

29 DECEMBER 2022

# DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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## SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Chinese netizens mourn the loss of beloved 103 year-old “Foodie Grandma”:** On December 29, it was reported that Yu Zeqin, popularly known as the “Hotpot Queen” passed away in Chengdu, Sichuan at the age of 103. After receiving the tragic news, her numerous fans expressed their disbelief on Weibo, and were shocked by the sudden news, and the hashtag #百岁网红奶奶喻泽琴去世# (centenary internet celebrity Yu Zeqin passes away) was one of the top trending hashtags on Weibo, with over 82.725 million views. Grandma Yu, who was also referred to as “the oldest internet celebrity” by netizens, was popular for her videos of eating. Her Douyin (抖音) account, which is the Chinese equivalent of TikTok, had accumulated over 7 million fans and hundreds of millions of likes. She won the hearts of netizens with her cheerful personality. Soon, rumours of the cause of her death started growing, and users speculated that it was a COVID-19 related death. This triggered a wave of netizens questioning the vitality of ending the lockdowns. One commentator asked, “It is the same group of people who shouted for freedom and unlocking at the beginning, who now mourn for the elderly. It’s ironic that they didn’t think about the elderly and children when wanting to be free”. Another netizen said, “There is overwhelming news about corpses, crematoriums, funeral parlours and the death of the elderly everyday. I’m going crazy with anxiety, if this is the inevitable result, I’m really powerless, I don’t know what else I can do to protect them”. This sentiment was strengthened due the comments made by Zeng Guang, an epidemiologist and chief scientist and doctoral supervisor at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, who

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said that though the first wave's impact was relatively large, the second wave would be very low because "the dry wood is almost burned out." Under the hashtag [#专家称第二波疫情风暴会很低#](#) (Experts say the second wave of the epidemic will be very low) with almost 610 million views, netizens rebuked the comment as insensitive saying that, "Regardless of the numbers, it is a big deal for the family who lost their loved ones", and "Though it may be true, it is somewhat unacceptable to say it so easily and freely."

## NEWS IN CHINA

- The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that China will [cancel nucleic acid tests](#) for international arrivals starting from January 8. Travellers will not be required to apply for a health code from Chinese diplomatic and consular missions. According to the statement, they shall declare their health status on the customs card. Those with an abnormal health status declaration or fever symptoms will receive an antigen test at customs, and will be advised to self-isolate at home until recovery or be treated in a hospital, depending on their health conditions. China will also scrap restrictions on international passenger flights, increase the number of flights in stages, and optimise the distribution of routes. The changes are in line with the optimised domestic epidemic prevention and control measures. According to Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin, these measures will coordinate epidemic prevention and make cross-border travel more convenient, safe and efficient.
  - China rolled out a series of [preferential tax policies](#), encouraging enterprises to increase research and development (R&D) expenditure and foster new growth drivers for key high-tech enterprises and build a sound environment for micro, small, and medium-sized tech firms. The R&D expenditure of Chinese enterprises accounts for over 70 per cent of all R&D expenditure of China. As capital shortage remains a severe challenge for the continuous innovation of tech firms, the additional tax deduction for R&D expenses will encourage enterprises to expand their R&D expenditure to enhance their efforts in innovation. According to Wei Hujun, an official with the tax office of Jincheng Economic and Technological Development Area, high-tech firms purchasing new equipment worth less than 5 million yuan would be entitled to a one-off deduction of total purchase costs from taxable income. With the new policy, all equipment purchased by high-tech firms in the fourth quarter of 2022 is eligible for the deduction, and will be 100 per cent deducted from enterprises' taxable income. China has also rolled out measures that offer tax preference for enterprises that sponsor non-profit scientific institutions, universities, and government-based natural science funds, which both alleviates capital pressure for these enterprises and supports the innovation in basic research of scientific institutions.
  - China has taken its first three-dimensional Earth-based [radar mapping](#) of the moon with its radar system equipped with high-definition deep-space active observation facility, located in the country's southwest Chongqing Municipality. The radar system,
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codenamed "China Fuyan," which means "faceted eye," had completed its first phase of the installation, commissioning and start-up observation recently. Different from China's 500-metre Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST), which is designed to collect observations of radio signals from space, the Fuyan will shoot radio signals at celestial bodies so as to observe asteroids and terrestrial planets in the solar system. The project, led by the Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT) Chongqing Innovation Center, will have three phases of construction. The first phase is to verify the feasibility of the radar system, mapping a high-resolution image of the moon. After the completion of the third phase, the project is expected to carry out high-definition observation of asteroids within 150 million kilometres of Earth, leading the country in deep space detection radar for 50 years.

