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# DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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## SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Courage, Camaraderie, and Criticism: The 3 Cs that's taking Weibo by Storm:** The aftermath of the 6.8 magnitude Earthquake that hit Sichuan province last week has been brutal and devastating. With many lives lost and mass casualties incurred, a wide sea of despair and misery has covered the Chinese people. In such times, netizens have taken to social media to share pictures and stories of brave citizens and soldiers pushing all boundaries to save and help the disaster-struck citizens of Luding county. Statements of solidarity and shared stories of the kind gestures flooded Weibo, sympathizing with those dealing with grief and loss. However, another section of Weibo has seen criticism flooding towards delayed responses from authorities who are busy prioritizing COVID-19 more than the mortality rates at Luding. "What happened to 'putting people and life first?'" some wondered, mentioning the famous quote by Xi Jinping.

## NEWS IN CHINA

- Queen Elizabeth II's demise on Thursday shocked the entire world. Amidst an uncertain future and fragile state of affairs in the United Kingdom, the now 73 years old, King Charles III is declared the new ruling monarch of the Sovereignty. Chinese President, Xi Jinping has taken this situation to congratulate the new monarch on his enthronement. With the year marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries and wishes to see mutual cooperation and stronger diplomatic ties between the two countries. He also stated the CCP's willingness to work with the new King to enhance mutual friendship and strength communication on global issues and contribute toward world peace and development.

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- Discussions on building a rail line connecting Gyirong county in China's Tibet autonomous region and Kathmandu were started as early as 2016 under the mega Belt and Road Initiative. The project is envisioned by Xi Jinping to transform "from a landlocked country to a land-linked country". The Nepalese Government wanted to start working on the construction back in 2019, but due to Covid-led delays, the project faced tremendous delays. However, recent surveys by Chinese authorities have calculated construction troubles due to technical and economical issues, along with a more Indian-favoured political climate under the new Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. While the project was estimated for a staggering 5.5 Billion Dollars in 2018, with the hopes of helping Nepal reduce its dependency on India and help China gain geoeconomic benefits through greater connectivity to South Asia, it is only a matter of time to see if Nepal and China can together come to a consensus to figure out effective ways to start construction, while keeping all issues in mind.
  - According to the latest sources, the 25-member Politburo, or the key decision-making body of the Chinese Communist Party, has deliberated over amending the current party charter at the 20th National Party Congress meeting in October. The revision is expected to confirm Xi for an "unprecedented" third term as the supreme leader of China. According to state news media Xinhua, the revisions are a necessary step in the party to help unify thought, enforce discipline and uphold policy directions. Political analysts believe that the structured move is a way to consolidate Xi's ruling philosophy over the party's 95 million members, further fortifying his position as the supreme leader, beyond any challenges.
  - As talks about data privacy and privacy protection loom at large, Chinese-based Social media company WeChat has warned its overseas Chinese users that their data and usage history would be stored and transmitted via servers to the mainland. While WeChat revised its data protection policy for overseas Chinese users from the domestic ones in 2021, however, user skepticism over the token revision proved to be a cosmetic move. Tencent, the parent company of the media platform, is required to assist the CCP under China's CyberSecurity Law with the data of citizens.
  - Concerns for privacy and the CPC's dictatorial nature concern the citizens. The Government is known for using the platform as a tool to curb the freedom of its people, censor speech, and also used as a tool for harassing activists in exile who speak out about the Human Rights violations in the country by the State Police.
  - With the devastating hit of COVID-19 yet to slow down in China, the Government has stepped up its zero-Covide responses policy by asking cities, even those without any outbreak or major fatalities, to conduct regular mass testings. The news comes as a surprise after the announcement from the National Health Commission which stated in early June that regular testing is not required in low-risk areas. While costs of the tests have been largely cut down, frequent testing has become a highly expensive approach to tackling the ongoing epidemic situation, with overall costs in all of China's major Tier 1 and 2
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cities rising as high as 208 Billion Dollars (1.5% of China's 2021 GDP). This appeal is proving to be a costly affair for local governing bodies, on top of China's currently fragile economy, pushing them to rethink the directive measure.

- Amidst fragile western ties and economic sanctions, Russia is seen shifting its focus to the Far East. Its evidence was seen at the Eastern Economic Forum meeting last week, where Russia shed much light on the development of the Kuril Islands, located NorthEast of Japan. The Russian territory sits atop vast oil reserves and is located near important world shipping routes. Its strategic position has harbored support from Russia for its industrialization through favorable policies and tax benefits to potential investors to boost its tourism and fishing industries.
- While immediate neighbors, Japan and South Korea have been deemed as 'unfriendly neighbors' for their Western support of the invasion of Ukraine, China is being seen as a potential economic partner based on mutual needs and complementary economies. As both countries are interested in cooperation for development on the island, economic support from China will not only boost productivity growth in the Islands but also deepen trade ties between the two nations. Additionally, the shift to yuan and ruble as a mode of financial exchange and purchase instead of the dollar will further bolster trade and investments between Russia and China.
- As the automobile industry is considered an important engine to drive a nation's economic growth, China's economy has seen significant growth due to the robust growth in its automobile sector, both in production and sales in August.

- The world's largest market, despite a looming COVID-19 outbreak, produced and sold 2.4 and 2.38 million units respectively, rising to 38.3% and 32.1% from last year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. With total sales of 16.86 million units in 2022, a 1.7% hike from last year, showing signs of economic stability and growth in consumer purchases.
- There has also been a significant rise in the production and purchase of New energy vehicles (NEV) and with the State Council's decision to extend tax exemption to all NEV purchases till the end of 2023, the transport ministry aims to see continued growth in vehicle purchases, further accelerating economic growth.

## INDIA WATCH

The Ministry of External Affairs announced this Friday that India and China will take up the remaining issues along the LAC once the ongoing disengagements at Patrolling Point (PP) 15 in Gogra-Hot Springs are completed by Monday. While both the countries haven't yet come to a mutual consensus since the 2020 border crisis, China has kept peace at the borders as its main aim as both countries look at the disengagement as a "positive development" and try to ensure dialogue to resolve the issue diplomatically. The MEA statement further states that absolute disengagement would be complemented by 12th September, 3 days before the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit, in which both country leaders are likely to meet after 3 years since the 2019 BRICS Summit. While the two sides have agreed upon ceasing deployments in a phase-by-phase manner, the reality is more difficult than what's said as seen in recent Chinese statements, where an agreement for less volatile points was met

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with much difficulty. The disengagement at PP15 came a year after agreements were reached for PP17A, and as per statements made by Indian officials, the Chinese have shown much reluctance in discussing reasonable terms to disengage troops in Depsang and Demchok, where India's access to five patrolling points have been blocked since 2020.

While peace and bilateral cooperation talks have been making the rounds between the two nations, time would be a witness whether China would eventually live up to the peace requirement at the borders, or further impose its version of the LAC borders of 1959.

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