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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Chinese netizens grapple with the recent lack of COVID protocol; “We’re going from one extreme to the other extreme.”:** In a major policy shift, China eased rules on home quarantine, scrapped the need for frequent mass testing and revised guidelines for snap lockdowns after the restrictions sparked popular unrest and hammered the country’s economy. Even though most citizens cheered the policy changes, many expressed concerns and fears about the sudden shift. [China’s Health Code apps](#) and the green QR code have been a crucial part of China’s Covid strategy for nearly three years. This idea of the government protecting people for three years, and that it is now up to the Chinese people to protect themselves, is a recurring one that can be seen all over social media. Many people feel that zero-Covid measures such as mass testing, local lockdowns, centralised quarantines, Health Code systems, 48-hour negative nucleic acid tests requirements, etc. were all government measures that were protecting the people. Without this layer of protection, many say that individuals should now take responsibility for their own health. “What To Do If You Tested Positive [for Covid]?” (#如果阳了怎么办#) was a top trending topic on Weibo on Tuesday, December 6, when the site was still in grey mode over Jiang Zemin’s death. The topic, initiated by Chinese state media outlet China News Service (中国新闻网), received over 400 million clicks on Tuesday. #老人小孩孕产妇防疫手册# was also one of the top trending hashtags on Weibo, which entailed the Epidemic Prevention Handbook circulated by various news agencies, which some netizens claimed to provide support and guidelines in times of chaos.

When a video of a 68-year-old went viral when he was diagnosed with no symptoms and recovered without hospitalisation, a user commented, "I really don't know why people younger than him are panicking", intending to calm others. Beijing News Service (北京新闻广播) also wrote: "Tested positive? Don't panic. If you have no symptoms or light symptoms, just stay at home." However, Chinese citizens continue to express their nervousness, "Actually, it makes me anxious to open up everything so suddenly, why can't we do it step by step?" Another netizen wrote, "I'm not sure if I am happy or nervous. We're going from one extreme to the other extreme."

NEWS IN CHINA

- On Wednesday, China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC) announced that the Enping 15-1 platform, Asia's largest offshore oil production platform, was put into operation in the Pearl River Mouth Basin in south China's Guangdong Province. The platform, about 160 metres tall and weighing over 30,000 tonnes, is the largest offshore oil platform with the most equipment and the most complete functions in Asia, said its operator CNOOC. Deng Changhong, deputy general manager of CNOOC Shenzhen branch, said that workers could guarantee the smooth and safe operation of the oil field by remote control at the platform in the event of typhoon weather. The Enping 15-1 platform is part of the Enping 15-1 oil field group, which deployed the country's first offshore carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) project. CCUS is the process of capturing carbon dioxide from industrial waste gases or the atmosphere and storing them for future usage. Zhang Lin,

production manager of the CNOOC Enping Oil field, said that the facility would capture carbon dioxide produced from the oil field and then store it at the submarine formation. It would help achieve zero emission of carbon dioxide and fill the gap of offshore carbon dioxide storage technology in China, Zhang said. The project is estimated to be able to store 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, which is equivalent to planting nearly 14 million trees, or stopping the use of nearly one million cars, Zhang added.

- On Wednesday, Chinese President Xi Jinping was warmly greeted upon his arrival by Governor of Riyadh Province, Prince Faisal bin Bandar Al Saud; Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud; Minister Yasir Al-Rumayyan who works on China affairs and other key members of the royal family and senior officials of the government at the King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to attend the first China-Arab States Summit, the China-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit, and pay a state visit to Saudi Arabia at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. During his talks with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud at the royal palace on Thursday, Xi said as an important member of the Arab world and Islamic world, Saudi Arabia is also an important independent force in a multipolar world and China's important strategic partner in the Middle East. "China-Saudi Arabia strategic mutual trust has been strengthened, and the bilateral practical cooperation in various fields has yielded fruitful results since the establishment of diplomatic ties 32 years
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ago," President Xi said in a written statement. He added, China supports Saudi Arabia's major development initiatives, such as Vision 2030 and the Middle East Green Initiative as well as in fields such as e-commerce, digital economy, clean energy, high-tech and space research and development, and is willing to actively participate in Saudi's industrialization process, aimed at helping the diversification of Saudi Arabia's economic development.

