

OPINION: CHRISTMAS IN CHINA P.26 | FEATURES: DELVING INTO XIAMEN'S HERITAGE P.30

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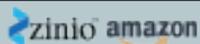
Tracing flavors along the ancient Silk Road

Cover Design: Wang Yajuan

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45 and Counting

On January 1, 1979, China and the United States officially established diplomatic relations based on the principle of seeking common ground while reserving differences. Forty-five years on, this principle still rings true.

Over the past decades, both countries have gained from cooperation and lost from confrontation.

There are two stabilizers in China-U.S. relations. Number one: people-to-people exchanges. Fifty-two years ago, an encounter between Chinese table tennis player Zhuang Zedong and his U.S. counterpart Glenn Cowan during the 31st World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, kicked off the normalization of China-U.S. relations, followed by U.S. President Richard Nixon's icebreaking visit to China in February 1972, ending more than 20 years of estrangement. Since then, people-to-people exchanges have always played an important role in China-U.S. relations, contributing to broader interactions in education, science and technology, culture, healthcare, sports, media, etc.

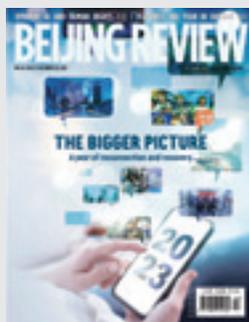
Number two: trade. Despite lingering frictions, China and the U.S. have made breakthroughs in economic and trade cooperation over the past 45 years. The value of trade in goods between the two countries surged from \$2.5 billion in 1979 to \$754.5 billion in 2022.

Though China and the U.S. have different national conditions, social systems and levels of development, they are both major countries with pivotal positions in the global framework. They complement each other in several fields, such as trade, economic development, and science and technology. Moreover, a stable Sino-American relationship is important for maintaining world peace and development.

In the past few years, the impact of the pandemic, among other things, has seriously affected China-U.S. relations, and people-to-people exchanges in particular. But the more difficult things get, the more important exchanges will be. Only through communication can they effectively resolve differences and problems and enhance mutual understanding and trust.

More than five years after the U.S. started a trade war against China, it is high time for them to return the world's most important bilateral relationship to a state of normalcy. Mutually beneficial trade relations should no longer be damaged in the endless battle between suppression and counter-suppression and between sanctions and counter-sanctions.

Both countries must continue to seek common ground while reserving their differences as they did 45 years ago, and jointly serve the world's common good. **BR**



WRITE TO US

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AT YOUR CULTURAL SERVICE!

Visitors explore the newly-opened Grand Canal Museum of Beijing, also called the Capital Museum East Branch, in Tongzhou District of Beijing on December 27, 2023.

Three cultural structures, the Beijing Performing Arts Center, Beijing Library and Grand Canal Museum of Beijing, opened to the public that same day. Mayor of Beijing Yin Yong said at the opening ceremony that the facilities will allow people to enjoy the city's finest cultural products and services, and promote the public sharing of fine arts.



No Cold Feet!

Visitors ride snowmobiles across a stretch of snow-covered land in Beiji Village of Mohe, Heilongjiang Province, northeast China, on December 22, 2023. Known as China's "North Pole," Mohe has developed several winter tourism programs in recent years, attracting tourists to embark on an "extremely cold journey."

Commemorating Mao's Birth

The Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee hosted a conference at the Great Hall of the People on December 26, 2023, to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the birth of former state leader Mao Zedong.

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese President and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, delivered an important speech at the gathering.

Xi said that the life of Mao was one devoted to national prosperity, rejuvenation and people's happiness. Mao led the people in blazing a trail for adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and made indelible

historic contributions to the Chinese nation and its people, which will go down in history, Xi said.

Xi stressed the importance of pushing forward the cause pioneered by Mao and called for efforts to transform China into a stronger country and rejuvenate the Chinese nation on all fronts by pursuing Chinese modernization.

Mao Zedong Thought is an invaluable spiritual wealth for the Party and will guide its action in the long term, Xi said, underscoring that the best way to commemorate Mao is to continue to advance the cause pioneered by him.

Meeting Targets

China will take several measures to ensure it meets the targets

outlined in its 14th Five-Year Plan for the 2021-25 period, an official said on December 26, 2023.

