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THE CHILDREN WHO SURVIVED BUCHA'S HORROR

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AP PHOTO



Thailand A popular leader of a progressive political movement has vowed to continue his activities despite being indicted on charges of defaming the king and violating a law on online activity which carry penalties of up to 20 years in prison. Thanathorn, a co-founder of the court-disbanded Future Forward Party, was indicted for comments he made in January last year about the awarding of a government COVID-19 vaccine production contract to a company owned by King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

AP PHOTO



Indonesia's Parliament approved a far-reaching law yesterday that sets punishments for sexual violence after being spurred into action by a recent case in which an Islamic boarding school principal raped and impregnated several students. The legislation had languished for years amid arguments that it contravenes religious and cultural values in the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation.

AP PHOTO



North Korea is destroying a South Korean-owned golf course at a scenic mountain resort in the second confirmed case of South Korean assets being eliminated in an area where the rivals once ran a joint tour program, officials said yesterday in Seoul. North Korea's demolition of South Korean-built facilities at its Diamond Mountain resort comes as ties between the countries remain strained over the North's recent series of high-profile missile tests.

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ORDER TO SPEND

Ho lat Seng calls on public servants, unaffected by financial hurdles, to give back to local economy all stimulus money received from the gov't

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AP PHOTO



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CE SLAMS LOCAL TOURISM PRODUCTS, TOURIST SOURCE MARKET FOR BEING MONOTONOUS

ANTHONY LAM

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng expressed during yesterday's parliamentary question session his dissatisfaction at the city's tourism offerings being, in his view, too monotonous and source markets too narrow.

A question from lawmaker Cheung Kin Chung, a tourism industry practitioner, triggered the head of the government revealing his opinion. Cheung wanted to know what the government would do, when the current Covid-19 pandemic ends, to help the industry's high-quality development.

Furthermore, he asked Ho about government policies in relation to constructing Macau in the direction of a "Big Destination" in the context of regional tours in the Greater Bay Area.

The question was raised timely and appropriately, Ho said, because of its post-Covid nature. Ho cited Thailand as an example to explain the explosion of tourism industry revivals after the country decided to let foreigners in.

He said, in terms of tourism industry revivals in Macau, there



are two topics he wished to raise. On one hand, it is about how to attract mainland tourists, specifically tour groups, back to Macau while complying with mainland epidemic control measures.

He disclosed at the parliamentary session that deals had been made last year with the Culture and Tourism Ministry on the resumption of tour groups to Ma-

cau, but the deals were halted as new infections were sparked in several cities or provinces.

The other topic is whether Macau should continue to focus on only a single source market, which is mainland China. He suggested the industry to consider this topic.

"In 1999, we had only about seven million tourists, but they

came from a wide array of origins: Southeast Asia, Japan and Thailand," Ho recalled. "We're too single-minded now."

Elaborating on his reply, Ho suggested Cheung and the industry contemplate how to widen the source market using the current period as "breaktime." He also suggested that the industry polish its multilingual and multi-

cultural capabilities so as to cater to people from different origins.

"We now understand what would happen if we only focus on a single market," Ho said. "We need to become an international tourism and leisure destination, not a Chinese destination."

The Macao Government Tourism Office, which has representatives in many places around the world, will help attract tourists to Macau, Ho added.

Following Cheung was Chan Chak Mo, who asked about tourism elements, with a particular focus on winter or ice facilities.

Admitting to the lack of large-scale winter activity facilities in Southeast Asia, Ho cited the multifaceted tourism elements in Dubai to prove Macau is not attractive to returning tourists.

He slammed local tourism operators for providing products that are too homogenous, which he says are not appealing to returning tourists.

"When an operator sees the profitability of the aquatic theme park concept, other operators follow suit," the Chief Executive said, adding that brands, retail products and dining options are as homogenous in Macau.

Gov't encourages lawmakers help with low birth rate

ANTHONY LAM

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng has suggested younger lawmakers have more children to help with the falling birth rate.

Lawmaker Lei Chan U listed data from the government, showing the latest birth rate in Macau is 7.4 babies for every 1,000 people. There is a falling trajectory over the past few years. The Chief Executive recalled that when he stood in the Chief Executive Election in 2019, the birth rate was 9 in 1,000.

