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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Birthday party amidst money shower goes viral on Chinese social media:** Hosts showered money over attendees at a birthday party they organised for their 16 year old son. This incident occurred in Anhui province in eastern China, where the unidentified family which organised the party threw money worth 20,000 yuan (US\$3,000) at friends and relatives who had gathered over there. People were shocked and started collecting the notes. The video of money being thrown went viral on Chinese social media platforms. One of the eyewitnesses named Yang said that the guests were flabbergasted when they saw money being thrown out of the balcony. The family had done the same thing in the past as well though it is not a local custom. This incident sparked many reactions on social media platforms, one person said that the family is showing off their wealth. Another person questioned "what if a tragic stampede broke out?" There were people appreciating the generosity of the family too.

NEWS IN CHINA

- Vice Premier of the State Council, Liu He held a talk with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on January 18th in Zurich, Switzerland. Liu He is also the head of the China-US Comprehensive Economic Dialogue. This meeting was held to discuss the implementation of consensus reached in the Bali meeting held between Chinese and US leaders. President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping met at the sidelines of the G-20 Summit held in Bali last year, where they agreed to keep all lines of communication open and stressed the fact that confrontation between these two giant countries won't

benefit either of the countries. During the meeting, both sides discussed the macroeconomic and financial situation of the world and their respective countries as well. Both sides opined that it will be beneficial for the US, China and the whole world to strengthen communication and coordination of macroeconomic policies and joint responses to the global economic and financial challenges. The Chinese side expressed its concerns over the US economic, trade and technological policies against China. Both sides agreed to keep engaging under bilateral and multilateral frameworks such as APEC, G-20 and the United Nations.

- China-Africa trade crossed the mark of US\$282 billion at the end of 2022. Since China replaced the US as the major trade partner of the continent in 2009, trade development has come a long way. China took special efforts to address the trade imbalance and promoted exports from African nations to China, which led to growth in trade by 11 per cent. The surge in prices of oil, copper and cobalt have played a role in increasing the value of the trade. Total exports from China stood at US\$164.49 billion for the past one year, which showed 11 per cent growth on a year on year basis. The growth rate of import from the African continent rose at the same rate, total imports are US\$117.51 billion. Much of the increase in the value of African export to China can be attributed to soared prices. Incidents such as the Russia-Ukraine war affected crude oil prices to increase across the globe. Cobalt, one of the major exports to China, had a price of US\$82,000 per tonne during the start of 2022 but later the price fell to

US\$49,000 per tonne. Copper also had the highest price in the first of the year which was US\$ 10,400 per tonne which later came down. Trade would have also increased as China started importing coking coal from Africa following trade disputes with Canberra. However Africa mainly exports raw materials to China and imports finished goods such as textiles, electronics and machinery which tilts the trade balance in China's favour. China allowed duty free imports from nations like Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. It also pledged US\$ 10 billion to support African exports. Moreover trade is mostly done with resource rich countries such as South Africa. COVID-19 pandemic affected the trade but China's active measures have ensured growth of trade between the two sides.

- The Chinese space agency plans to send manned spacecraft and cargo spacecraft in 2023. This mission information was announced in the "Blue Book of China's Aerospace Science and Technology" press conference on 18th January in Beijing. This mission will comprise of Shenzhou 16, Shenzhou 17 manned spacecraft and Tianzhou 6 cargo spacecraft. Jing Zheng, Deputy Commander-in-chief of the space station system of the Fifth Academy of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, said at the press conference that crews of manned spacecrafts will work continuously to launch astronauts and cargo out of the cabin, provide support for space science and material and technology test projects. For the first time this mission consists of sending external load support in cascaded state of the large and small robotic arms and first time the people and
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goods will leave the cabin at the same time. Zheng Wei, Deputy Chief Designer of the manned spacecraft system said that the manned spacecraft will perform two return trips, two rendezvous and docking trips. Another highlight of the project is that the manned spacecraft trips will be launched every six months.