China is halfway through its implementation of the plan and has laid a solid foundation for securing a strong start to building a modern socialist country on all fronts, Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said in an interim assessment report delivered to a session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature.

Going forward, challenges include an imperfect long-term mechanism to expand residents' consumption, a high level of pollutant and carbon emissions, and the coexistence of an inadequate supply of public services

and the partial misallocation of resources, Zheng said.

To meet its targets, China will take a series of measures such as expanding domestic demand, ensuring accelerated recovery and the steady growth of the economy, and deepening market-oriented reform and institutional opening up, the report read.

Global Festival

China looks forward to celebrating the Spring Festival, which falls on the first day of the first month on the lunar calendar, with the world, and hopes all civilizations will live in harmony and prosper together, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said on December 25, 2023.

Mao made the remarks at a daily press briefing when asked to comment on the fact that the 78th UN General Assembly on December 22, 2023 adopted a resolution by consensus to list the Lunar New Year as a UN floating holiday.

The resolution acknowledges that the festival is observed in many UN member states, and invites UN bodies at headquarters and other duty stations, where the festival is observed, to avoid holding meetings on the Lunar New Year.

Mao said that the Lunar New Year is the oldest and most important traditional festival in Chinese culture, and it's a time for family reunion. She noted that its Chinese name *Chunjie*, literally meaning Spring Festival, conveys the greetings and warmth of the spring season, and the festival embodies the core values of harmony, love and peace in Chinese culture.

Mao said that the festival has become a global cultural event. "Some rough estimates suggest

that the festival is a public holiday in almost 20 countries and is celebrated in various ways by about one fifth of humanity,” Mao said. Traditional celebratory activities are organized in nearly 200 countries and regions, she added.

This year, the Spring Festival will fall on February 10, ushering in the Year of the Dragon.

Germplasm Resources

China had approximately 539,000 crop germplasm resource samples in long-term preservation facilities by late 2022, according to an NPC report released on December 26, 2023.

The value of China’s crop seed market exceeded 130 billion yuan (\$18.2 billion) for the first time in 2022, and total assets of enterprises in the sector climbed to some 306.9 billion yuan (\$42.9 billion), a team dispatched by the Standing Committee of the 14th NPC to inspect the implementation of the Seed Law said in the report, which was submitted to lawmakers for deliberation.

The Seed Law was enacted to protect germplasm resources and promote their rational use;

standardize variety selection and seed production, trade and use; safeguard the lawful rights and interests of variety breeders and seed producers; and to promote the development of plant cultivation and forestry.

Crop germplasm resources play an important role in both food security and agricultural sci-tech innovation. The report suggested that more efforts should be made to strengthen the protection and utilization of germplasm resources, step up research on the breeding of outstanding seed varieties, foster large seed companies with competitiveness, beef up intellectual property protection, intensify supervision over seed quality, and implement support measures for the seed industry.

Urban Air Traffic

An urban air traffic center for self-driving passenger aircraft opened in Shenzhen of Guangdong Province and started urban air traffic business on December 26, 2023.

The center, located in Baoan District, includes an apron, a hangar, as well as its command and dispatch center on 4,500 square meters of land.

It supports low-altitude urban air mobility (UAM) business,



Ready to Cruise

Exterior view of the cruise ship *Adora Magic City*, China’s first domestically built large cruise ship, docked at a port in Shanghai on December 24, 2023. The ship departed from the port for a trial operation that same day, in order to get ready for its commercial maiden voyage to Northeast Asia on January 1.

which is likely to expand in the future to include UAM travel for sightseeing, science and technology projects and science popularization education.

Shenzhen, home of China’s leading drone manufacturer DJI, has strived to promote the

development of low-altitude UAM economy. The city authority intends to lead the country in developing a convenient and efficient low-altitude infrastructure system for both passenger and cargo transport, as well as low-altitude air tour services.



Winter’s Meat and Greet

A worker hangs up meat to cure at a food processing factory in Huangshan, Anhui Province, on December 26, 2023. The aroma of cured meat is often associated with the onset of deep winter.

THIS WEEK ECONOMY

SOE Profits

Total profits of enterprises under direct regulation of the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) of the State Council, commonly known as central state-owned enterprises (SOEs), reached 2.4 trillion yuan (\$336 billion) in the January-November period, according to the commission.