Admitting to the government's lack of means to encourage people to give birth, the head of the government turned to younger lawmakers and encouraged



them to make more babies. "This is a relatively low figure," he admitted, but claimed that there is not much the government can do to boost people's desi-

re to have babies. Nonetheless, he did pledge that the government would make plans in response to the development of the population change. "We will

try our best to work accordingly," he replied to Lei.

"This is a personal matter," he said. "It's not like giving people a flat will [entreat] them to give birth."

The head of the government did not neglect the chance to reveal his very conventional view of life. "Simply put: after getting married, a couple should at least give birth to a couple of babies, so that they can be understood as balanced," Ho said at the plenary, which was broadcast live on TV channels and online platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook.

Then he turned to the hall and started encouraging younger lawmakers to be "role models." "Legislator Lei, you only have one

child. You should make one more child," Ho said with a smile. The meeting hall broke into laughter due to Ho's comment.

Getting serious afterwards, Ho agreed that the scenario must be handled delicately. Not only is the birth rate becoming a concern, the city having an aging population makes the situation tougher when combined with the low birth rate.

"Younger generations should take up the responsibility," Ho said, before slightly criticizing youths. "Many young people are willing to keep pets, but not raise children."

He listed the free services in Macau to prove that raising children is not ac-

tually very difficult. "We have free-of-charge education from nursery to high school, as well as a high level of subsidy for university studies," he emphasized.

Meanwhile, he recapped that lawmaker Leong Sun Iok had previously said the lack of two-room apartments in subsidized housing projects discouraged people from having babies. "We're studying the feasibility of more two-room apartments. But if at the end [of the day] the extra room is used to keep dogs, it will be a waste," the Chief Executive remarked.

Many social critics have said that the lack of room for talent retention, among other factors, is the reason behind the low birth rate. The recent economic challenges arising from social restrictions may also be part of the reason.

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

ANTHONY LAM

E-VOUCHER

Consumption stimulus expected by May

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng has disclosed that he expects the consumption stimulus measure to be implemented by May, after the amendment to the Annual Budget.

During yesterday's parliamentary question-and-answer session, the head of the government gave this indication in reply to lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng's question. Her question, the first in yesterday's plenary, focused on the speculated consumption stimulus measure.

"We hope to implement the measure quickly," Ho said, admitting to the actuality of the scheme. He added that the government has heard opinions from society and is heading in the direction of a consumption stimulus scheme.

Ho recapped that a similar scheme last year had helped many small and medium enterprises, not only in terms of continuation of business, but also in retaining many local residents in employment.

The reason that details of the scheme are still yet to be announced is that the Annual Budget needs to be amended and the amendments passed by the parliament. Only then, he said, can he promulgate Executive Regulations to stipulate the use of the

ANTHONY LAM



stimulus fund.

The head of the government stressed that he does not want to repeatedly amend the Annual Budget, which is why the financial team within the government is working to refine this upcoming amendment.

He was, in effect, recapping an earlier disclosure on the scheme by Lei Wai Nong, secretary for economy and finance.

In addition, Ho explained that, in each fiscal year, the government only has 3% of the Annual Budget initially approved as au-

xiliary funds, hinting that much mathematics has to be done.

He also addressed the fact that many found the cash handout – officially called the Wealth Partaking Scheme – critical to their yearly budgeting. "Many residents use the cash to settle utility

bills and rentals," Ho said.

However, he added, many have not been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic financially, such as civil servants, because their salary has not been decreased; neither were they forced to furlough.

Therefore, as the boss of the civil servant team, he encouraged civil servants to spend the cash handout, their tax returns, and the upcoming consumption stimulus.

Details of the scheme are still yet to be announced [as] the Annual Budget needs to be amended

The cash handout cost the government about MOP7 billion, which is nearly the sum of the city's annual retail revenue, which reached MOP8 billion, according to Ho. With this said, he hinted the cash handout would almost be able to support the city's annual retail revenue.

He encouraged residents with spending power to spend the money returned from the government in order to keep the economy revolving.

