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## CULTURAL CONSUMERS

How the experience economy builds resilience and drives growth



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Cover Photo: Tourists at the Shanghai Disney Resort on March 20, the day the resort launched its 10th birthday celebrations (VCG)

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## From Goods to Good Times

Chinese consumers are increasingly spending their money on experiences, developing the experience economy as a new engine of consumption quantity and quality. As living standards continue to rise and the middle class continues to expand, demand is shifting from basic needs and functional products and services toward those that provide enjoyment.

In particular, the young consumers who have grown up in the digital age prefer unique and hands-on experiences and are willing to pay a premium for experiences that provide breaks from daily life, a sense of being the creator of the experience and valuable social media content. This shift from buying goods to buying experiences is essentially a transformation of consumers from passive buyers to co-creators of value. What they purchase are no longer the goods themselves, but rather the unique memories, emotional resonance and mental fulfillment embodied in the process.

Behind the emergence of the experience economy lies the dual driving forces of culture and technology. Culture provides an irreplaceable emotional element in the consumption process. Whether strolling through ancient towns in traditional Chinese costumes or crafting a piece of pottery, experience consumers engage with history and traditional culture. At the same time,

technology is breaking the limitations of time and space, transforming static cultural symbols into immersive spaces that engage all five senses. Cutting-edge technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality and digital twins are making culture more accessible and attractive.

To ensure the sustainable development of the experience economy, many market players are continuously focusing on the quality of their products. They are drawing deeply on the rich resources of local culture, transforming unique intellectual properties, such as local characteristics, folk customs and intangible cultural heritage, into experience products, creating distinctive competitive advantages. They are also building cross-industry creative collaboration mechanisms, promoting collaboration between cultural institutions, artists and commercial entities, and transforming high-quality cultural resources into content output, enabling consumers not only to consume, but also to learn, understand stories and develop emotional connections.

The growth of the experience economy is a continuation of people's long-standing desire for a better life. It reflects a shift from material consumption to the pursuit of meaningful and memorable experiences. All this will help promote the growth and resilience of the domestic economy. **BR**



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## CROSS-STRAITS DIALOGUE

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, meets with Cheng Li-wun, Chairwoman of the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) party, in Beijing on April 10.

Invited by the CPC Central Committee and Xi, Cheng is the first KMT chairperson to have led a delegation to the Chinese mainland in the past decade. The delegation had visited Jiangsu Province and Shanghai before coming to Beijing.

Xi said this meeting between the CPC and KMT leaders after 10 years is of great significance for developing relations between the two parties and across the Taiwan Straits.

Xi stressed that no matter how the international landscape and the situation across the Taiwan Straits may evolve, the overarching trend toward the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will not change, and the prevailing momentum for the Chinese on both sides of the Straits to come together will not change.

He added that people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits hope for peace and tranquility, improved cross-Straits relations, and better lives. “This is a responsibility that the CPC and the KMT cannot shirk, and also a driving force for the two parties to work together,” Xi said.



## Racing Through History

Boatmen race punts during the Qintong Boat Festival, held at the Qinhu National Wetland Park in Qintong Town of Taizhou City, Jiangsu Province, on April 6. Originating in ancient China's Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), the Qintong Boat Festival is held in memory of ancestors and ancient heroes.

## Funeral Services Website

The China Funeral Network, a platform developed under the guidance of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), went online on April 5, coinciding with the Qingming Festival, also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day.

The website focuses on meeting the information service needs of bereaved families by integrating funeral and burial service resources nationwide.

It provides authoritative information for inquiries and consultation related to funerals, burials and memorials.

Xu Zesheng, an MCA official, said all provincial-level regions have participated in the website's development and promotion, noting that it will help families quickly locate funeral resources and clearly understand service pricing.

The website's functions will be expanded in the future to help promote eco-friendly burial practices, and encourage civilized memorial customs in China, according to the ministry.

## Digital Humans

The Cyberspace Administration of China has drafted a set of administrative measures for governing Internet services involving digital humans and began soliciting public opinions on the draft on April 3.

The draft requires that providers of services involving digital humans, which are human-like virtual beings capable of voice chat or other forms of interaction, continuously display a prominent label reading "digital human" on all such content.

According to the draft, the use of individuals' sensitive personal information for generating and modeling digital human images

must be subject to their informed consent.