During this period, fixed assets investment of the central SOEs, including real estate, expanded 9.1 percent year on year to 4.1 trillion yuan (\$574 billion).

According to the SASAC, the central SOEs have increased spending on research and development (R&D) to boost innovation-driven development. In the first 11 months of 2023, their total R&D input topped 900 billion yuan (\$126 billion), an increase of nearly 70 billion yuan (\$9.8 billion) compared with the same period a year earlier.

The data also revealed that the productivity of the central SOEs increased steadily in this

period, with their annualized overall labor productivity reaching 773,000 yuan (\$108,212) per person, up 3.8 percent year on year.

Cotton Output

China's cotton output last year exceeded 5.61 million tons, down from 2022 partly due to unfavorable weather conditions in the major producing region, official data showed.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the yearly output was 6.1 percent lower than in 2022, while the overall cotton field area was down by 7.1 percent to more than 2.78 million hectares. Meanwhile, the national average output per hectare increased by 1.1 percent.

NBS official Wang Guirong said Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the country's largest cotton-growing region, experienced unsatisfactory weather conditions such as lower temperatures and more rainfall in spring and long-lasting heatwaves in summer which, combined with a

reduction in low-yield fields, resulted in a marginal per hectare production decline.

The harvest in the Yangtze River basin, one of the longest-inhabited regions in China—stretching from the country's southwest to east, increased per-hectare output from a low foundation caused by persistent high temperatures and droughts in 2022. Planting regions along the Yellow River, the principal river flowing through north China, also increased per-hectare output due to improved management, Wang said.

Industrial Recovery

China will take further measures to step up the country's industrial development in 2024 based on the sector's current steady recovery, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT).

The country will beef up policy support for the stable development of key industries, promote sci-tech innovation, expand demand and help

reduce the cost of industrial companies, Tao Qing, head of the bureau for operation, monitoring and coordination with the MIIT, said in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency.

Since early 2023, the industrial economy has shown steady recovery and good momentum amid fluctuations, with policy efforts taking effect and the foundation consolidated, Tao said.

Xie Cun, head of the bureau for information and communications development with the MIIT, said China aims to accelerate the construction of its 5G networks and gigabit passive optical networks, minimizing the physical footprint, increasing bandwidth and improving network security, and continue to promote innovative breakthroughs in core devices.

Renewable Energy

Nationwide, renewable energy capacity has overtaken thermal power for the first time, accounting

NUMBERS

China's Service Outsourcing Industry in January-November 2023

(All growth rates are y.o.y.)

Service outsourcing contracts inked by Chinese firms

Total value



Executed contract value



Offshore service outsourcing contract value



Service outsourcing executed contract value

With other RCEP members



With the United States



With the European Union



for over half of installed power generation capacity, official figures showed.

The installed power generation capacity of renewable energy, which includes wind power, solar power, hydropower and biomass energy, totaled 1.45 billion kilowatts (kW) as of late last year, according to the National Energy Administration on December 21, 2023.

The country's total power generation capacity reached around 2.9 billion kW, up 12.9 percent from 2022.

Amid the country's efforts to accelerate the development of wind and solar power, the combined power generation capacity of the two has topped 1 billion kW, maintaining a major share in the country's newly installed power generation capacity, the administration said.

The data also showed that renewable energy currently provides about one third of the country's total power consumption, with wind power and solar power combined accounting for

more than 15 percent of total power use.

Non-Financial ODI

China's non-financial outbound direct investment (ODI) increased 18.4 percent year on year to 814.54 billion yuan (\$114 billion) in the first 11 months of 2023, official data showed.

ODI is a business strategy in which a domestic firm expands its operations to a foreign country.

In U.S. dollar terms, the ODI went up 12.7 percent from 2022, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The non-financial ODI in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, a China-proposed initiative to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, came in at 201.17 billion yuan (\$28.2 billion) during the January-November period, up 26.8 percent year on year.

The turnover of contracted projects overseas grew 6.9 percent year on year to 955.22

billion yuan (\$133.7 billion), the ministry said.

Tesla New Factory

U.S. electric car maker Tesla Inc. has officially launched its new mega factory project capable of producing 10,000 Megapacks a year, in Shanghai.