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HONG KONG RETURNEES CLASSIFIED AS ASYMPTOMATIC CASE

Two Macau residents from Hong Kong were classified as imported cases of asymptomatic infection after positive nucleic acid test (NAT) results on April 11 upon their arrival in Macau. The first case is a 45-year-old who was administered three doses of the inactivated Sinovac vaccine in May and June 2021 and March 2022; while the second case is a 34-year-old who was administered with two doses of the mRNA vaccine in August and September 2021. Both denied any history of infection. They took the golden bus that departed at 3 p.m., being in possession of negative result certificates via the NAT test. A total of 82 confirmed Covid-19 cases and 77 cases of asymptomatic infection have been registered in Macau.

232 RESIDENTS VACCINATED IN MOBILE VACCINATION VEHICLE

A total of 232 residents were administered with Covid-19 vaccines on April 10 and 11 in the government's mobile vaccination vehicle, which was parked nearby in the Lao Hon Garden. The mobile vaccination vehicle is aimed at further promoting vaccination amongst community members and providing vaccination services to people in need living nearby. Authorities again appeal to anyone who has not yet been vaccinated to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

GBA ART EXHIBITION OPENS TOMORROW

The exhibition "Wild Imagination: Contemporary Ink Art in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao from 2000 to 2022" will be inaugurated tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. at the Macao Museum of Art (MAM). The exhibition, which forms part of the 32nd Macao Arts Festival, is curated by contemporary art critic Pi Daojian, featuring nearly 80 pieces or sets of contemporary ink works by over 50 artists from Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau. The exhibition covers contemporary ink paintings, works of mixed media, animations, video installations and installations. It also examines the evolution of ink art in the Greater Bay Area from traditional Chinese ink painting to international contemporary art over the past two decades.

STUDENTS WITH HEARING DISABILITY DROP OUT OF UNIVERSITY DUE TO COMPULSORY MASK-WEARING

LYNZY VALLES

STUDENTS with a hearing disability have opted to drop out of higher education due to the mandatory use of masks, according to the Macau Deaf Association.

Association director Nerissa Lau has communicated that since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, students who have a hearing disability have had a difficult time because they are obliged to use masks at universities, which hide the lips and half of the face, making it harder to understand speech.

For those who are deaf, it is difficult to understand sign language when wearing masks, as facial expressions are an important part of sign language.

Speaking to Portuguese News Agency, Lusa, Lau has called for attention to these issues and understanding of the needs of the



USJ Rector Stephen Morgan (left) and Macau Deaf Association director Nerissa Lau

deaf community, adding that the use of transparent masks in the classroom would be helpful, yet would require the community to have strong contact with higher education institutions.

Data from the association shows that they have about 700 members, with a low percentage of those pursuing higher education.

Lau was speaking on the sidelines of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) aiming to advocate for universal sign language education and promote a disability-friendly society in Macau.

According to the Social Welfare Institute, there were about 4,197 residents that acquired a registra-

tion card attesting to hearing impairment last year.

USJ Rector Stephen Morgan hopes to promote the universalization of sign language, stating that the inclusion of sign language courses in USJ's Social Work degree programmes not only strengthens the long-term partnership between USJ and the association, but also further links the university and the local community, serving those in need.

Meanwhile, Jacky Ho, head of the Department of Social Work of USJ in charge of this collaborative project, also pointed out that establishing strategic partnerships with social local service agencies can help build equal rights for persons with disabilities.

He also stated incorporating sign language in future social work degree training will become a long-term trend, and that society should pay more attention to the needs of deaf people.

GBA

Hengqin gov't: Industrial park boosts Guangdong-Macao IC design trade



STAFF REPORTER

IN-HOUSE enterprises at Guangdong-Macao Integrated Circuit (IC) Design Industrial Park in Hengqin generated an output value of over 1.5 billion yuan (USD36 million) in 2021. Under the "Sci-Tech Achievements From Macao + Industrial Transformation in Zhuhai" mode, the industrial park is becoming a high-level IC innovation platform, industrial service carrier, and industrial exchange and cooperation center.

The park was established as an international first-class professional park by Zhuhai Da Heng Qin Group and Zhuhai Advanced Integrated Circuit Research Institute at the Hengqin International Science & Technology Innovation Center. The park provides IC design companies with professional incubators, investment funds, and public technological platforms.

To enhance Macau's industrial diversification, the park assists Hengqin and Macau in transforming and

incubating scientific research achievements, talent introduction and cultivation, and breeding of hard-core IC industrial clusters. It is now home to high-quality IC design firms such as Chipone, Innosilicon, and Biren Technology.