- The United States is behind China's grim situation of security, according to an article by China Watch, a Chinese think tank. The article states that the US will use its "Indo-Pacific Strategy" to force its neighbouring countries into some border or security issues with China. It has brought tension to sensitive areas such as the East China Sea, South China Sea, Indo-China border and the Korean peninsula. The article states that China has played its role as a 'responsible major power'. It has focused on 'cooperation and actively cooling off' hot border disputes. Further it is said that the US might deliberately promote camp confrontation. Some of the US's methods are to link the situation in South China sea to the Russia-Ukraine crisis, exaggerating the "China Threat" and promoting distrust about China's strategic intentions among the neighbouring countries. It talks about the military alliances network built by India and countries like Japan, the US, Australia. Moreover, Indo-China disputes are also mentioned, where it has been said that India stubbornly links the border situation with the bilateral relations, strengthening infrastructure and military deployments in border areas and conducts high altitude joint military exercises with the US at locations within 100 km of the border. It also says that India provoked an incident in the Dong Zhang area in the

eastern sector of the Indo-China border.

- The Cyberspace Administration of China has begun running a month-long campaign to remove 'unhealthy' content. It could be anything ranging from feudal superstitions, overzealous fandom to wasting food. The move is said to be aimed at creating a "festive and peaceful" online spirit on the eve of new Lunar year which starts on January 22 this year. The authorities have warned citizens to not post COVID-19 related rumours, fake news of outbreaks and false experiences of suffering due to the same. Medical experts have said that rural areas might see an increase in COVID-19 cases during the new year holiday as several people travel to their hometowns. The central government has said that it will provide additional medical facilities in the rural area. The clean up drive is also aimed at female influencers for "vulgar clothing" and "explicit actions" which is done to gain online traction. The watchdog said that it wants to protect the minor by rectifying the video content and prevent them from internet addiction.
 - The Chinese news agency took notice of a new category of guided missile destroyers which the US navy is developing. The news outlet reported that the US navy has completed preliminary design work of the new generation of DDG(X) guided missile destroyers. Ships from this class will measure more than 10,000 tonnes, this category of ships will be big in size. The project is expected to enter the next stage which will be bidding and detailed design. The US navy will have new destroyers after 30 years. The US navy had a plan called
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“21st Century Surface Combat” or SC-21 under which aircraft carriers, cruisers and destroyers were envisioned. DD(X) forms one of the major parts of this plan. This class of ships will have modern weaponry such as Laser weapons, large calibre naval guns but at the same time these ships come at a large cost (nearly US\$ 7 billion for a single unit). Their use will be limited to sea and land attack mainly, this plan has seen a lot of twists and turns and finally there is substantive development regarding the same.

INDIA WATCH

- China has been engaging with the African continent for quite some time now. It has not only engaged economically but also invested in infrastructure development in the region. China-Africa relations recently saw their trade cross US\$ 280 billion. China has been giving loans to African countries which bear very high interest. Countries have faced problems such as failure to repay loans, repatriation of profits by Chinese companies and jobs being offered to Chinese nationals in Chinese projects. Africa is an emerging market for both China and India. India is also looking to expand its trade with African countries but compared to China, India's trade with Sub-Saharan Africa stands at US\$ 74.86 billion in 2021-22 and the trade surplus is in favour of Africa. As both countries are trying to expand their sphere of influence, India has a lot of distance to cover in trade and investments. Although India lacks economic capital to invest in Africa, it enjoys soft power and goodwill in African countries. Along with that, India shares historical relations from the medieval

period to the modern era freedom struggle of countries. India has also launched an export promotion scheme in which it supports African businesses. Furthermore, India has taken several measures for capacity building of local African people. India recently invested US\$ 1 billion in the 'India Technical and Economic cooperation' program. This program is run by the Ministry of External Affairs to focus on capacity building and resource development. China's exploitative policies such as bringing its own workers to work on local projects, high interest loans and environmental degradation do not benefit the countries at large. On the other hand, India has focussed on delivering people-centric projects by which the livelihood standards have improved. Senegal received two projects from India, a water treatment plant for safe drinking water and an irrigation project which led to a six-fold increase in rice production. India has extended 182 Lines of Credit worth US\$ 10 billion, all for developmental projects. Total 98 Indian institutes offer technical education courses in the field of agriculture, food & fertiliser, engineering and environment. During COVID-19 pandemic, India helped African countries with more than 25 million vaccines. Such measures certainly help India to increase its soft power and make a meaningful impact in Africa.