A signing ceremony for the project's land acquisition took place on December 22, 2023, in Shanghai, marking the official opening of what the company called a "milestone project."

The Megapack is a powerful battery that provides energy storage and support, helping stabilize the grid and prevent outages, information on Tesla's website showed.

The new project, located in the Lin-gang new area of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone, is scheduled to break ground in the first quarter of this year and start production in the fourth quarter.

The factory will initially produce 10,000 Megapack units every year, equal to nearly 40

gigawatt-hours of energy storage. The products will be sold worldwide.

RMB Activity

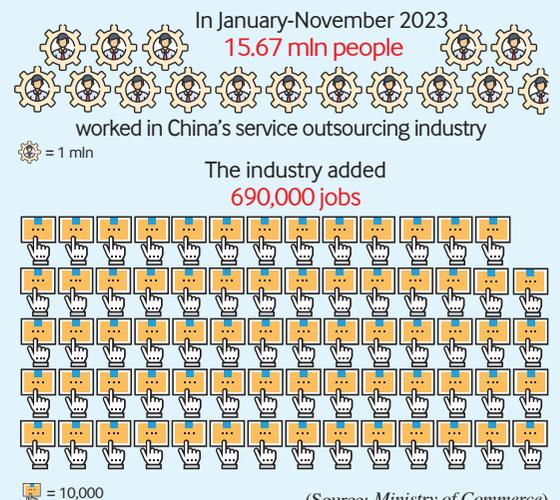
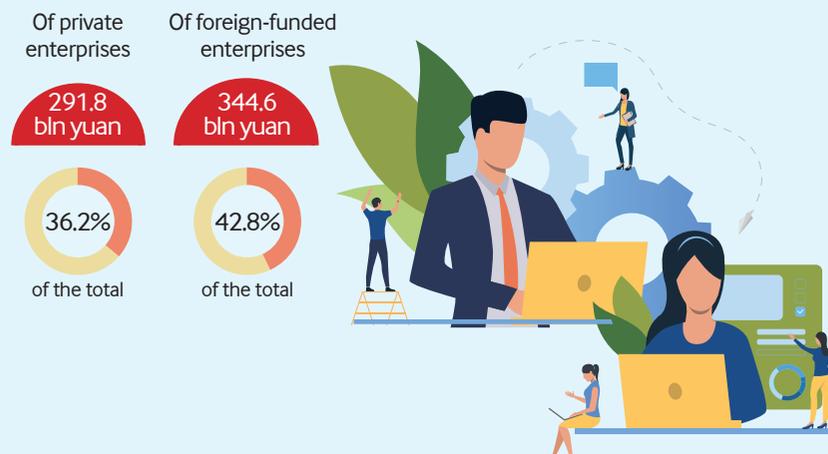
The Chinese currency renminbi (RMB), or the yuan, climbed one position to become the fourth most active currency for global payments by value in November 2023, with a share of 4.61 percent.

Overall, the renminbi payment value jumped 34.87 percent compared to October. In general, all payment currencies increased 5.35 percent, said the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), a global provider of financial messaging services, on December 21, 2023.

Regarding international payments, excluding payments within the eurozone, the renminbi ranked fifth with a share of 3.15 percent as of November 2023.

Last October, the renminbi retained its position as the fifth most active currency for global payments by value, with a share of 3.6 percent.

Executed contract value of outsourced services



THIS WEEK WORLD



RUSSIA

People walk past New Year decorations in central Moscow on December 21, 2023



UNITED STATES

People are served food during the National Action Network (NAN) Christmas Dinner and Toy Distribution at the House of Justice in Harlem, New York City, on December 25, 2023. NAN offered free meals and toys to local residents



