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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



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NEWS IN CHINA

- President Xi Jinping decided to send a special envoy of China to Ukraine following the talks with the Ukrainian President. Such talks were the first of its kind since the Russian special operation in Ukraine in February 2022. Xi emphasised on cooperation with Ukraine and reiterated China's position on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. President Xi also stated that the only way out is through dialogue and negotiation. The special envoy, Li Hui, who is the former vice-minister of foreign affairs and a former ambassador to Russia will be the third envoy of China to interact with their Ukrainian counterparts following Wang Yi and Qin Gang in April 2022 and March 2023 respectively. Zelensky, the Ukrainian President is also reported to have said that Ukraine adheres to the "One China principle".
- Zhao Leji, the chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, made his remarks during the second session of the 14th NPC Standing Committee. He addressed the gathering discussing the important role of the deputies in people's congresses play as part of their duties. The deputies play a significant role in maintaining close contact with the people and conducting research for fact-finding. Zhao said that the deputies should adhere to the party's principles and act as a bridge between the Party and the people.
- Wang Chi, the director of the National Space Science Centre, delivered a speech at the International Deep Space Exploration Conference held in Hefei, Anhui Province. He said that China's space program aims to yield breakthroughs in five major themes: the extreme universe, space-time ripple, Sun-Earth panorama, habitable planets, and biological and physical science. Under these themes, there are 17 scientific priorities that aim to study the extreme universe. Wang said

that the National Space Science Plan is the first of its kind with a long-term plan ranging from 2023 to 2045. Future missions would be chosen based on their scientific importance, technological viability, and affordability, according to Wang.

- The 20th China-ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO) and the China Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Export Fair was held in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. The event aimed to promote cooperation between companies from China, Laos and Thailand, in areas of electrical appliances, machinery, medical equipment and so on. Jiang Zaidong, the Chinese Ambassador to Laos, said that this event provides an opportunity to promote Guangxi's products in Laos. Wei Zhaohui, the secretary-general of the CAEXPO Secretariat, highlighted the importance of the China-ASEAN Expo and that of China-ASEAN cooperation. Chansouk Sengphachanh, the Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce of Laos, said that this event is a platform for the promotion of business cooperation and post-pandemic recovery.
- Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia (ACHA) was established during the General Assembly of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia held in the historic city of Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. Xie Bing, the deputy head of the National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA) said that 13 countries from across the continent are actively involved in the protection of cultural relics. The joint declaration released talks about carrying out archaeological projects and cooperating on declaring the world heritages. The Asian Fund for Cultural Heritage Conservation

was also officially launched during the assembly.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning talks about the return of Ya Ya (丫丫) to China:** The Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning in a regular press conference talked about the return of the giant panda 丫丫 (Ya Ya) back to China from the Memphis Zoo, Tennessee in the United States. She said that various preparations and arrangements are being made for Yaya's return to home. The route and transport plan have been sorted and measures have been implemented to ensure the safety of Yaya's arrival. #中美已落实丫丫回国运输方案及航线 trended on Weibo on 26 April 2023. Several other hashtags like #旅居美国大熊猫丫丫启程回国, #丫丫启程回国画 and #接丫丫回家 have also trended on Weibo. In addition to discussions about 丫丫's return, “美香” (Mei Xiang) has also been a subject of online discussion. Mei Xiang is another giant panda living in the United States.

INDIA WATCH

- China's advancements in space research and its space program makes it an important area to focus on for any China watcher in India as it is speculated to be a frontier for expansion. Given its close relations with the People's Liberation Army (PLA), China's space program is of great importance and its advancements will have severe implications for India. For example, China has enough capabilities to carry out outer space operations by tacitly militarising the space domain. India should
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also take note of the possible space weaponisation by China. Another issue to be focused on is a potential space race between China and India given both have been traditionally investing heavily in space research as a part of national development goals. Both also have independent capabilities with regard to space launches and data gathering through satellites. China views the usage of technology like GPS by the US as a strategic dimension. China's investment in Beidou is also a result of such strategic calculations. India's concerns on the other hand are intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities for national security. In this context, China's rapid development of ISR capabilities is viewed as a threat by India to its space-based critical infrastructure. In addition, China's Anti-Satellite (ASAT) test is also viewed as a threat. Though they focus on the strategic dimensions, the grand strategies of India and China for space are different. On one hand, India only focuses on development of the traditional space goals like sending humans to Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and missions to the Moon. China on the other hand aims for the development of critical space infrastructure. India too should aim to move beyond the traditional goals and develop critical infrastructure in the age of modernising of technologies for advancing its strategic interests.

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