- China's video games regulation body granted publishing licences to 44 foreign games for release in the country, including seven South Korean games, further lifting rigid curbs that had lasted 18 months. Among the imported online games approved by the National Press and Publication Administration (中华人民共和国新闻出版总署) are five to be published by Tencent Holdings, including "Pokémon Unite" by Nintendo and "Valorant" by Riot Games, according to a list the regulator released. The administration also approved 84 domestic games for the month of December, according to a separate list released on Wednesday. Regulators resumed issuing game licences to homegrown games in April since the game approval process was suspended last

August, and the approval of foreign games was seen as the last regulatory curb to be removed. Among the approved games, the largest imported game is "Pokémon Unite" jointly developed by Nintendo and Tencent. The game was first released on the Nintendo Switch last July. According to Tencent, by the end of December last year, the game had been downloaded more than 50 million times.

- On Thursday, tariff authorities said that China will adjust import and export tariffs for some commodities in 2023 to better support the country's "dual circulation" strategy. After the latest adjustments, the country's overall tariff level will drop from 7.4 per cent to 7.3 per cent for the year, the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council said in a notice. To better utilise domestic and international resources, China will impose a provisional import tax rate lower than the "most-favoured nation" tariff rate on 1,020 items starting January 1 next year. The country will also reduce the "most-favoured nation" tax rate on 62 information technology products from July 1. A zero tariff rate will be implemented on the raw materials for some drugs for the treatment of COVID-19, cancer and cancer pain relief drugs to ease the financial burden of patients. In addition, the import tariffs on certain medical supplies will be reduced. The country will also lower import tariffs on some industrial products to support the manufacturing industry while adding export tariffs on aluminium and aluminium alloys to push for industry upgrading and facilitate high-quality development. China first introduced the "dual circulation" strategy in 2020 to promote high-level opening-up and
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improve the quality of China's economic links with the world.

- On Thursday, Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng held a phone conversation with Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat. Han remarked that the high-level cooperation between China and Singapore is developing vigorously, and has become increasingly strategic. He noted that Chinese President Xi Jinping had recently met with Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in Bangkok, during which they conducted talks on bilateral relations and major international and regional issues, which provided guidance for the development of China-Singapore relations. Han added that China is willing to work with Singapore to make better use of the mechanism meetings, so as to better provide strategic planning and policy guidance for bilateral cooperation. Deputy PM Heng praised the role of the China-Singapore bilateral cooperation mechanism meetings. Singapore is ready to join hands with China to make full use of the mechanism meetings to continuously deepen mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries, he said. Heng added that Singapore supports China in optimising epidemic prevention and control measures, and commends China for “effectively safeguarding the lives, health and safety of the Chinese people.”

## INDIA WATCH

- China spends 2.4% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on Research and Development (R&D), which reached 2.7864 trillion yuan in 2021, making China the second largest investor country in R&D

after the United States (US) in terms of absolute investment. This has allowed China to make rapid advancements in the areas of infrastructure, high-tech manufacturing, academic publishing, patents, and commercial applications. In comparison, India's gross expenditure on R&D (GERD) as a percentage of GDP is only around 0.7%, and has remained so for about a decade. The Economic Survey has pointed out that the low spending on research and development (R&D) is one of the reasons why India lags behind countries like China and the US in patents. Furthermore, greater investment in R&D, both from the government and the private sector is necessary to create an ecosystem to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. In order to compete globally, India must focus on increasing its GERD to ensure technological development in sectors ranging from agriculture to defence. Furthermore, China's fast technological growth also poses a security threat to India. Its advancement in surveillance, digital currencies, the Beidou satellite navigation network as well as the internet of things. China is capable of launching major cyberattacks towards India. Currently, India lacks both offensive capabilities and foolproof defence mechanisms in cyber warfare. This demands greater investment in R&D from both the Indian government and private sector to counter future attacks from China.

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