The draft also prohibits inducing minors to become addicted to digital humans through virtual services that simulate family or intimate relationships, or services that may encourage excessive spending.

## Illegal Financial Activities

Chinese authorities have launched a new campaign to crack down on illicit intermediaries involved in illegal and borderline-legal activities in the financial sector, as part of a drive to maintain regulatory order and protect consumers.

The campaign, coordinated by the Ministry of Public Security and the National Financial Regulatory Administration, will target illegal deposit and loan intermediaries, unapproved online lending services, and illicit insurance agents,

among others, according to a meeting held on April 2.

Authorities vowed to deepen investigations into criminal networks and pursue those behind the operations. They also called for improved financial services alongside stronger law enforcement to root out illegal activities in the sector.

In a previous round of crackdowns from June to November 2025, police investigated more than 1,500 cases and broke up over 200 criminal gangs.

## Transparent School Admissions

China's Ministry of Education (MOE) has issued a circular outlining plans for a 2026 special campaign to promote fair, well-regulated and transparent admissions in primary and secondary schools.

The circular highlights equal access to education for key groups, calling for the full implementation of policies to ensure that children of migrant workers are enrolled in public schools primarily on the basis of their current residence permits.

In areas with large population inflows, local governments are urged to increase the supply of public school places for migrant children.

In addition, tailored measures will be introduced to facilitate school enrollment for children from families with more than one child, allowing younger siblings to attend the same schools as their older brothers or sisters. The campaign also focuses on improving forward-looking planning of educational resources, according to the MOE.

Authorities will establish a database to forecast the school-age population and conduct regular assessments of school facilities, teacher allocation, and equipment at the county level to better gauge supply and demand for admission

slots and issue early warnings where needed.

## Power Bank Safety

On April 3, China unveiled a mandatory national standard for power bank safety, aiming to comprehensively improve the safety level of portable energy storage devices.

Effective April 1, 2027, the new standard introduces a series of stringent requirements. It mandates enhanced safety protection against risks such as high temperature, overcharging and compression. The standard also introduces a new test to ensure aging batteries maintain normal functioning to reduce the risk of internal short circuits after long-term use.

Furthermore, products must be equipped with functions for storing and retrieving abnormal operation information. Each product is also required to bear a unique identification code, allowing consumers to query core information such as the battery brand.

After the standard's implementation, consumers may continue to possess and use previously purchased compliant power banks that hold a valid China Compulsory Certification.

Formulated by the Ministry

of Industry and Information Technology, the standard is expected to further regulate the market, promote technological upgrades in the industry, and better protect consumer safety and rights.

## Children and Women Trafficking

The number of abductions and human trafficking crimes involving women and children significantly declined in recent years, with a 77.95-percent drop in 2025 compared to the peak in 2012, the Supreme People's Court (SPC) announced on April 2.

The decline indicates that such crimes have been effectively curbed, the SPC said.

Over the years, Chinese courts have implemented strict measures against trafficking, the SPC noted. In addition to cracking down on the offenders directly involved in trafficking, courts also punish those who "purchase" trafficked women and children, aiming to curb the demand that drives these crimes.

Those who, after "purchasing" the victims, commit additional crimes such as rape, intentional injury, illegal detention, or abuse,



## Taking Flight

Staff debug a drone at an aviation company in Laixi City, Shandong Province, on April 2. An industrial chain for the low-altitude economy has been established in Laixi in recent years, covering aircraft research and development, aviation materials processing, precision manufacturing, flight training, air transport services and vocational training.

also face relevant penalties under the law.

Authorities have also focused on addressing illegal activities related to the falsification or unlawful issuance of birth certificates, marriage certificates, household registration documents, and other materials tied to human trafficking or "transactions," the SPC added.

On the day of the announcement, the court also published four typical cases of related crimes handled by Chinese courts, including one in which the convicted child abductor was sentenced to death and executed. In another case, the convict was sentenced to life in prison for the raping and trafficking of women.



## Pear Blossom Spectacle

Tourists wander beneath pear trees in full bloom at Nanchangtan Village in Zhongwei, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on April 6. The village is home to hundreds of old pear trees, the most ancient of which is over 600 years old. This natural wonder has made the village a popular tourist destination.