INDONESIA

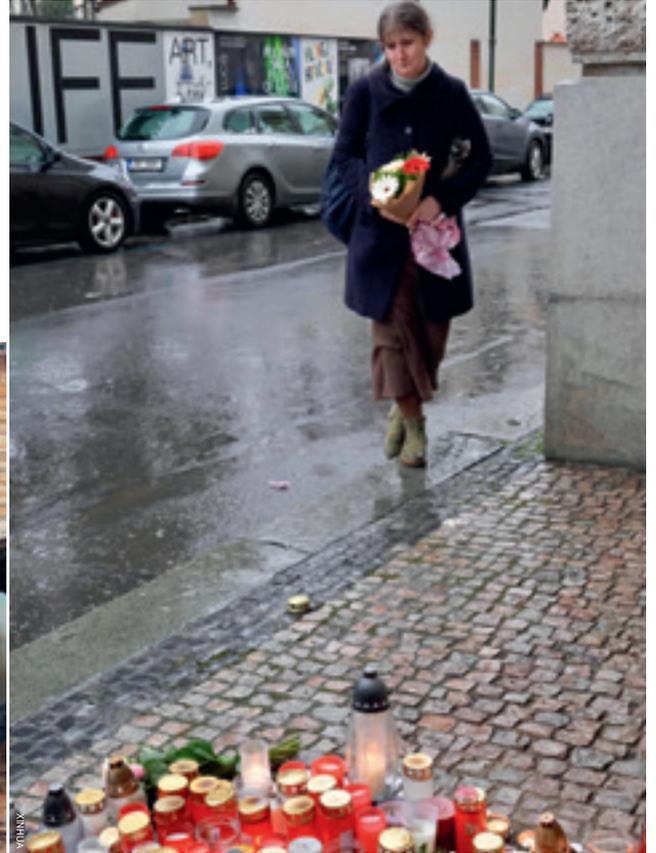
Passengers on the platform of the Halim high-speed train station in Jakarta on December 25, 2023. The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway handled more than 1 million passenger trips since its official commercial launch last October





DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Residents stand in front of houses severely damaged by heavy rains in Bukavu, capital of South Kivu Province, on December 27, 2023. At least 25 people were killed after heavy rainfall hit Bukavu overnight



YOHANNES KIMANI



YOHANNES KIMANI



CZECH REPUBLIC

A woman carries a bouquet of flowers to candles placed in front of the Faculty of Arts building at Charles University in Prague on December 23, 2023. The country mourned the victims of a shooting at the university that left 14 people dead and 25 others injured the day before



MALTA

Firefighters work to put out a fire at a waste management complex in Maghtab, Naxxar on December 23, 2023



YOHANNES KIMANI

THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ CENTRAL BANK DEPUTY GOVERNOR

Veteran central banker **Lu Lei** has been appointed deputy governor of the People's Bank of China (PBC). He is the third new senior official to join the central bank's top management team, which consists of a governor and five deputy governors, since July 2023.

Lu was moved from his position as a deputy administrator of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, China's foreign exchange regulator, a role he had held since 2017.

Born in 1970 in Wujin, Jiangsu Province, Lu joined the PBC in 1996 and studied on the job at the central bank's graduate school from 2001 to 2004, earning a Ph.D. in economics. He served as director of the PBC's Research Bureau from 2014 to 2016 and its Financial Stability Bureau from 2016 to 2017.



No Man's Land

Gmw.cn

December 22, 2023

Chatbots powered by artificial intelligence (AI) have found their way into every corner of China's customer service sector.

Whenever you dial customer service, your quest will be answered by a polite voice, which never gets angry but also seldom solves the problem. Oftentimes, customers are trapped in an endless loop that never leads to a human agent. As the Chinese say, "The farthest distance on Earth lies between you and a human support team."

The widespread use of AI avatars is

rooted in the rapid rise of e-commerce. The massive expansion of the country's online shopping sector over the past decade has generated an enormous demand for online consumer services. And the deployment of virtual agents, which are best at offering pre-programmed responses to frequently asked questions, can boost efficiency and unclog busy hotlines.

Businesses should understand that people's real concerns with AI customer support lie not in the technology itself, but in its use as a means to avoid addressing client requests. To offer consumers a better shopping experience, e-commerce platforms should set up a proper complaint mechanism to deal with the improper use of AI agents.



Reviving a River

China Newsweek

December 18, 2023

Stretching over 6,300 km from the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau to the East China Sea, the Yangtze River, the longest river in both China and Asia, has nourished the time-honored Chinese civilization.

However, as the country's economy set off and industries started to spread along the river, it became heavily polluted with toxic wastes from local factories. Lakes in its lower reaches frequently dried up. Fish stocks in its tributaries were once

"We cannot afford to have a generation growing up in isolation or having much mistrust and misunderstanding toward each other."

