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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA

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SOCIAL MEDIA CHATTER IN CHINA

- **Chinese netizens deliberate the meaning of marriage in the current society:** According to a [survey](#) by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs, in the first three quarters of 2022, a total of 5.445 million couples registered for marriage nationwide, a decrease of 7.49 per cent as compared to 2021. Additionally, 1.643 million couples filed for divorce, showing an increase of 3.72 per cent. This is the first time since 2003 that the number of marriages has fallen below the 8 million mark. As the number of singles in the country rises, there's concern for China's falling birth rates and ageing demographics. Following the release of the report, the media company Sanlian Life Weekly (三联生活周刊) posted a poll on Weibo asking young netizens #年轻人结婚的意义是什么# (What is the most important thing about marriage for you?). This hashtag received over 2 million views, and received various responses from users. These responses reflect the strong sense of individualism the youth in China possess today, as well as changing values towards marriage institutions. One netizen from Zhejiang said, "Do not marry unless necessary", and others agreed, with another netizen replied asking "whether the marriage rate can be dynamically reset to zero". A resident of Hubei commented, "I choose not to get married. I think the quality of life of being single is too high." The most anxiety was in relation to finances, and Official Weibo of the People's Procuratorate of Luobei County, Heilongjiang Province (萝北检察) even posted a [tutorial](#) on how to split finances in case of getting divorced under the hashtag.

NEWS IN CHINA

- Chinese President Xi Jinping held a virtual meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing on Friday afternoon. It was noted that in the first 11 months of 2022, two-way trade volume reached a record high and investment cooperation was improved and integrated. China reiterated to stand with Russia to oppose hegemony and power politics, reject unilateralism, protectionism and bullying. The Presidents agreed to encourage parties of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to enhance solidarity, and to actively advance BRICS membership expansion to bolster the strength of BRICS countries and uphold the common interests of developing and emerging market countries. Russia promised to support China's position on the Taiwan question and stay committed to the one-China principle. The two presidents also exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis. President Xi stressed that China has noted Russia's statement that it has never refused to resolve the conflict through diplomatic negotiations, and China will continue to hold an objective and impartial position, work to build synergy in the international community and play a constructive role towards the peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis. The two presidents also exchanged new year greetings, and wished the two peoples a happy new year and the two countries greater achievements in their development.
- China's first independently-developed ultra-deepwater gas field Shenhai-1, or Deep Sea-1, has commenced the construction of its phase II project, the

China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) said on Friday. The phase II project, located 200 kilometres offshore from Sanya, south China's Hainan Province, is expected to increase the natural gas reserves of Shenhai Yihao from 100 billion cubic metres to 150 billion cubic metres once it is completed, according to the CNOOC. Aiming to drill 12 wells, it will also expand the peak annual output of the gas field to 4.5 billion cubic metres, equivalent to 90 per cent of Hainan's natural gas consumption in 2021. Liu Shujie, the chief engineer with the CNOOC's Hainan branch, said the phase II project would progress under more complicated seabed geological conditions, overcoming water depth, high temperature, and high pressure. The total depth of drilling will surpass 60,000 metres, 220 per cent more than phase I. According to Liu, this project would be "unparalleled in a global comparison". Put into operation in June 2021, the Shenhai Yihao ultra-deepwater gas field is the deepest of its kind in China.

- On Friday, China reiterated its longstanding opposition to the potential arms sales from the U.S. to Taiwan region after Washington approved the sale of an anti-tank mine-laying system to the island. According to reports, the potential sale would cost an estimated \$180 million. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin urged Washington to immediately stop military contacts with Taiwan. "We urge the U.S. side to abide by the one-China principle and the provisions in the three Sino-U.S. joint communiques, fulfil its president's commitment on not supporting 'Taiwan independence,' stop arms sales to and military contacts with
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Taiwan, and to stop creating new tensions in the Taiwan Straits," Wang told reporters at a daily press briefing. Wang warned that China will take "strong measures" in defending its sovereignty and security interests. The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council also voiced firm opposition to the arms sale, urging Washington to deal with the Taiwan question "carefully." The office also warned the authorities from Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party to stop colluding with external forces and seeking "Taiwan independence."

- On Friday, Chinese lawmakers voted to adopt a revised Law on the Protection of Wildlife, which will take effect on May 1, 2023. The revised law was passed at a session of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, which was held from Tuesday to Friday. It strengthens the protection of the habitats of wildlife and refines measures for the regulation of wildlife populations in detail. The revised law explicitly prohibits the consumption of wild animals under special state protection as well as terrestrial wildlife of important ecological, scientific and social values and others on the list of national protection. Any acts of hunting, trading or transporting for meat of terrestrial wild animals that grow and reproduce naturally in the wild shall be forbidden, according to the revised law. It also intensifies punishment on related offences. The existing law on wildlife protection was formulated in 1988 and since then had seen three amendments and a revision, according to Yue Zhongming with the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee. The revised law stipulates detailed measures of regulating and

controlling wildlife populations that have exceeded the environmental capacity. It also makes stipulations on national subsidies for losses caused by wild animals, and on management of artificially bred species.

- On Thursday, China's National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA) announced its latest list of 19 national archaeological parks, increasing the total number in the country to 55. Selected from 31 candidate sites, the oldest of the new national archaeological parks dates back to the Palaeolithic Period, while the youngest dates back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), according to a media release from the NCHA. These are various types of archaeological sites, including settlement, town, kiln, mine, cemetery and temple sites, and are located in various geological environments, including city downtown and suburb, village, and the Gobi Desert and oasis. These new national archaeological parks are of national, historical and cultural significance, and are qualified to be recognised as landmarks for Chinese civilisation. All of the new parks have or are building museums, with outstanding performance in archaeological research, conservation, exhibition and management. China started to select national archaeological parks back in 2010, and by 2025 the NCHA plans to begin the selection of another batch of parks. During the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020), the 36 national archaeological parks that were in existence then, received 40 million visitors annually on average, according to the NCHA.
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INDIA WATCH

- Both China and India are Russia's most significant strategic partners. However, the nature of their relationship differs significantly. The Russia-India relationship is based on the foundation of weapons and oil supply, while Russia and China have leveraged their relationship with the mutual desire to curb the United States' power, and to hold hegemonic influence in their own regions. Days before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin said their partnership has "no limits" and vowed to deepen cooperation on various fronts. This relationship has not developed into a military alliance yet, which is in great part due to Russia's closeness with India. However, this may change, especially with India's increasing imports in weapons from the United States which could antagonise Moscow, as well as the possibility of China opposing Russia's weapons trade with India. If this situation should arise, India must prepare to diversify its defence imports and reduce heavy reliance on Russia, both by diversifying its suppliers and developing indigenous production capabilities. Although Moscow and Delhi have enjoyed a long history of friendly relations, the changes in Russian foreign policy and the rapidly changing geopolitical scenario must be taken into account for the future of the Indo-Russian relationship.
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