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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Probe launched after mainland official claims Chinese civilization is older than ancient Egypt online:** A controversial claim by a mainland official that the Chinese “created” Egyptian civilization has caused an online backlash and prompted a formal investigation. In an online article on a [WeChat account](#), a senior researcher at the Culture and Tourism Bureau of Zhangjiakou city in Hebei province, Yu Ruijun claimed there was “a great deal of evidence to show that it was the Chinese who created Egyptian civilization”. The key evidence Yu based his claim on was a bronze basin dating to the Spring and Autumn Period of 770–476BC which was recovered from a tomb in China and is being exhibited at the Zhangjiakou Museum. The vessel had sculpted carvings that he claimed were similar to those found in ancient Egypt. Zheng Jinsong, deputy head of the Museum of Southwest University in Chongqing, stated that while evidence cited in the article showed there were similarities between the two civilizations, there was nothing to support the claim that Chinese civilization came before that of ancient Egypt. Therefore, Yu’s extraordinary and unfounded claim was met with confusion and mockery on various Chinese social media platforms.

NEWS IN CHINA

- In a new [guideline](#) focusing on the management of private pensions, the Chinese government has outlined plans to develop a multitiered, sustainable social security system to benefit its aging population. The guideline, which was launched by five central departments, including the Ministry

of Human Resources and Social Security, the Ministry of Finance and the State Taxation Administration, stated that a private pension was a supplement to the public pension system and was supported by government policies. Under the guideline, workers at Chinese companies covered by the state pension system can join a private pension plan voluntarily. Those who wished to be a part of this scheme were obliged to open an account at a state-run social security platform and register their personal information. Then, the individual is required to open a private pension account at an authorised commercial bank or financial institution. Account holders are allowed to deposit up to 12,000 yuan (\$1,650) per year into their accounts, and payments can be made monthly, yearly or by other structured installment plans. They can also take advantage of tax reductions and other supporting policies. As per the guidelines, pensioners could begin making withdrawals once they meet the age requirements (60 for men and 55 for women) or in the event they lose the ability to work or they migrate outside of China. They can also purchase financial products using money from their private pension accounts at their discretion, but financial institutions are obliged to inform them of the risks involved. This latest policy was initiated as a result of the growing infertility rate and increase in the ageing population of the nation.

- China has made an ambitious road map for its future lunar exploration programs, including an international scientific outpost. China's [Chang'e 6](#) robotic mission has been set to land on the moon's far side

to collect and bring samples back. After Chang'e 6, Chang'e7 robotic probe will be sent to land on the moon's south pole to search for water and other resources. The probe will carry a 'flyby craft' tasked with flying into pits on the lunar surface to look for ice. It will also be tasked with detecting the natural resources beneath the south pole's surface. Moreover, mission planners are considering whether the probe to be used to dig into the surface to check the underground structures and composition. Chang'e 8 will be also set to land near Chang'e 7 on the south pole of the moon where it will work together to form a prototype of a robotic scientific outpost. In the long run, the outpost will be a platform for international collaboration on lunar exploration as stated by Wu, the academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

- In the [face-to-face dialogue](#) between China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai during the 29th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral economic and trade issues as well as multilateral and regional trade cooperation. Wang expressed his solemn concern over U.S. trade and investment restrictions, as well as Taiwan-related issues and suggested that the two sides should consider being open-minded to regional economic cooperation initiatives that were open, inclusive and conducive to solidarity and cooperation. He further emphasised his hopes of implementing the important consensus reached by the two heads of state at their meeting, and stated that the U.S. will work with China to push bilateral
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economic and trade cooperation back on the path of steady and sound development.

- As the global economy continues to grapple with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other uncertainties, China has honoured its promise to steer global development toward a new stage of balanced, coordinated and inclusive growth. In his congratulatory letter to the sixth [China-South Asia Exposition](#), President Xi noted that in recent years, China and the South Asian countries have deepened practical cooperation in all aspects, and that the trade and economic exchanges have maintained a sound momentum, bringing benefits to people of all countries. With the China-South Asia Exposition serving as a platform, China has been willing to work with all countries, to foster consensus on enhancing solidarity and cooperation and pursuing development; create more growth drivers in cooperation; advance the high-quality development of the Belt and Road cooperation; and implement the Global Development Initiative, so as to build a more prosperous and brighter future together. During the sixth China-South Asia Exposition held from November 19 to 22 in Kunming, capital of southwest China's Yunnan Province, contracted investment projects worth over 600 billion yuan (84.27 billion U.S. dollars) were inked. The event became an increasingly influential platform for economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between China and South Asian countries.

INDIA WATCH

- Assessing China's outreach in the South Asian region through its economic and diplomatic initiative on the sidelines of 6th China-South Asian Exposition, [India's](#) strategic space in South Asia has been on the verge of shrinking down alongside China expanding its footprint in the region. As most of the India's neighbours are underdeveloped economies they find China - with its mega pool of foreign exchange resources - an attractive ally which is willing to invest in their infrastructure projects, particularly airports, roads, ports and power plants. In this backdrop, Beijing's economic statecraft enables it to carve out a strategic space in the region due to weak integration among the South Asian states. In South Asia, India's strategic stature stands out in sharp contrast, which China aims to counter through close relations with New Delhi's neighbours. Given that India has limitations in matching China's economic assistance to the region, India needs to re-work its image as an arrogant, overbearing patriarch in the region to ensure cordial neighbourly ties. It could also be noted that from the developmental perspective India's neighbours are more concerned about extracting cash from the borrower country to fulfill their developmental needs and for them China fits best in this role. As India has stressed more on its soft power diplomacy, it could not win over its neighbours merely by asserting civilizational links. Meanwhile, India's domestic religious polarisation has sparked concern in friendly South Asian states. A politically and socially harmonious India could set an example to its neighbours and
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a divided and high-handed one raises concerns about their own security. That is a major reason why India's friends play their China card against New Delhi. Domestic peace and progress are essential to counter China in South Asia. As a consequence, India must establish that it can create and consolidate economic, human and strategic security, maintain social harmony and bestow more largesse on them than China.