The park also facilitates a cross-border flow of innovative IC talent, technology and capital. Its goal is to attract 50 IC design enterprises to Hengqin by 2026, with an estimated industrial scale of 5 billion yuan (\$786 million).

Integrated circuit is an emerging industry which supports the digital economy and new infrastructure, as well as Macau's industrial diversification.

As of March 2022, there were 10,000 sci-tech companies registered in Hengqin, with 3,000 newcomers in 2021.

BYD ATTO 3

NEW AUTOMOBILE LAUNCHED AIMED AT PROMOTING GREEN TRANSPORTATION

BYD ATTO 3 has officially been launched in Macau as BYD, working alongside its Macau partner Companhia De Automóveis De Energia Nova Hap Dic Limitada to realize the "carbon-free" goal in Macau.

At the launching event,

Ye Chenghui, general manager of BYD (MACAU) LIMITADA, said, "BYD sold 104,338 new energy passenger vehicles in March and continued to rank [at the] top in the monthly sales of new energy vehicles in China."

He recalled that in

March 2022, BYD announced that it had stopped the production of full combustion engine vehicles and would focus on battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles in the future.

"We will [join] with Hap Dic to promote the

development of green transportation in Macau and give further impetus to build a 'carbon-free city'," he added, as cited in a statement.

Liu Pui Lam, co-founder of Hap Dic, said that to better respond to the national goals for 'peak

carbon dioxide emissions and carbon neutrality,' accelerate green transportation in Macau, and create a carbon-free city, "Hap Dic will work together with BYD to introduce more new energy vehicles in Macau and cover efforts in green transport and environmental protection."

BYD now has four industries, including Auto, Electronics, New Energy, and Rail Transit. LV

LYNZY VALLES

GAMING

Casino sector on the brink of revenue downturn

THE city's gaming sector is expected to tumble this month as analysts forecast a 13% drop in gross gaming revenue (GGR) compared to March, which was MOP3.67 billion – a 55.8% tumble compared to figures recorded in February.

According to brokerage Sanford C. Bernstein, border restrictions and Covid-19 cases in the mainland are factors leading to the negative forecast.

Just this week in Guangzhou, the neighboring region's manufacturing hub closed as China battles a major Covid-19 surge in its large eastern cities. Shanghai has also taken the brunt of the rise, with another 26,087 cases announced on Monday, as the city sees its 26 million under a tight lockdown. No such lockdown has yet been announced for Guangzhou, a metropolis of 18 million, which recorded 27 cases on Monday.

Macau authorities have remained adamant in their strict border measures for Guangdong, requiring a 24-hour negative Covid-19 test result for travelers from the neighbouring Guangdong province.

In Bernstein's channel checks, analysts forecast Macau's GGR from April 1 to 10 to be around MOP1 billion, an average daily

LYNZY VALLES



rate of 100 million.

This figure is down 86% compared to pre-pandemic levels, and 64% compared to last year's earnings.

In a note, analyst Vitaly Umansky said that the figure in April could drop if "further tightening occurs."

As cited in a report issued by

GGRAsia, the analyst remarked, "April's GGR – and potentially May – is likely to continue a recent trend of weakness," stressing that "Shanghai and Changchun

– with approximately 35 million in population – are still in full or partial lockdown as of today, and other areas have partial lockdowns."

Morgan Stanley, meanwhile, has estimated that the three of the six gaming operators are likely to post negative EBITDA during the first quarter of this year.

The operators are MGM China, SJM Holdings and Wynn Macau.

As previously reported by the Times, the anticipated revival of the gaming sector is again receding into the distance, with no recovery expected for at least six months. Gaming insiders have admitted that the casino sector's financial situation is set to worsen in the next six months, expressing concerns about possible additional financial pressure coming from the closure of several satellite casinos.

Just recently, Fitch Ratings forecast that Macau's economy would only expand by 19% in 2022, based on the assumption that gaming revenue will recover to about 44% of its pre-pandemic levels, far lower than the initial expectation of 36%.

The credit rating agency expects that gaming tourism recovery will pick up momentum in the second half of this year, underpinned by a gradual resumption of inbound tourism from mainland China.