## Consumption Growth

China recorded strong consumption growth during the three-day Qingming Festival holiday from April 4 to 6. The holiday travel boom was boosted by the overlap of the festival holiday and the spring breaks for primary and secondary school students in many regions, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce on April 6.

During the holiday, the average daily sales of key retail and food and beverage enterprises monitored by the ministry increased by 2.4 percent year on year. Hotel accommodation consumption on major platforms increased by 2.6 percent year on year, while intercity travel trips grew by 15.1 percent. During the holiday, car rental orders increased by about 40 percent from a year earlier, driven by a surge in family trips, the data showed.

The data also indicated that during the holiday, online sales revenue from smart products,

including smart glasses, smart watches and bands, and smart blood glucose meters, saw marked increases.

Qingming Festival, or Tomb-Sweeping Day, fell on April 5 this year. It is a traditional Chinese festival during which people visit burial places and pay tribute to their ancestors. The holiday also provides a short break for people looking to engage in outdoor activities and sightseeing.

An estimated 845.38 million passenger trips were made across China during the holiday, up 6 percent year on year, according to transportation authorities.

## Offshore Wind Farm

China's deepest commercial offshore wind project entered full-capacity operation on April 7, marking breakthroughs in deep-water construction, large-scale turbine integration and precision installation technologies, according to state-owned China Huaneng Group.

The project is located roughly 70 km off the northern coast of the

Shandong Peninsula in the Yellow Sea. It has a total installed capacity of 504 megawatts, made up of 42 sets of 12-megawatt wind turbines. At full capacity, the wind farm will generate approximately 1.7 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, which is enough to save about 500,000 tons of standard coal equivalent per year.

Situated in waters between 52 and 56 meters deep, the project overcame challenges including complex deep-sea geology, frequent extreme sea conditions and long-distance offshore construction. Innovations include the application of four-pile jacket foundation structures up to 83.9 meters tall, the tallest of their kind in China, to ensure safe and stable operation of the turbines in the complex deep-sea geological environment.

The project also adopted high-precision positioning technology developed on the basis of China's homegrown BeiDou Satellite Navigation System, achieving millimeter-level accuracy in seabed pile driving. Combined with intelligent auxiliary sinking technology,

the time needed to sink piles for a single turbine was shortened from 48 hours to 29 hours. In addition, technicians used collaborative technology combining drones and artificial magnetic fields to complete the laying of 95.6 km of ultra-long submarine cables.

## Forex Reserves

China's foreign exchange (forex) reserves stood at \$3.3421 trillion at the end of March, down \$85.7 billion, or 2.5 percent, from the end of February, official data showed on April 7.

The State Administration of Foreign Exchange said in March, the U.S. dollar index rose, while prices of major global financial assets declined, influenced by the global macroeconomic environment, monetary policies of major economies and market expectations.

The combined effects of exchange rate conversion and changes in asset prices led to a decrease in China's forex reserves that month, the administration said.

China's economic perfor-

## NUMBERS

### China's Service Outsourcing Industry in January-February

(All growth rates are y.o.y.; \$1=6.86 yuan as of April 9)

#### Service outsourcing contracts inked by firms in China

Total value

213.28 bln yuan

down 8.7%

mance improved steadily during the period, with new and higher-quality development momentum. Its steady performance provided solid support for maintaining a high degree of stability in the scale of the country's forex reserves, according to the administration.

## High-Quality E-Commerce

Several government departments have jointly issued guidelines to advance high-quality development of the e-commerce sector, aiming to strengthen its role in supporting the real economy, the Ministry of Commerce announced on April 6.

The document outlines key measures to deepen the integration of the digital and real economies, focusing on empowering small and medium-sized enterprises and rural areas through e-commerce, boosting industrial digitalization, and encouraging technological innovation to improve consumption quality.

It also highlights efforts to expand high-standard opening

up by advancing cross-border e-commerce and the Silk Road e-commerce initiative, while pushing for greater alignment with international rules in areas such as digital trade.

To foster a sound development ecosystem, the guidelines call for clarifying the responsibilities of platforms, enhancing regulation and supporting e-commerce companies in expanding globally in compliance with relevant regulations.

Supporting measures include improving financial services, activating the value of data elements and strengthening talent cultivation for the industry.

## Corporate Credit Evaluation

China will establish an institutional framework for the comprehensive evaluation of corporate credit status, according to a document recently released by the General Office of the State Council, the highest state administrative organ.

