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# DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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## NEWS IN CHINA

- The first passenger [flight route](#) connecting China's Xi'an to Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat was officially launched on Saturday. The route is part of China's Air Silk Road venture which is nearing completion just ahead of the [China-Central Asia Summit](#) to be held later next week. The venture aims to connect Xi'an- the starting point of the historic Silk Road to the five Central Asian countries. As per current schedules, the China Southern Airlines operated CZ5086 will depart from Xi'an every Saturday at 17:30 Beijing time, and arrive in Ashgabat at 00:40 local time. The air route between Xi'an and Ashgabat is expected to cater to business-oriented and leisurely travellers, students, and in turn promote cultural exchange.
- On Saturday, Feng Sixuan secured gold in the [women's 25 m pistol](#) event at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup in Baku, Azerbaijan. Fellow national representative, Tian Jiaming finished seventh overall despite initially ranking first in the qualifiers with 590 points. Feng's podium finish has contributed to China's overall medal tally at this edition of the World Cup. Han Jiayu and Huang Yuting had previously secured gold and bronze respectively in the women's 10 m air rifle, while Sheng Lihao won bronze in the men's event.
- Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND) has reported on a recent series of [Chinese incursions](#) into the Taiwanese air defense identification zone (ADIZ). MND tracked 10 Chinese military aircraft- among which one was identified to be Shaanxi Y-8 anti-submarine warfare aircraft, and 4 naval vessels. Their incursions into the ADIZ are reported to have occurred between 6 AM on May 12th to 6 AM on May 13th. Chinese incursions have increased against a backdrop of increased engagement between the American and Taiwanese governments. The latest series of incursions come ahead of

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ex-British Prime Minister Liz Truss's potential visit to Taiwan next week.

- State media reported that [Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki](#) arrived in Beijing on Sunday, beginning his official state visit. Afwerki is expected to be welcomed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, and also engage with Chinese Premier Li Qiang as part of the visit agenda. Afwerki's last visit to China was in 2006, when he attended the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. His current visit is coloured with a commemorative tinge as this year marks the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Eritrea. It is also the first state visit after the African country joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2021.
- China's [first home-grown mRNA vaccine](#) for COVID-19 was rolled out in Hebei Province on Sunday. The vaccine which is recommended by the Central Leading Group for Novel Coronavirus Prevention and Control, is developed by local drug maker CSPC Pharmaceutical Group. It was made available for citizens in Shijiazhuang at the city's Taoyuan community healthcare centre. The rolling out of the vaccine- which was approved for emergency use against Omicron variants in March, comes as China sees a surge in COVID-19 cases post the May Day holiday period.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **'Happy Mother's Day,' and 'Will you go home and have a meal with your mother on Mother's Day?' trends on Weibo as**

**netizens celebrate Mother's Day: #母亲节快乐#** trended on Weibo, as netizens took to the platform to send Mother's Day wishes. Several users choose to mark the day by sharing pictures and videos of their mothers. Additionally, the tag [#母亲节你会回家陪妈妈吃饭吗#](#), also made rounds as netizens uploaded pictures of home-cooked meals they shared with their mothers to celebrate the day. Posts under the tag appeared to highlight the importance of spending quality time with one's parents rather than simply commemorating the day with materialistic gifts.

## INDIA WATCH

- China has been deepening engagements with the Central Asian countries, both in terms of physical connectivity and diplomatic engagements. The city of Xi'an is the historic focal point of these engagement as it was the origin of ancient silk road. It is also gearing up to host the first edition of the China-Central Asia Summit next week. As a home to a huge repository of natural gas reserves, Central Asia has become critically important for China's energy security. Much like China, India too has historicised its diplomatic ties with the Central Asian countries, invoking interactions facilitated by the ancient Silk Road. India has held its own dialogues with these countries, hosting a [virtual India-Central Asia Summit](#) in the January of last year. In [2015](#), Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited all 5 countries in a single trip, to seemingly signify proactive Indian policies vis-à-vis Central Asia. The nature of Chinese engagements however points out certain shortcomings on India's side that need to be rectified if India

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wishes to take the lead. Firstly, India's negotiated outcomes mostly remain confined to the area of human resource and security alliances - in 2022, India pledged to receive and train diplomats, and carry out joint-counter terror exercises. Whereas, China has managed to make inroads deeper particularly through the BRI. The lack of infrastructural aid could possibly carry serious implications for any Indian access to Central Asian energy reserves in the near future. Secondly, India also lags behind in the soft power domain; it has relied excessively on the natural appeal formerly produced by the Indian film industry- Bollywood in particular. China on the other hand has secured a more stable comparative advantage in the game, thanks to a series of carefully cultivated state-backed people-to-people interactions. The historicity of Xi'an has been utilised to fashion an explicit link between China and the Central Asian Republics. It is also a lesson that reinforces the effectiveness of soft power strategies to meet goals of both hard, and structural power. China's existing Central Asia policy and its upcoming interactions with the countries then, serve as an effective litmus test to examine the success of Indian policies.

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