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COVID-19

SHANGHAI EASES TWO-WEEK SHUTDOWN, LETTING SOME RESIDENTS OUT

JOE MCDONALD, BEIJING

SOME residents of Shanghai were allowed out of their homes as the city of 25 million eased a two-week-old shutdown yesterday after videos posted online showed what was said to be people who ran out of food breaking into a supermarket and shouting appeals for help.

About 6.6 million people will be allowed to leave their homes, but some must stay in their own neighborhoods, according to the online news outlet The Paper. The government said some markets and pharmacies also would reopen.

The abrupt closure of most businesses and orders to stay home left the public fuming about a lack of access to food and medicine. People who test positive for the virus are forced into sprawling temporary quarantine facilities criticized by some as crowded and unsanitary.

The unusual severity of Shanghai's shutdown starting March 28 appeared to be driven as much by politics as by public health

concerns.

China's case numbers are relatively low, but the ruling Communist Party is enforcing a "zero-tolerance" strategy that has suspended access to major cities to isolate every infected person. Some local officials were fired after being accused of failing to act aggressively enough.

The government reported 24,659 new cases through midnight Monday, including 23,387 with no symptoms. That included 23,346 in Shanghai, only 998 of whom had symptoms.

In Shanghai, more than 200,000 cases but no deaths have been reported in the latest wave of infections.

The government eased restrictions by announcing residents of areas with no cases for at least two weeks can leave their homes starting yesterday. It said they could go to any other area that also had no new cases during that time but were urged to stay home when possible.

Such "prevention areas" have about 4.8 million people, The Paper reported, citing city officials. It

said all but 500,000 of those were in less densely crowded suburbs.

An additional 1.8 million people in "control areas" with no new cases in the past week are allowed out but can't leave their neighborhoods, the report said.

Another 15 million people in "quarantine areas" that have had infections in the past week still are barred from leaving their homes. The report gave no indication of the status of the remaining 3.4 million people in the official population.

The abrupt shutdown caught Shanghai households by surprise and prompted complaints they were left without access to food or medicine and were unable to look after elderly relatives who lived alone.

The government distributed packages of vegetables and other food for a few days at least twice to some households. Others said they received nothing.

A video that circulated online Saturday showed what the caption said were people in the Songjiang district breaking into a supermarket and carrying away

cartons of food.

Another showed people thrusting their fists into the air in front of what appeared to be government employees wearing hooded white protective suits. A third showed what it said were apartment dwellers, barred from going outside, shouting appeals for help out their windows.

The Associated Press was unable to find the source of the videos or verify when and where they were shot. The supermarket video was labeled with an account number from China's popular Sina Weibo social media service, but the video doesn't appear on that account.

The ruling party requires Chinese social media operators to enforce censorship and remove videos and other postings about banned topics. Social media and online bulletin boards are filled with complaints about the Shanghai shutdown and appeals for food or medicine. It is unclear how many others might have been deleted.

Complaints about food shortages began after Shanghai closed

segments of the city on March 28.

Plans called for four-day closures of districts while residents were tested. That changed to an indefinite citywide shutdown after case numbers soared. Shoppers who got little warning stripped supermarket shelves.

City officials apologized publicly and promised to improve food supplies. Despite that, residents said online grocers often sold out early in the day or were unable to deliver. Online commerce companies said they added hundreds of employees to increase deliveries.

The State Department last week advised Americans against travel to China due to "arbitrary enforcement" of local laws and anti-virus restrictions. It cited a risk of "parents and children being separated."

"The United States should immediately stop attacking China's epidemic prevention policy, stop political manipulation with the epidemic issue and stop smearing and discrediting China," said the spokesman, Zhao Lijian. **MDT/AP**

US pulls non-emergency staff from Shanghai

THE U.S. has ordered non-emergency government staff to leave Shanghai, which is under a tight lockdown to contain a COVID-19 surge.

The State Department said the order announced late Monday is an upgrade from the "authorized" departure advisory last week

that made the decision voluntary. The order covers non-emergency U.S. government employees at the consulate in Shanghai and their family members. Consular officers will remain on duty at the consulate.

"Our change in posture reflects our assessment that

it is best for our employees and their families to be reduced in number and our operations to be scaled down as we deal with the changing circumstances on the ground," the announcement said.

The State Department also issued a series of advisories for Americans in

Shanghai, including that they ensure they have a "sufficient supply of money, medication, food, and other necessities for your family in the event of sudden restrictions or quarantine."