Yang Qianye, Third Secretary of Education at the Chinese Embassy in the United States, in a recent interview with *China Daily* newspaper, stressing the importance of student exchanges for China-U.S. ties

"Digital connectivity will benefit not only large corporations but also small and medium-sized enterprises in the long run as it opens up opportunities for everyone."

Montri Mahaplerkpong, Vice Chairman of the Federation of Thai Industries, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

on the brink of extinction.

Realizing something had to be done to restore the river's health, authorities and scientists in recent years have worked in tandem to boost water quality by combating industrial pollution. And their efforts have been paying off. Data show that 98.1 percent of monitoring stations along the river reported fairly good water quality in 2022, marking a 19-percent increase from 2015.

However, biodiversity loss is still a major issue in the Yangtze River basin. In 2007, the *baiji* dolphin, a species found only in the Yangtze River, was proclaimed extinct. The Yangtze finless porpoise, another critically endangered species, also saw its numbers dwindle over the past 30 years. According to a survey conducted in 2022, there were only 1,249 Yangtze finless porpoises left in the world.

Therefore, experts have been advocating a shift in focus from water quality restoration to the conservation of aquatic life. On January 1, 2021, the country imposed a 10-year fishing ban covering all key waters of the Yangtze River. In June 2023, the Central Government launched an assessment system that prioritizes the health of aquatic life and river ecosystems. Hopes are high that the system will usher in a new age of ecological conservation.

Dashing Through the Snow?

Rednet.cn

December 19, 2023

As snowstorms hit China's chilly north in December, a heated debate erupted on Chinese social media about whether people should order any type of delivery on snowy days. Some netizens urged the public to refrain from placing orders during severe winter weather to protect couriers from traffic accidents when speeding on icy or snow-covered roads.

But for many couriers who choose to stay on the job during bad weather, this "act of kindness" translates into nothing more than a pay cut during the winter season. "If you don't order delivery,

how are we supposed to make a living?" Liu Zhuang, a delivery courier, said in a video that went viral on Chinese social media.

There is no right or wrong answer to the question of whether people should order, for example, food during a snowstorm. What customers can do, however, is be a little more understanding when it comes to delivery delays. A positive customer review, or even a simple five-star rating, is also an effective way to show gratitude.

For their part, delivery service platforms should enhance the algorithm to automatically generate optimized routes based on changing weather and road conditions, so that couriers do not have to go literally the extra mile.

NEW TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY HEAD

Li Luming, a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has become the new president of the Beijing-based Tsinghua University, one of the leading higher education institutions in China.

Born in Huantai, Shandong Province, in 1968, Li received his bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. degrees from Tsinghua's Department of Mechanical Engineering. After graduating in 1996, he joined the department, where he became a professor in 2003.

In 2004, Li became head of the then newly established Institute of Human-Machine-Environment Engineering at Tsinghua. The institute focuses on space health, as well as neurological and psychiatric disorders.

With a research focus on neuromodulation technology, Li led his team to develop China's first implantable deep brain stimulator for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. In September 2022, Li became Tsinghua's vice president.



"The country [China] is an indispensable part of global value chains, so you can basically not have a significant global presence if you are not present in China."

Jens Eskelund, President of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, in a recent interview with Xinhua

"We must renounce the moral and medical disaster of rich countries hoarding and controlling pandemic healthcare supplies, and ensure everyone has access to diagnostics, treatments and vaccines."

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General, in his message marking the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness on December 27, 2023, emphasizing the imperative for global preparedness against future pandemics, drawing on the lessons from the COVID-19 crisis



COVER STORY

UPS AND DOWNS

Economic and trade ties, a microcosm of China-U.S. relations over the last 45 years

By Zhong Feiteng

Over the past decades, the economic and trade relationship between China and the United States, which connects both sides of the

Pacific like “thread and needle,” has gone through a process of rising from nothing and then falling from its recent peak.

In 1972, after then U.S. President Richard Nixon’s visit to China, the two countries resumed trade relations after a 20-year-plus hiatus. Then,

China’s historic reform and opening-up drive that began in 1978 brought it into the wider global market.

The country has since become an important part of the