- From January to November this year, northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region constructed a total of 6,442 kilometres of rural highway, with a total investment of 8.126 billion yuan (\$1.17 billion), according to the local transportation department. The highways were built to support various industries and local tourism, with priorities given to transportation infrastructure in farming and stockbreeding areas to boost rural revitalization, an official said. This year, Yili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture started construction of a number of rural highways. After completion, there will be a higher-level regional highway network to promote regional economic development and benefit more rural populations.
- On Thursday, Chinese economists said that reviving the COVID-19-battered economy will be a key policy priority for China next year as the top leadership has sent a strong signal to push overall improvement of economic activity and substantially expand domestic demand, economists. Top policymakers in Beijing have called for better coordination between pandemic containment and economic development

while emphasising the need to stabilise growth, employment and prices to boost the economy. They also pledged to comprehensively deepen reform and opening-up and to strongly spur market confidence. The key Party meeting mapped out the direction and major tasks for China's economic development next year and set the tone for the upcoming Central Economic Work Conference, which is scheduled to be held later this month. To achieve the goals, most economists expect that China may raise its fiscal budget deficit ratio to 3 percent or higher in 2023. Gu Xueming, president of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that given rising uncertainties in the global economic recovery, China's pledge to advance high-quality opening-up reflects its strategic determination, market potential and policy effectiveness, which play a significant role in boosting overall market confidence.

- On Thursday, China voiced firm objection to the United State's two new arms sales to the Taiwan region, urging Washington to stop military contacts with the island and not create tension across the Taiwan Straits. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning made the remarks after the U.S. State Department on Tuesday approved sales worth more than \$425 million of spare aircraft parts to support Taiwan's fleet of F-16 fighters, C-130 transport planes and other U.S.-supplied weapons systems. The package included \$330 million in standard replacement parts and \$98 million in non-standard equipment. "China is strongly dissatisfied with and firmly opposed to that," said Mao, vowing that the country would take forceful measures to resolutely
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safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such acts flagrantly violate the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiques, especially the August 17 Communique. The sales were announced just weeks after the leaders of China and the U.S. met for talks in Indonesia in which the U.S. President Joe Biden reiterated commitment to the one-China policy, saying the U.S. government does not seek to use the Taiwan question as a tool to contain China. "The U.S. should stop the arms sales to Taiwan region and refrain from exploiting Taiwan to contain China so as not to go further down a wrong and dangerous path," she added.

INDIA WATCH

- A recent landing exercise aired by state broadcaster CCTV indicated that the Chinese military is enhancing its amphibious combat skills and command efficiency. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Marine Corps exercise showcased the capabilities of a combined arms battalion, as troops tried out multiple types of weapons, equipment and combat models, according to the report on Thursday. PLA Navy Marine Corps are expected to be a key force if Beijing decides to seize self-governed Taiwan, which it sees as breakaway territory to be reunited by force if necessary. Tensions have been on the rise since US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taipei in August, defying Beijing's repeated warnings against such a trip. The land, sea and air drills by an unidentified brigade of the PLA Navy Marine Corps combined multiple tasks, including obstacle removal, reconnaissance and firing while functioning as a single

battalion, CCTV said. The PLAN is the second largest navy in the world in terms of tonnage which stands at 1,820,222 tonnes in 2019, only behind the United States Navy, and has the largest number of major surface combatants of any navy globally with an overall battle force of approximately 350 surface ships and submarines- in comparison, the US Navy's battle force is approximately 293 ships. The Indian Navy, on the other hand, ranks seventh in the world by tonnage, and is the most powerful navy in the Indian Ocean region. Thus, if China were to invade Taiwan, the Indian Navy would also be integral to the core alliance of the US, Australia and Japan to defend Taiwan. Additionally, the Indo-Pacific region is a geostrategic point of focus for both India and China, and while looking to counter growing Chinese influence, India must focus on her naval power. In addition to cooperation with democratic allies and neighbours in the region, India should increase investment in its navy. In particular, completing construction of new aircraft carriers and attack submarines, modernising naval assets, and improving its maritime domain awareness capabilities will ensure that India has a modern navy that can counter an aggressive China.
