

WEEKEND ISSUE
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DAILY CONVERSATIONS IN CHINESE MEDIA



**ORGANISATION FOR RESEARCH ON
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I. Social Media Chatter in China

- **Heroes of Galwan trends on Baidu:** Baidu search trends showed "Heroes of Galwan valley send New year's greetings" at number 2 which redirected to a video of Chinese soldiers in a ravine, holding guns and taking pledges to safeguard the frontier. In the video, they say "We are on the snow-covered plateau at the country's western border and wish the people of our country a happy new year. We pledge to the motherland to guard the border." There were posts on Chinese social media that show Chinese and Indian troops exchanging sweets at Demchok, Hot Springs, Nathu La, Kangra La, etc., on the occasion of New year.
- **PLA's positioning near border:** A social media post claimed that PLA has assembled an armoured division in the garrison town of Ngari Prefecture (a major PLA helicopter base) - 60Km from Demchok in Ladakh. Allegedly, the armour is being assembled there since early 2021. (See Image 1)
- **Harassment by Chinese police for mocking Xi:** A video of Chinese police harassing a Chinese student living in Australia over a video call went viral on social media. It could be seen in the video that Police personal were instructing the student to delete a Twitter account for mocking Xi Jinping. Police have also summoned her father in China to the station.
- **Weibo on way to becoming state-owned media:** Weibo's 2020 annual reports mentioned that New Wave held a 45% stake in Weibo, along with a 30% stake by Alibaba. Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba is preparing to sell its 30% stake in social media platform Weibo. According to experts, Alibaba is negotiating with the state-owned Shanghai Media Group (SMG). Netizens expressed fear that Weibo would become more censored and used for official media, in case the deal goes ahead. (see image 2)
- **Discontent over mismanagement and strict lockdown in Xi'an:** 13 million residents were made to stay at home after 175 cases of COVID-19 were reported on 28th December in Xi'an. On the 11th day of strict lockdown in the city Xi'an, netizens have claimed that many residents were struggling with food shortages and in meeting basic needs. Most offline and takeout stores were closed and people were not allowed to leave their residence for fetching food supplies and other essentials.

II. News in China

- Non-mainstream HK media believes that Li Zhanshu being absent from the CPPCC National Committee New Year tea party was because of his health issues. Li Zhanhsu is 71 years old.

- The Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee has demanded that Xi'an must achieve the goal of social reset (which loosely means no infected cases among the public) by 4th January. Infected people in Xi'an are being transferred to other places for isolation so that this goal can be achieved.
- Observers have pointed out that CPC leaders usually do not use the word "I" but "we" in their speeches. This has always been the case. But Xi Jinping in his new year speech used "I" (time 5:08). He says "The concerns of the people are what I always care about, the aspirations of the people are what I always strive for".
- Recent news was published on a domestic popular media outlet in China stipulating that 'Indian uploaders shoot videos in China and then show them to Indians.' The report observed that while Indian government encourages the view that China is average and similar to India, the Indian vloggers themselves use an exaggerated style and remark that 'China is so awesome'. Moreover the article stated that such videos receive an exaggerated response and high click rate by Indian audiences. (See Image 3)
- A local digital platform in China covered the comments by Jean-Luc Mélenchon-, the leader of the far-left party "La France Insoumise" which supported France's withdrawal from NATO to avoid being dragged by the US into a "new cold war" against China and Russia. The piece mentioned that Jean-Luc regards China and Russia as partners rather than competitors. In the past, he had advocated the purchase of Russian and Chinese vaccines over the US' Pfizer vaccine.
- A media report in China covered Wu Jinmu, the former "representative" of Taiwan in Nicaragua who had resigned one month prior to Nicaragua severing its relations with Taiwan. Since then, he has acquired Nicaraguan citizenship with his wife. The article mentioned that it was a complete rebellion by Wu against Taiwan and that the Taiwanese authorities are investigating and recovering his pension. Meanwhile in a counter-narrative, Taiwan news outlets have remarked Wu's action was an act of gratitude by Nicaragua- which leaves possibility to revive relations in the future and continue ties through unofficial means.
- Mou Shangang, former party secretary and director of the Service Center of the People's Bank of China is being investigated by Tianjin Municipal Supervision Commission on charges of serious violations of discipline and law and is currently under disciplinary review and supervision investigation. Though a part of the CCP since 1980, he is now alleged to be working for money rather than serving the party and people.

