3,700 metres and manoeuvred towards a certain combat area, which was not mentioned in Chinese news. In addition to this, a tank unit of a brigade of the Tibet Military Region conducted a driving manoeuvres assessment on a complex mountainous road at the field training ground which is situated at an altitude of 4,000 metres. Moreover a tactical drill was conducted in an unknown area of the Ngari Plateau in Tibet. This particular drill was carried out by a frontier regiment of the Ngari Military Sub-division, this military Sub-division is situated on the same plateau where the drill was conducted.

- The Chinese Scientist Wu Weiren, chief designer of China's Lunar Exploration, said on 3rd of January that it is possible to build a basic Lunar Research Station on the moon's surface by 2028. In a joint research article by Guo Linli et al. published in the journal "Space Science and Technology", it was suggested that lunar lava tubes might be feasible for human habitation. Guo also proposes to use earth caves to simulate extraterrestrial lava tubes. The karst caves from Chongqing region will be used as a simulation site to carry out relevant research. Lunar lava tubes were discovered in recent years, these tubes are hollow tubular caves formed by volcanic activity on the moon. These tubes have a hard basalt top, its internal environmental factors such as temperature, radiation
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dose, meteorite impact probability are relatively stable. Therefore they can provide habitat to humans for long term stay. The research team plans to use Chongqing's karst landforms to find suitable caves. These caves will host a number of experiments such as creating the internal environment of extraterrestrial lava tubes, automatic construction technology, in-situ utilisation technology and artificial ecosystem. In addition to these experiments some trials related to automatic energy control systems and light pipes which will be used to bring sunlight to ecological laboratories will be conducted.

- China's consumer market is continuing to recover and consumption rates have been witnessing growth as people came out for shopping on new year's eve. Supermarkets, Departmental stores, E-commerce companies and other economic activities saw increased footfall during the new year's holidays. The reported increase in economic activity saw an expenditure of 3.53 billion yuan. People travelled to various tourist places to celebrate the new year which resulted in increased passenger traffic at airports and railway stations. The reported growth in the passenger traffic stood at 82% in this month. In the two day holiday, offline and online markets did business of around 10-12 billion yuan each day.

INDIA WATCH

- China has recently appointed Qin Gang as her Foreign Affairs Minister who has previously served as Ambassador to the US. Given the strained phase of the US and China relations going through, it seems

that President Jinping has brought an experienced hand in the picture. The Presidents of both the concerned countries met recently at the G20 summit and seemed to be on good terms with each other. An important development is that the US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken will be visiting China in early 2023. This development comes at a time when India and the US are getting close along with countries like Japan and Australia to counter China through groupings like the QUAD. The upliftment of India-US relations to a strategic level has caught China's attention as India is seen as the only potent force in the region to stand against China. It is important for New Delhi to watch where US and China relations will head in 2023. China has taken centre stage in the US national security picture; strained relations of the US and China is one of the major reasons why the US-India bonhomie is growing. China is a long term threat to both the US and India which makes them come together but if the outstanding issues between the US and China get resolved and there are less issues left for the contention between these two concerned countries then perhaps the US may not accord much importance to issues concerning India. Thereby it can affect India's bargaining power with respect to China. This will not only impact India-US relations but also South Asian geopolitics. Such a development may not take place in the near future but its possibility cannot be ruled out considering major global powers are guided by the tenets of realism.