The framework will strengthen the fundamental role of public

credit evaluation while promoting its integration with market assessment, thereby facilitating financing for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, it says.

Unified rules will be established for public credit evaluation, together with standardized channels for publishing evaluation results. The document also calls for stronger coordination mechanisms and improved management of credit evaluations across industries.

It urges local authorities and related departments to enhance data sharing, streamline evaluation procedures and create a level playing field for market competition, so as to help build a unified national market.

## Hi-Tech Industry Growth

Data released by the State Taxation Administration on April 1 show steady economic performance as well as strengthening innovation momentum, indicated by robust revenue growth in hi-tech industries in the first quarter

of 2026.

The sales revenue of hi-tech industries for the period from January 1 to March 25 increased by 14.6 percent year on year. Hi-tech manufacturing and services saw revenues grow by 12.7 percent and 15.8 percent, respectively.

Driven by demand from AI and computing power centers, the sales revenue of integrated circuit design and manufacturing also saw a sharp increase, the data showed. During the same period, the sales revenue of the manufacturing sector grew by 5.4 percent while the sales revenue of machinery and equipment manufacturing rose by 6.3 percent.

The data also revealed China's accelerating pace in green transition, with the sales revenue of ecological and environmental protection industry rising by 9.6 percent year on year. The sales revenue from clean energy power generation grew rapidly, accounting for 36.3 percent of the total sales revenue of power production, an increase of 4.5 percentage points compared with a year ago.