III. India Watch

- In a recent speech, Xi used the term "I" in place of "we". This reflects a subtle change in the political discourse where Xi is sending a more individual-centric signal to the public and the party members.
- The use of direct cohesion to get things done is widely practiced by the Chinese Police even for those stationed abroad. Shanghai police often use the term "touching the ground" to refer to finding overseas critics and identifying their connections to China. This is not the only means of getting things done for CCP as even in this instance the Australian student's account on Twitter was suspended initially and later restored after mass reporting. Twitter did not provide any grounds for suspending the account, but it is possible the action was done due to Chinese pressure. Police have targeted increasingly obscure critics and even Chinese students have been contacted. Many of them were questioned about their followers on Twitter.
- Weibo was fined heavily for not aligning with CCP's initiative to make a cleaner Cyberspace. Alibaba might have analyzed some upcoming risks and the step to sell its stake might be a step to mitigate them. According to the annual report on Weibo dividends are genuine and make normal profits but the price of shares has not been exceptional with value decreasing since 2018 (See Image 2). Since speculations about Alibaba selling its shares came out, the share value has increased to 2.8%. So the step might be just to increase the investor interest in the firm. This trend infers that the Chinese stock market investors prefer to invest in a state-owned enterprise rather than a majority private-stake one.

Image 1 : PLA's Armored Division



Image 2 : Weibo corporation performance in Last 5 years (Source: Seeking alpha)

WB - Weibo Corporation

31.81 **0.83 (+2.68%)** 4:00 PM 01/03/22

NASDAQ | Close

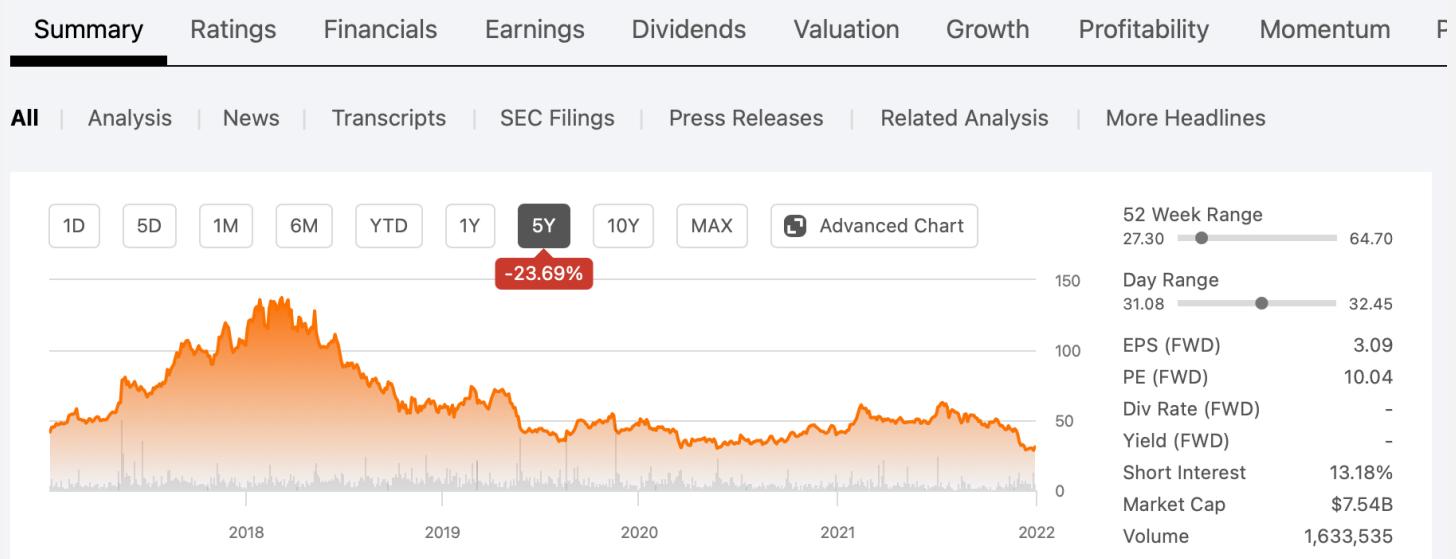


Image 3: Images from an article reporting on Indians shooting videos in China (translated by ORCA)

