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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Winter Olympic athlete gains praise:** China's Winter Olympics athlete Eileen Gu/Gu Ailing (谷爱凌) earned praise from many Chinese netizens after she won two gold medals at Halfpipe Skiing World Cup held at Calgary. CCTV celebrated the Gu victory on social media using the hashtag "Gu Ailing Claims Two Gold within Three Days During New Year Celebration " which included two minutes video clip receiving 180 million views. Many netizens admired her talent and dedication for the country with hashtags like “为国争光.” On the other hand, many Chinese citizens have also questioned her love for the country and her privileged background. Many netizens believed that Gu Ailing cannot become an inspiration for young Chinese as she has not lived their life and her views are merely reflections of her privileged position. Division among Chinese people was clearly visible when many of her supporters even questioned patriotism of critics.

NEWS IN CHINA

- The re-election of Bob Dadae as the Governor-General of Papua New Guinea received warm congratulations from the People's Republic of China President Xi Jinping. Xi recalled the historical diplomatic ties cherished by both nations. Papua New Guinea was among the first Pacific Island country that established diplomatic relations with China and transformed into a comprehensive strategic partnership that maintained a high level of growth. Xi also noted that past achievements made by both countries would be instrumental in sustained growth of bilateral relations in the future.

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- The diplomatic Tussle between The People's Republic of China and the United States of America spurred up at a new level in the aftermath of US President Joe Biden's announcement of extending the "Deferred Enforced Departure." It allows the Hong Kong citizens not to be subject to deportation citing foreign policy reasons. The DED that was brought under the 2021 Memorandum in light of the Beijing Crackdown on the opposition leaders, lawmakers, and activists for causing hindrances in the process of National Security Law implementation. The Chinese government and the government of Hong Kong lambasted this development citing the move as hegemonic bullying. The PRC branded this move as an attempt to provide a safe haven for anti-Chinese forces that have been dispersed in the fallout of the Hong Kong protest, turning Hong Kong into chaos and stirring up protests against China.
 - Several South-Eastern provinces of China have been engaged to bring back laborer's after the lunar festival 2023. Provinces like Guangdong, Zhejiang, Fujian and Jiangsu have all started efforts to attract more laborers from different parts of the country. These four coastal provinces employ the greatest number of people in China and are highly dependent on migrant workers. Teams appointed by these provinces and different cities have been deployed to different inland provinces to fulfil labor demand. According to reports, Shenzhen Human Resource and Social security bureau planned to invest 270 million yuan to encourage employment. These provinces have also carried out extensive newspaper campaigns to attract more

laborer's. In Fujian, chartered flights have been scheduled for the return of workers and providing maternal family services.

- The arrival of the lunar festival brought a surge in the consumption rate in China that has recorded 308 million domestic trips. This reported number brought back the consumption rate to 88.6 percent in comparison with the pre-pandemic rate and thus, propelling the revival of the Chinese economy. Revenue from domestic tourism has reached 375.843 billion Yuan (US\$ 56.37 billion). Henan's duty-free shop sales reached 1.69 billion yuan in the first five days of the lunar festival. At the box office, it exceeded one billion dollars on the holidays crossing the 2019 collection during the holiday.

INDIA WATCH

- The growing influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region has been a concern that India attempted to tackle by building good ties with Australia by recently entering Free trade agreement that would bolster the bilateral trade. The comprehensive security proposal prepared by China for Pacific island countries undermined the Australian position by allowing China to deploy the Military for the maintenance of Law and Order. Although this proposal was rejected by pacific countries, it still demonstrated China's long-term ambitions to establish its hold in South Pacific. These countries can also be helpful for China in United Nations to dismiss any anti-China resolutions or deliberations. India's key interests in the Pacific involve the universal principles of free trade, and freedom of
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navigation that can limit China's influence tactics. Despite their limited size and partial seclusion from global affairs, the Pacific nations have been a major player in sea-based trade and are critical for global maritime security. India has an opportunity to build stronger ties with these countries in the maritime domain. Similarly, these countries have been severe victims of rising sea-levels caused by climate change. Thus, India has an opportunity to further its climate diplomacy by assisting these countries to tackle this issue through initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). Australia will play a crucial role for India due to its proximity in connecting with these countries and thus, improvement in China-Australia ties under Anthony Albanese may impact India's interests in the region.
