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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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NEWS IN CHINA

- Recently, the China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec) and Kazakhstan-based KazMunayGas agreed to develop the biggest polyethylene project in Kazakhstan. The two companies signed an agreement for the joint implementation of this project in Xi'an, on the sidelines of Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's visit to China as part of the China-Central Asia Summit. The polyethylene plant, which will have an annual capacity of 1.25 million metric tons, will be built in the Karabatan Special Economic Zone, close to the Tengiz Field in Atyrau. According to Magzum Mirzagaliyev, Chairman of KazMunayGas, the "wealth of Sinopec's experience in the design, construction and operation of technologically complex petrochemical facilities will have a positive effect on the planned polyethylene project. The project will increase the investment attractiveness of the petrochemical industry of Kazakhstan."
- China unveiled its plan of building a state-of-the-art innovation centre, in the form of the Beijing International Science and Technology Innovation Centre, scheduled to be completed in 2025. The plan entails Beijing to cultivate top-quality scientific talent by aiding higher educational institutes in implementing reforms in engineering education. In the backdrop of increasing competition from the United States in the field of technology, and American sanctions on Chinese hi-tech companies, China is looking to achieve technological self-sufficiency. According to the plan, national research institutions and laboratories will take the lead in the scientific and technological fronts, and private companies will contribute to the further development of the Zhongguancun, Beijing's equivalent of the Silicon Valley. There will be more investment towards building scientific and technological infrastructure clusters, and specialised planning in fields like low-carbon energy, space, life sciences, Earth research and Artificial Intelligence. The total spending on research and

development will be 6 per cent of China's GDP, with 17 per cent of the experiment allocated to basic research. Additionally, the plan envisages Beijing offering attractive visas, work permits and long-term residence options in order to bring in talent from abroad.

- The People's Bank of China released the [China Financial Stability Report](#) for the year 2022. The report gave the latest results of the stress tests undertaken on China's banking industry. Around 4000 banks of various types participated in these tests, which measure indices like solvency macro scenario, solvency sensitivity, liquidity risk and contagion risk. The macro scenario test results indicate that the overall capital adequacy level of 19 domestic systemically important banks (D-SIBs) is relatively high and their operations are stable, but with varying risk resistance capabilities. The sensitivity tests show that the 19 D-SIBs have strong risk resistance to credit asset quality deterioration, but there are serious risks in areas like MSMEs and personal operating loans, customer concentration, and real estate financing. With regards to the liquidity risk test, the results show that the participating banks have a strong ability to withstand liquidity risk as a whole. As for the contagion risk test, while a majority of the banks will be able to resist the default of a single bank, in the securities and insurance industry, the default of financial institutions has slightly enhanced the inter-bank contagion risk.
- On Friday afternoon, the Yangtze River Delta Eco-Green Integrated Development Zone [Police Cooperation Centre](#) was

unveiled, at the Zhujiyajiao Police Station of Qingpu Public Security Bureau. This development is part of the Yangtze River Delta Integrated Development Strategy, which entails implementing new developmental concepts with the aim of integrated development of the region. The Police Cooperation Centre is primarily a cross-departmental cross-regional cooperation mechanism focusing on river water security, through inspections on border waterways, coordinated law enforcement, joint investigation and control, and integrated rapid linkage. The public security services displayed their equipment in the exhibition hall, comprising of water rescue flying wings, Black Hawk chariots, fixed-wing UAVs, and other cutting-edge police equipment. During the unveiling ceremony, the public security organs of Qing, Wu and Jia signed the 'Agreement on Key Police Cooperation Projects in the Yangtze River Delta Eco-Green Integrated Development Demonstration Zone in 2023.' Later, a joint security exercise was conducted, which tested the capabilities of the police forces in terms of smart security, joint command, joint management and control, and logistical support.

- On Friday, the inaugural [China-Central Asia Summit](#), held in Xi'an, came to a close, with Chinese President Xi Jinping and the heads of state of the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) jointly signing and releasing the Xi'an Declaration. In the press conference that followed, President Xi talked about the major highlights of the Xi'an Declaration. A major takeaway from the Declaration is
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that the China-Central Asia Heads of State meeting mechanism has been formally established, which will be held every two years, hosted by the six countries on a rotational basis. Kazakhstan is slated to host the next edition of the summit in 2025, and a permanent secretariat will be set up in China. In the Declaration, the two sides affirmed their commitment to deepen cultural exchanges, and cooperating in fields like sports, healthcare, tourism, food security, etc. The Belt and Road Initiative was also talked about, and the countries agreed to continue and speed up developmental initiatives in line with the BRI, like the China-Central Asia transport corridor. The two sides also affirmed that they will take steps to combat issues plaguing the region like extremism and transnational organised crime, resolve the crisis in Afghanistan, and build a peaceful Central Asia.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Netizens divided over joke on China's PLA:** Chinese stand-up comedian Li Haoshi, known by his stage name House, recently caused a huge stir with a joke which irked many people, and more importantly, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In a performance a few days back, he told an anecdote about adopting a pair of feral dogs in Shanghai, during which he made a certain reference which sparked a furore. He said, "But when I saw these two dogs, the first phrase to flash into my mind was 'able to win battles.' I mean, these really were elite [troops]!" The phrase which Li mentioned refers to a speech made by President Xi Jinping to the PLA

parliamentary delegates in 2013, wherein he called for an army "that obeys the party and can win battles." The joke angered the national authorities, and as a result, the Chaoyang district police opened investigations against him. Li's employer, Shanghai Xiaoguo Culture and Media, also had to bear the brunt, with the agency paying a fine of 1.33 million yuan, and getting banned from hosting shows in Beijing. Post this incident, both Li and Xiaoguo offered public apologies, with the latter cutting off its professional ties with the comedian. Netizens on social media platforms like Weibo and WeChat were divided. There were many who criticised Li for his act, and patronised and valourised the soldiers for their service to the nation. On the other hand, there were YouTubers and other commentators who defended Li by saying that stand-up comedy thrives on satire, and that due to ideological indoctrination, this art form has been largely stifled.

INDIA WATCH

- China has been investing in the neighbouring Central Asian countries for quite a long time, considering the geographical proximity and the vast natural resource endowments in the region. Through policy initiatives like the One Belt One Road (OBOR), and multilateral institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), China has presented itself as the leading benefactor for the region. Russia considers the Central Asian region as its 'Near Abroad' zone of immediate influence, on account of those five countries being a part of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The growing convergence in Sino-Russian ties has further cemented

China's pre-eminent position in Central Asia, and recent developments like the China-Central Asia Summit and Chinese investment in the Kazakh petrochemical industry further add onto it. India has had historical relations with Central Asia, and is geo-strategically a very critical region for India. However, post the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, India took away its attention from Central Asia, and the region became a blind spot for Indian foreign policy for quite a while. In the recent few years, New Delhi has tried to correct this gap, by initiating the Connect Central Asia policy from 2012 onwards. India has tried to gain access to energy resources in the region, through initiatives like the TAPI gas pipeline, which has faced several bottlenecks. In terms of regional organisations, India became a member of the SCO in 2017, and has been given the SCO Presidency for the year 2022-23. In 2022, the first-ever India-Central Asia Summit took place in Delhi, which was attended by heads of state from all the five Central Asian republics. These recent developments show that New Delhi has made some progress with regards to gaining lost ground in the region. There is even further scope for improvement, as India and the Central Asian countries can cooperate in arenas like counterterrorism, energy security, trade, IT, biotechnology, and medical tourism.

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