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DAILY
**CONVERSATIONS
IN CHINESE
MEDIA**



**ORGANISATION FOR RESEARCH ON
CHINA AND ASIA**

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I. Social Media Chatter in China

- ***Olympic discussions heat up on Weibo highlighting outlooks of Chinese netizens towards other countries:*** Competition at the Olympics is raking up views on Weibo, with users linking it to patriotism especially amidst tense ties of countries like Japan, US, India, South Korea and Australia with Beijing. For instance, Japanese athlete Daiki Hashimoto won the gold for men's gymnastics individual all-around on the sixth day of the Olympics while China's Xiao Ruoteng, who had been leading the competition in the first five rotations, claimed the silver medal (announced after the Chinese team's inquiry over his score of 14.066 in the last rotation was rejected). While memes on Hashimoto abounded on Weibo amidst the scoring controversy, the Indian gymnastics judging who judged the competition was also trolled with Chinese netizens claiming deliberate misallocation of points in favour of Japan.
- ***Weibo military accounts comment on upcoming Sino-Russian joint drills:*** The drills are being heralded as a warning to India against closer cooperation with the US, with observers stating the drills are testimony to the fact that China-Russia ties are stronger than India-Russia and India-US. More than 10,000 personnel from both PLA Western Theatre Command and Russia's Eastern Military District are set to participate in the exercises wherein electronic information warfare and joint reconnaissance are major focuses.
- ***Stories of community aid amidst Henan flooding continue:*** Zhengzhou volunteers have helped carry a 550-metre long electric cable to restore power in their province while Weibo continues to be a major source of connect for help.

II. News in China

- People's Daily has continued with the second article in its series on the Chinese economy; the article is focused on the digital transformation of the manufacturing industry. The timing of this –amidst regulatory upheaval in the technology sector –is interesting to note.
- Military historian Maj-Gen (Retd.) Prof Jin Yinan spoke on China's National Radio about how with China's rising national power and military capabilities, it is important that Beijing keeps a 'greater sense of responsibility' vis-à-vis international obligations, especially peacekeeping.

- CCP's Beidaihe meeting, held annually in the resort town in Hebei province where China's leaders and elders from earlier generations meet in an informal setting for closed-door discussions that also sets the tone for major domestic issues is to be held in early August. And the discussion on who can take the place of Li Keqiang after he retires soon is expected to take the limelight.
- People's Daily has carried a report on the SCO Defense Ministers' meeting in Dushanbe; Chinese State Councillor and Defence Minister Wei Fenghe attended the meeting. India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh was also present for the meeting but no bilateral was held between the two. China's Ministry of Defence in its statement released that Wei held bilaterals with counterparts from Pakistan, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.
- Outspoken Chinese business tycoon Sun Dawu has been sentenced to prison for 18 years and fined 3.11 million yuan as China's crackdown on its business conglomerates and their owners continues. Sun and 19 others affiliated with his agricultural conglomerate 'The Dawu Group' were arrested in November 2020 post conflict with a local-state owned company. Sun's outspoken political commentary is said to have been another major cause (especially as his trial was unusually speedy with marathon sessions). Sun has accused the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of covering up a 2019 African swine flu epidemic and had supported calls for Xi Jinping's resignation for mishandling the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. India Watch

- China's focus on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) is not new; rather, it has been a consistent contribution that Beijing has used as a self-assurance of its role as a global security provider. Recently, China's new group of UN peacekeepers –part of its 20th batch in the Middle East –has been deployed to Lebanon showing continued focus on UNPKO even amidst the pandemic.
- India must look at its own UNPKO operations and broader UN outreach in new light, especially as New Delhi hopes to use its present non-permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to further its bid for a permanent seat. This has always been rejected by China and the 'Coffee Club', which is a group of non-permanent countries like Pakistan, Italy and more led by China that are against the Group of 4's (India, Japan, Brazil, Germany) UNSC bid.

- Li Keqiang has sent a congratulatory message to Sher Bahadur Deuba (who has assumed office as Nepal's Prime Minister) with mentions of COVID-19 cooperation and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) being high. This puts renewed pressure on India to build upon its own Nepal outreach especially with the new government as China continues to grow its economic and political clout in Kathmandu.
- As China-Taliban meet in Tianjin, reports by a US newspaper have surfaced that Danish Siddique –an India origin photojournalist with Reuters who died in Afghanistan amidst crossfire while covering news on ground –was allegedly executed by the Taliban post verification of his credentials. This development could adversely affect India's Taliban outreach vis-à-vis the Afghanistan peace process.