### Offshore service outsourcing executed contract value

With the United States

21.26  
bln yuan

With Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

23.85  
bln yuan

With Singapore

20.83  
bln yuan


### Offshore service outsourcing executed contract value

Of foreign-funded enterprises

58.66  
bln yuan

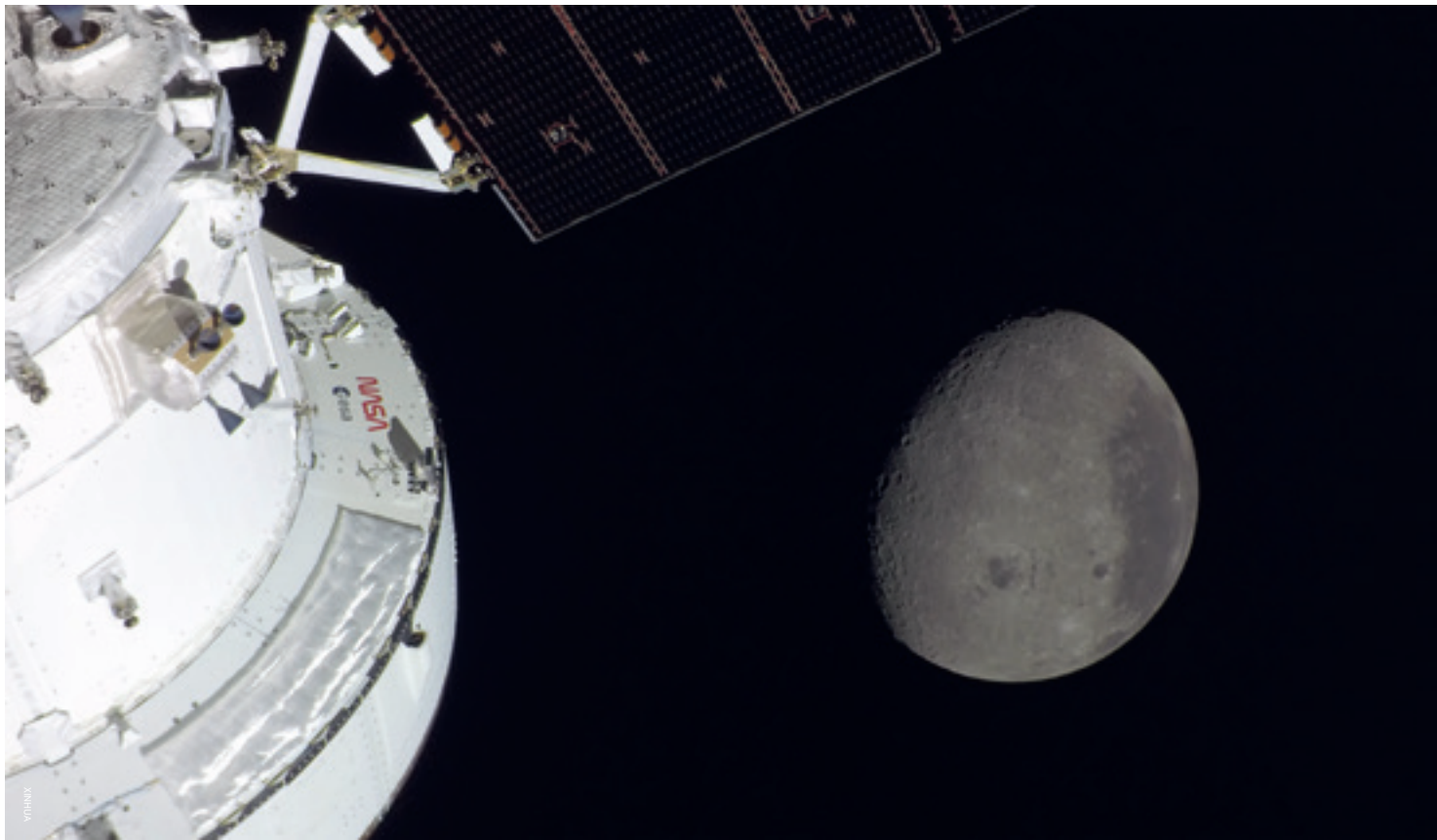
Up 2.2%

By the end of February 2026, 17.734 mln employees had joined China's service outsourcing industry.

 = 1 mln



(Source: Ministry of Commerce)



## OUTER SPACE

The *Orion* spacecraft makes its way from lunar orbit toward Earth on April 6. On that day, the crew of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration Artemis II mission began the return phase of their 10-day lunar flight



## CHILE

Visitors at the 2026 International Air and Space Fair in Santiago on April 7. This year's fair, scheduled from April 7 to 12, attracted 440 exhibitors from 35 countries and regions



## CUBA

Teenagers take to the streets on April 2 for an anti-imperialist youth parade, under the slogan Here With Fidel. The parade was attended by President Miguel Díaz-Canel





## JAPAN

A large crowd of protestors gathers outside the parliament building in Tokyo on April 8 to protest government moves that undermine the country's pacifist constitution, including the deployment of long-range missiles and attempts to ease restrictions on lethal arms exports



## RWANDA

President Paul Kagame and first lady Jeannette Kagame light the Flame of Remembrance during an event marking the 32nd anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, in Kigali on April 7



## PALESTINE

A vehicle in which an Al Jazeera journalist was killed burns after being hit by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City on April 8



# THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

## ↓ SENIOR ENGINEER DONATES ANOTHER MILLION TO CHARITY

**Qian Qihu**, an 89-year-old member at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and China's top defense engineering expert, has donated another 1 million yuan (\$146,000) to the Jin Hui Charity Fund, which he established in 2013, bringing his total personal donations to over 25 million yuan (\$3.65 million). To date, the fund has benefited more than 2,000 people.

Born in 1937, Qian began using his bonuses and allowances to support poverty-stricken students and vulnerable groups in the 1990s before establishing the fund, which he named after his mother and wife. He later contributed his entire 8-million-yuan (\$1.1 million) prize from China's top science award—the State Preeminent Science and Technology Award—to the fund.



“Everything I have achieved comes from the nurturing of my country and its people. Giving back to society is my lifelong mission,” Qian said.

## The Token Explosion

*People's Daily*

April 3

Once a piece of jargon largely confined to the tech world, “token” has recently broken into public discourse and emerged as one of the most talked-about words in China.

Tokens are the base units of text that AI models use to understand and learn language. When users submit a prompt, the model breaks it into tokens, processes them and re-assembles them into an answer.

Why has the term suddenly gone mainstream? The reason lies in the shifting

relationship between humans and the machine. Until recently, most interactions with AI were relatively simple: Humans asked questions, and models replied. In that setting, token consumption rose only when a user actively triggered it. But with the rapid spread of OpenClaw and other AI agents—systems designed not merely to respond but to perform tasks more autonomously—token usage has exploded.

At the start of 2024, China's daily token calls stood at 100 billion. By March this year, it had surpassed 140 trillion. The explosion in token use suggests that AI is no longer on the margins of daily life. It is fast becoming part of its basic infrastructure.



