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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Weibo turns black and white to mourn former president Jiang Zemin:** Due to former Chinese president Jiang Zemin's demise Wednesday evening, citizens took to social media to express their grief. Websites such as Weibo, Baidu, People's Daily, Alipay and Bilibili turned their graphics grey as a symbol of mourning. The government issued an official obituary in the media praising his leadership and statesmanship; current President Xi Jinping's statement described the leader's demise as "an insurmountable loss". On Weibo, the trending hashtag on Wednesday night read "Comrade Jiang Zemin Passed Away at the Age of 96 in Shanghai" and had over 2.5 billion clicks. Jiang died of leukaemia and multiple organ failure. The former president was popular for his expressive manners and storytelling skills. He was president from 1993 to 2003, leading the country through important moments such as opening up of its markets and the political annexation of Hong Kong to the mainland. After the rise of social media, his appearance led to memes showing him as a toad, creating an online movement of his followers known as 'toad worshippers' (膜蛤文化).

NEWS IN CHINA

- Protests against the Covid control measures continued on Wednesday, gaining more support internationally. In the US, people gathered outside Chinese consulates in Chicago and New York with blank placards to support the 'A4 revolution'. Protests also mourned deaths in the Urumqi fire which triggered the unrest. Chinese officials described the protests

as a threat: Hong Kong's security minister warned that the protests were highly organised, held only under the pretence of mourning the fire deaths. The Chinese Communist Party's mouthpiece People's Daily called on citizens to guard themselves against Covid, warning that the Covid situation was complex in some parts of China. On Monday, the Party's security chief had vowed to crack down on "hostile forces".

- The Shenzhou-15 manned spacecraft successfully landed at the Chinese space station, according to the China Manned Space Agency. The crew of three met with the crew of the earlier Shenzhou-14 mission, and took pictures together. The group of six taikonauts will remain in space together for a week, working and handing over the procedures. The crew of Shenzhou-14 will then return to earth. This is the first mission involving the operation of two Shenzhou spacecraft simultaneously. The taikonauts' work will contribute towards the opening of the Chinese space station Tiangong.
- The China Securities Regulatory Commission announced new steps to boost real estate financing. The authority permitted the refinancing, mergers and acquisitions of real estate enterprises in an effort to improve the real estate market. Refinancing of these institutions was suspended twelve years ago in 2010, which has now been revoked. According to analysts, the move is part of a larger policy plan to broaden the channels of property financing to bond, credit and equity markets in order to ensure the health of the property and financial markets.

Meanwhile, the People's Bank of China conducted a currency bills swap valued at 5 billion Yuan to improve the liquidity of perpetual bonds.

- India was left out of China's conference on maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. The China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation was recently held in Yunnan province of China, involving most countries from the Indian subcontinent. According to an official spokesperson, China wants to contribute to security and lasting prosperity in the region. Experts say that a move to draw closer to countries in the region might be a response to India's efforts to strengthen its own maritime cooperation with the Quad countries.
 - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang held a high-level meeting with Kazakh Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov. The two countries stressed the importance of energy cooperation, which is highly important for China, a heavy importer of natural gas. The Premier expressed hopes that Kazakhstan will ensure a stable gas supply to China through its crucial railway line. With multiple parts of China under the sweep of a cold wave, the country is in need of energy reserves. In the context of uncertainties in the international environment, Russia and China had expressed similar sentiments on Tuesday during the 4th China-Russia Energy Business Forum.
 - China's traditional tea-making techniques and related social practices were added to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. The techniques passed the
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examination of the 17th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Rabat, Morocco. China is the country with the most items on the list which is now 43.

- The Asia-Europe Young Leaders Conference began in Xi'an, China. This two-day event invites over 100 youngsters from Asia and Europe to discuss the theme Building Global Partnership for Green Development. Hosted by the All-China Youth Federation and the organising committee of the World Youth Development Forum, it involves an opening ceremony, a forum and a roundtable discussion among other events.

INDIA WATCH

- A lesson to be learnt from China's foreign policy is its active engagement with regional powers. Through diplomatic channels as well as foreign aid, China has focused on strengthening ties with small players ranging from South Korea to Kazakhstan. In Africa, its network of alliances with small economies has enabled its clout. While India looks to big powers such as the Quad, China meticulously cultivates ties with Nepal, Sri Lanka and the ASEAN. Although India has recently begun to focus on the same strategy through its attempts to revive SAARC and embrace ASEAN, it has not been without challenges. India's major push is still for the major players. As the most populous country in the region, a growing maritime power and among the largest economies in the world, India should seek to establish itself as the

dominant player in the region. This endeavour requires the active cooperation of smaller countries, which can enable India to be a strategic leader – a position that China is currently said to enjoy. Be it Indian vaccines, businesses or armed forces, they would be more acceptable if India cultivates strong ties within the region. In terms of security strategy as well as economic cooperation, India needs to be accepted by its neighbours and other small powers as a dominant and desirable force. China has achieved this through diplomacy or otherwise. India must choose the same end, but through better means.
