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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Discussion sprouted on Chinese social media regarding blockbuster movie *Wandering Earth II: Prequel*** to *Wandering Earth* (2019), which was the highest-grossing Chinese movie this year, and fifth in non-English movies globally. During the spring festival, production of this movie also became a topic of discussion on social media due to its relatively low cost of production compared to other science fiction movies. *Wandering Earth II* was made in around 600 million yuan (88.5 million dollars), which is half the size of *Interstellar* (\$165 million) and *Inception* (\$160 million). The Master in Begging for Alms (#郭帆 化缘大师), as nickname awarded to Director Guo Fan on social media, had made social media buzz in 2019 too for another low-cost production of a movie. Prominent actors in the movie, including Wu Jing (吴京), alleged low payment for their work in the movie, which made Chinese netizens to nickname *Wandering Earth* (流浪地球) “Little Broken Ball” (小破球) back in 2019. However, Guo has gained appreciation on Social media for producing low-budget movies with high-end quality.

NEWS IN CHINA

- The [data](#) released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology reported a decline in the total revenue of Chinese Internet firms for the first time since 2017. The total revenue declined by 1.1 percent to 1.46 trillion Yuan (\$ 217 billion). Tencent recorded a two percent decline whereas Alibaba reported three percent growth in the third quarter. Two main reasons for this decline are economic slowdown due to

COVID-19 and also government crackdown on internet firms. The traveling, financial, and flat rental services took the major blow in the down spiral trend of the internet economy with a 17.5 percent year-to-year decline compared to their last year revenue. E-commerce, medical supplies, and delivery services recorded a 12.6 percent surge. News media and social industry, including gaming, music, and video, observed a 4.9% year-on-year increase. This data is crucial as the ministry has stopped publication of other key data like number of apps, which can measure the success of internet firms in China

- Chinese analysts interpreted the recent spy balloon conspiracy allegations made by the United States as a new diplomatic low between Beijing and Washington. A hovering white balloon over Montana was alleged by the US as being a Chinese spy tool as it intruded sensitive locations in the United States. While denying these allegations, Chinese foreign ministry clarified that the civilian airships accommodated the balloon for meteorological research purposes and that balloon went astray from the path and reached Montana as its self-steering capabilities are limited. Chinese issued further communication with the United States on this matter. This new controversy erupted prior to the United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to China on February 5 and 6.
- Tunisian President Kais Saied expressed the willingness of Tunisia to bolster the relationship with China in various domains to attain shared prosperity while treating each other as equals that has been the

cornerstone of China-Tunisia Partnership. He expressed his opinions during the meeting with the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Tunisia Wan Li. Tunisian President Kais Saied unequivocally stated the wish to develop strong, stable, and long-term relations with China in the foreseeable future. He also said that new avenues of cooperation were created during the first China-Arab states summit that aimed at developing China-Arab and China-Tunisia diplomatic relations through consensus building.

- The eighth Plenary meeting of the State Council was held in Beijing on Feb 3 under the leadership of Premier Li Keqiang and vice premier Han Zheng. The attendees discussed the "Government Work Report" that is to be submitted to the first meeting of the 14th National People's Congress as a deliberation draft and other concerning government agencies and departments for comments. As pointed out by Li, the timely unexpected events that emerged out of nowhere has hindered the development and became extremely difficult to attain them. Nevertheless, the proactive role provided a panacea that conjured the efforts the overcoming such unexpected obstacles. At this moment, the Chinese economy is standing at 5.2 percent, with the average urban employment crossing 12.7 million in the new industrial boom; the implementation of new models that are part of "Six stability" and six guarantees" configured itself as a new development concept. This drastically controlled unemployment, that is around 5.5 percent by the year's end. In his address, Li stated the policy packages that brought stability in continuity and optimization, and the
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departments will fulfill their duties and continue to do so.

- China is set to release the official movie on the Beijing Winter Olympics 2022 directed by Lu Chuan and Director Zhang Yimou as executive producer according to the announcement made by Beijing Organizing Committee on Saturday. The movie production begun in 2020 accommodating the hardship caused by the COVID-19 restrictions and how it overcame these challenges. The movie makers took 700 hours of footage to develop this movie. Lu hoped that audience will be impressed about China's excellent management of a global event during a global crisis after watching this film.

INDIA WATCH

- China and India both have been extensively focusing to further their engagements in the North African region, primarily also due to its vital geographical location which places it in the crossroads of three important regions- Africa, Mediterranean and West Asia. As the Tunisian president calls for strengthening its bilateral relations with China, India too has been placing its bets to invest both economically as well as politically in order to limit Chinese influence not only in North Africa but also across the whole continent. Some of these commitments have also begun taking shape recently with New Delhi enhancing its relationship with some of its key strategic partners in North Africa. The Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's visit to India as a guest of honour during Republic Day celebrations was a

case in point and reiterated India's willingness to engage with crucial partners in the region. The importance of enhancing relations with the region is also signified in the fact that three of the North African countries including Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco account for almost half of New Delhi's imports of phosphates. India has also focused on forging greater defence partnership in the region including with Egypt with whom it shares a long history of defence cooperation. Domains such as energy supplies, defence cooperations, pharmaceutical and trade investments are amongst some sectors that can mutually benefit India and the North African countries given its existence in their bilateral relations. Thus, India's focus apart from its own neighborhood, should also focus on its key partner in North Africa with who it shares decades long partnerships, some of which date back to the inception of the non-Alignment movement as well.