## Vertical Hollywoods

*Oriental Outlook*

February 19

China's micro-drama boom is doing more than minting viral hits. It is also altering the geography of China's entertainment industry. Unlike traditional film and television, which rely on heavy infrastructure and large upfront investment, micro-dramas are built for the speed and logic of online production. That has opened the door to cities with little pedigree in conventional film-making.

“Traditional opera can only thrive if it preserves its artistic core and finds ways to connect with modern audiences. That means nurturing young performers, encouraging innovation and making better use of digital platforms.”

**Chen Li**, a professor at Nanchang University School of Arts and a national inheritor of Ganju Opera, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency about the promotion of regional operas

“The release of four films from Taiwan this spring reflects respect for Taiwan's cultural narratives and the unifying power of Chinese culture.”

**Liu Xing-ren**, an associate professor at Chinese Culture University in Taipei, commenting on the recent debut of a series of Taiwan films on the mainland

A clear example is Zhengzhou, Henan Province. Known in industry circles as China's "vertical Hollywood," the city has emerged as one of the country's most formidable micro-drama hubs. Its competitive edge lies in a combination of convenient transport, relatively low costs and a cluster of advertising firms adept at rapid production and digital marketing. Other small cities, from Linfen and Datong in Shanxi Province to Yancheng and Wuxi in Jiangsu Province are also trying to stake out a place in the industry.

Micro-dramas are proving useful not just as an opportunity to grow local industries, but also as a vehicle for cultural promotion. A popular title, set in the Sichuan-Chongqing region in the 1980s, departed from the genre's usual rapid-fire twists and offered viewers a slower, more textured glimpse of local culture.

Industry insiders are beginning to ask whether the market really needs so many micro-drama hubs. Some cities, eager to boost local GDP figures, have erected barriers against outside production teams, thereby deepening regional divides across the industry. If the sector is to move from competing on speed to competing on quality, it will need to embrace deeper inter-regional cooperation.

## Freedom or Infringement?

**Tide News**

**April 3**

On March 29, Chinese singer and song writer Li Ronghao called out Shan Yichun on social media, accusing her of performing an unauthorized cover of *Li Bai*, a song he wrote in 2013, after he had declined giving her permission to do so. Shan, another singer, first covered and adapted *Li Bai* on a variety show in 2025, reworking it into a high-energy track infused with electronic Chinese-style elements and gaming memes. On March 28, she performed the song again at her concert.

Why did Li refuse permission? Beyond

online mockery from Shan's fans and potential revenue losses, his social media statement suggests a deeper concern: a strong objection to Shan's artistic interpretation of the song. Central to Shan's version was a newly inserted refrain, "so what, what can be done," which not only fractured the song's original structure but also altered its message. On the surface, it projected effortless freedom and a breezy personality; beneath that veneer, however, it hinted at a shrugging-off of responsibility.

Respecting creators is not just a matter of legal or economic protection—it also means taking their artistic vision seriously, rather than brushing it aside with a nonchalant, "so what, what can be done."

## ↓ SNOOKER PLAYER MAKES HISTORY WITH TRIPLE WIN

Chinese snooker player **Zhao Xintong** defeated world No. 1 Judd Trump 10-3 in the final of the 2026 Tour Championship in Manchester on April 6. The 29-year-old thus became the first player in history to win all three events in the Players Series — the World Grand Prix, the Players Championship and the Tour Championship — in a single season.

Zhao's victory is also his sixth ranking title, a feat previously achieved by only three others. With the win, Zhao's world ranking rose to No. 4, and his season prize money exceeded 1 million pounds (\$1.3 million), making him only the third player to reach that milestone.



Born in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, in 1997, Zhao took up snooker at age 8 and turned professional in 2016. He won his first ranking title at the 2021 UK Championship.

**"The station is designed to store energy for eight hours and generate electricity for four hours."**

**Liu Shaoyong**, a project manager with China Energy Engineering Group Co. Ltd., about the launch of a compressed air energy storage project in Shandong Province. During off-peak hours, electricity is used to compress air and store it underground.

The compressed air is then released to generate power during peak demand

**"The promotion of unmanned delivery vehicles is not simply about replacing human labor. While optimizing delivery services, it will also create new jobs in operations, maintenance and dispatch."**

**Li Tiegang**, a professor at Shandong University School of Economics, in an interview with Xinhua



COVER STORY

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