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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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NEWS IN CHINA

- Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for "severe punishment" to those responsible for the attack on the Central African Republic's gold mine that killed nine Chinese nationals and injured two others. The mine was run by a Chinese company called the Gold Coast Group. The Chinese foreign ministry dispatched a team to the mine and urged the Central African Republic to take action. The country has rich mineral reserves and foreign companies, including those from China and Russia, have invested in the industry. The country has been suffering from political instability since 2012, leading to underdevelopment despite its wealth of resources. The conflict between rebel militias is largely fought along religious lines between Christians and Muslims.
- On March 20th, Chinese President Xi Jinping departed from Beijing on a special plane to pay a state visit to Russia, following an invitation from Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin. President Xi Jinping is accompanied by other officials, including the director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee Cai Qi, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Qin Gang Chairman of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission Wang Yi. Upon his arrival in Moscow, the Russian side held a grand welcoming ceremony at the airport.
- Chinese and Cambodian militaries conducted joint maritime drills as part of the China-Cambodia "Golden Dragon-2023" joint exercise. As per reports, this was the first time both countries jointly conducted a maritime military exercise. Both militaries conducted several consultations on the exercise and coordination plans before laying down the foundation for the exercise. The exercise intends to focus on practising the

control of key target regions, prevention and control of an unidentified infectious disease, the search and disposal of suspected explosives, and the handling of low and small flying objects. A number of other Southeast Asian countries have also sent military officers as part of their delegations to the exercise as observers reported the state media outlets.

- Chinese Ambassador to Moscow, Zhang Hanhui, has stated that economic and trade cooperation between China and Russia continues to progress despite challenges and pressures. Bilateral trade between the two nations reached a record high of \$190.27 billion in 2022, with energy playing a pivotal role. The proportion of settlements in local currencies is growing, and subnational cooperation between the two countries is deepening. The Heihe-Blagoveshchensk cross-border highway bridge and other boundary bridges have opened to traffic, and cross-border logistics and transportation channels have expanded. People-to-people cooperation has also played a vital role in China-Russia relations, with sports and cultural exchanges increasing. 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road Initiative, both proposed by President Xi Jinping. Russia has also become an important partner in the initiative, and the two countries are working together to build a community with a shared future for mankind, stated the ambassador.
- The first plenary meeting of the new State Council in China was held on March 17, chaired by Premier Li Qiang. The meeting

announced the division of labour among the leading comrades of the State Council, reviewed and approved the newly revised "Work Rules of the State Council," and made arrangements for government work. Li Qiang emphasised the importance of implementing the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Party, carrying out work closely around the central task of the Party in the new era and new journey, and building a modern socialist country in an all-around way. He stated that the government would focus on the primary task of high-quality development, stabilise the economy, promote the real economy, fight the tough battle of key core technologies, accelerate the construction of a modern industrial system, and further deepen reform and opening up. Additionally, the government would also effectively prevent and defuse major risks, consolidate and expand the achievements of poverty alleviation, improve the quality of the ecological environment, and enhance the people's sense of gain, happiness, and security.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Hashtag "Xi Jinping Published Signed Article in Russian Media" trends on social media:** Ahead of President Xi's visit to Russia, both the leaders cross-published op-eds in the other country's state-affiliated newspapers. Xi's article "Forging Ahead to Open a New Chapter of China-Russia Friendship, Cooperation and Common Development" ("踔厉前行，开启中俄友好合作、共同发展新篇章") stressed upon the strong bond and mutual trust between the Sino-Russian relations. Putin's op-ed titled
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“Russia and China – A Future-Bound Partnership” (“俄罗斯和中国——面向未来的伙伴关系”) also focused on the special relationship between both countries. The article also condemned the American role in the international arena while also thanking China for its approach to the Ukrainian issue.

INDIA WATCH

- China-Russia relations are seeing new heights after the isolation of Russia by the international community, mostly consisting of the West due to its aggression in Ukraine. Bilateral trade has seen an increase between the two countries in the first two months of 2023 with trade reaching \$33.69 billion. In 2022, the bilateral trade touched a record high of \$190.27 billion and both sides are striving to achieve the annual trade target of \$200 billion set by the two heads of state. China’s electronics, mechanical and automobile exports to Russia have all seen substantial growth. As Russia grows closer to China, India's concerns are increasing proportionally. There are concerns that China could influence Russia to withhold the supply of critical components during times of distress, but the director of the Carnegie Moscow Centre Dmitri Trenin had said “Russia will not allow itself to be dictated to by another country on issues that are of major interest, and that includes the Indo-Russia arms relationship.” Having said that, it is less likely that India-Russia relations will deteriorate. Despite pressure from the West, India has maintained its neutrality in the Ukraine crisis. Russia-India trade has seen substantial growth, India’s export of

petroleum products rose significantly from April 2022 to January 2023, these exports were worth \$78 billion. Imports from Russia have also surged nearly 400% in this fiscal year alone. Although Russia is getting closer to China, it is unlikely to turn its back on India any time soon. Thus, a balanced approach to the crisis between Russia-Ukraine is essential for India to safeguard its strategic as well as defence interests, that to without jeopardising its relations with the West at the same time.