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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Video of girl bullying homeless man shocks netizens:** On Saturday night, a [video](#) showing a young girl bullying an elderly homeless man, snatching his money and tearing it to shreds went viral on Weibo. By Sunday night, it had attracted more than 9.5 million views. People expressed shock at the girl's behaviour, condemning her actions and demanding a police investigation of the matter. "How can there be such an inhuman person?" wrote a user, while others pointed out that tearing paper currency into pieces was an illegal act. The video showed the girl running away after teasing the man to come and get his money.
- **Discussion over Paxvloid and insurance raises questions:** Over the weekend, Chinese authorities announced medical insurance for the treatment of COVID-19. However, American drug Paxvloid has been exempted from insurance due to its high price. As major media outlets [posted](#) this news on Weibo, people debated this topic in detail. Many felt that authorities should prioritise access to vaccination over pricing, while others pointed out that Paxvloid was even costlier in Western countries. One user raised several [questions](#) about the government's inconsistent stance on vaccination, saying that people's money should not be wasted on a drug that does not sell well even in the USA.

NEWS IN CHINA

- The Chinese Spring Festival travel season took off on Saturday. On the first day, 34.7 million people [travelled](#) to different parts of the country, of which around 6.2 million people travelled by

train. Authorities expect a little over 2 billion trips to occur throughout the period of the festivities, which is around 80% of 2019 levels. Lunar New Year (22nd January 2023) is the most important festival in Chinese culture, an occasion for family reunions and celebration. Hence, the official 2023 mascot for the festival was revealed on Saturday, symbolising the year of the rabbit as per tradition. However, some places including Beijing continued a ban on firecrackers during the festival, a policy which has aroused some discontent among people. In order to facilitate the new year celebrations, the Chinese government aligned the lifting of COVID-19-related restrictions with the Spring Festival travel surge. As a result, unrestricted travel from Hong Kong and Macao Special Autonomous Regions to the Chinese mainland began on Sunday. Travel routes through land, air and sea were reopened after three long years. Macau authorities announced an updated set of regulations to contain the COVID-19 virus, stating that it will no longer require the monitoring of people's health codes or self-declarations on personal health status. Travel and trade from abroad without quarantine restrictions also began at ports and airports.

- The Chinese National Healthcare Security Administration approved medical insurance for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. The scheme allows patients registering before 1st April 2023 to get a reimbursement of at least 70% of expenses. The drugs Azivudine Tablets and Qingfei Paidu Granules were approved for insurance, while US-based company Pfizer's drug Paxvloid failed to make it to

the list due to "high quotations".

- Data released by the Chinese State Administration of Foreign Exchange on Saturday revealed that China's foreign exchange reserves had reached \$3,217.69 billion at the end of December 2022, registering a month-on-month growth of 0.33%. This registered the third consecutive month of growth in the country's forex reserves. The Chinese reserves stood at \$3.05 trillion at the end of October 2022, a growth of 0.77% from the previous month. They rose to \$3.12 trillion at the end of November (growth of 2.13% from October). The growth in December is being attributed to the fall in the US dollar due to global macroeconomic factors.
 - Chinese businessman Jack Ma diluted his stakes in the financial company Ant Group. On Saturday, the company announced that its shareholding as well as management structure and voting rights will be modified to improve corporate governance. Now, every major shareholder would be voting individually and Ma's stakes in the company would be decreased from 34% to 31.04%. With this development, Jack Ma has lost stakes in one and voting control of two investment firms he earlier controlled. These firms now have independent voting rights, effectively reducing Ma's voting power in Ant Group to 6.2 per cent.
 - The Standing Committee of the 15th Shanghai Municipal People's Congress appointed Fang Guo and Xiaohong Zhang as Deputy Mayors of Shanghai. Simultaneously, Wei Zhang was removed from his post of Deputy Mayor. The Committee also appointed Yu Jia as the
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acting President of the Shanghai Higher People's Court after Xiaoyun Jiu's resignation from the post.

- Researchers from the Institute of Plasma Studies at the Hefei Institute of Material Science successfully experimented with a new high-energy environment, making an advancement in nuclear fusion technology. The scientists published their findings on Saturday, showing a possible method to contain the plasma generated in nuclear reactions in a steady state. This development can be a major contribution towards the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, which is an international collaborative effort to develop clean energy using nuclear fusion reactors.
- Last week, China and Afghanistan signed a 25-year contract to allow China to carry out oil exploration in Northern Afghanistan. China's Xinjiang Zhongya Petroleum Company was beneficiary to the contract, gaining the rights to explore oil reserves in an area of 4,500 square kilometres in Afghanistan, making an investment of around \$150 million in the first three years. The revenue share of Afghan authorities in the operation will initially be 20% and later reach 75%.

INDIA WATCH

- Scientific research is among the few areas which offer clear opportunities for mutual cooperation between India and China. Contributions by both countries towards the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) can be leveraged to develop bilateral ties in the

science and technology sector. ITER is an ambitious project undertaken by nearly all nuclear powers for collective progress towards clean energy. China and India are separately developing various components of ITER: China is contributing towards the correction coil, magnet supports and the first wall among other parts, while India is responsible for the cryostat, in-vessel shielding, and cooling water systems. This provides an opportunity for India to address China's geopolitical challenges in a different way. By developing partnerships over emerging technologies such as ITER, India can reduce possible strategic conflicts in the future and also strengthen bilateral relations to reduce the current tensions. The absence of such a cooperation could be due to lack of political will, economic dependencies and mutual distrust. Territorial disputes among the two countries have been heightened due to border clashes in the recent past, which adds to the prevailing distrust due to concerns of cyber-espionage and IPR theft cases. In an increasingly protectionist global economy, India has adopted the policy of self-reliance, which promotes a policy of developing technology domestically. Further, the aggressive nationalism of the current Chinese dispensation could trigger a reciprocal response from the Indian side. Despite these factors, some steps can be taken to make cooperation feasible. enabling knowledge sharing among the research and educational institutions in India and China can be a vital step in this effort. Collaborative projects to develop frontier technologies can further integrate Chinese and Indian scientific research. Apart from nuclear physics, the prowess of the two

countries in disciplines such as space technology, computer science and telecommunications further opens up windows for collaboration. In the long run, a flourishing partnership in areas critical to the future of both countries might overrun strategic issues. As ITER suggests in its motto, collective effort for a safer future is the way forward for all.