China's government and the entirely state-controlled media are growing increa-

singly defensive about complaints over the COVID-19 prevention measures.

Beijing responded angrily to last week's voluntary departure advisory, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian saying China was "strongly dissatisfied with and firmly opposed to the U.S. side's

groundless accusation against China's epidemic response."

In that announcement, the State Department advised Americans to reconsider traveling to China due to "arbitrary enforcement" of local laws and COVID-19 restrictions, particularly in Hong Kong, Jilin province and Shanghai. U.S. officials cited a risk of "parents and children being separated." **MDT/AP**

SRI LANKA

Government halts debt repayment pending IMF bailout plan

KRISHAN FRANCIS, COLOMBO

SRI Lanka is suspending its repayment of foreign debt, including bonds and government-to-government borrowings, pending the completion of a loan restructuring program with the International Monetary Fund to deal with the island nation's worst economic crisis in decades, the government said yesterday.

Sri Lankans for the past months have been enduring shortages of fuel, food and other essentials and daily power outages. Most of those items are paid for in hard currency, but Sri Lanka is on the brink of bankruptcy, saddled with dwindling foreign reserves and \$25 billion in foreign debt. Nearly \$7 billion is due this year.

"Sri Lanka has had an unblemished record of external debt service since independence in 1948," the Ministry of Finance said in a statement. "Recent events, however, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and



Sri Lankans shout anti government slogans blocking the entrance to president's office during a protest in Colombo

the fallout from the hostilities in Ukraine, have so eroded Sri Lanka's fiscal position that continued normal servicing of external public debt obligations has become impossible."

The ministry said the IMF has assessed Sri Lanka's foreign debt as unsustainable, and staying current on foreign debt repayment is no longer a tenable policy.

In addition to seeking help from the IMF, the government has

turned to India and China for help in dealing with the shortages.

"The government intends to pursue its discussions with the IMF as expeditiously as possible with a view to formulating and presenting to the country's creditors a comprehensive plan for restoring Sri Lanka's external public debt to a fully sustainable position," the ministry said.

Meanwhile, protesters camped out around the president's office

for a fourth day demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, holding him responsible for the economic crisis. Supporters of the protesters supplied drinking water and food, and Muslim protesters broke their Ramadan fasting at the site to share food with those around them.

Much of the anger expressed in weeks of protests has been directed at the Rajapaksa family, which been in power for most of the

past two decades. Critics accuse the family of borrowing heavily to finance projects that have earned no money, such as a port facility built with Chinese loans.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, a former president who is the current president's older brother, sought in a speech Monday night to reassure people that the government is working on resolving the problems.

"We are embarking on an enormous program to overcome the crisis we face today. Every second spent by the president and this government is used up exhausting avenues to rebuild our country," he said.

He refused to yield power, saying the governing coalition will continue to rule Sri Lanka because opposition parties rejected its call for a unity government.

The crisis and protests prompted many Cabinet members to resign. Four ministers were sworn in as caretakers, but many of the key portfolios are vacant.

Parliament has failed to reach a consensus on how to deal with the crisis after nearly 40 governing coalition lawmakers said they would no longer vote according to coalition instructions, significantly weakening the government.

With opposition parties divided, they too have not been able to form a majority and take control of Parliament. MDT/AP



A landslide area at Baybay City, Leyte province, central Philippines

PHILIPPINES

FLOODING, LANDSLIDES KILL AT LEAST 43 PEOPLE

HEAVY rains caused by a summer tropical depression killed at least 43 people, with 28 others missing in the central and southern Philippines, mostly due to landslides, officials said.

Twenty-two villagers died in landslides in four villages in Baybay city in central Leyte province on Sunday and Monday, city police chief Lt. Col. Joemen

Collado said. At least six other people were reported missing in the landslides and a search was underway, he said.

Three other storm-related deaths were reported by the government's main disaster-response agency in the southern provinces of Davao de Oro and Davao Oriental.

"In one village, a landslide occurred and other vic-

tims, unfortunately, were also swept away by the surge of water," Collado told the DZBB radio network. "There were at least six missing but there could be more."

Nearly 200 floods were reported in different areas in central and southern provinces over the weekend, displacing about 30,000 families, some of which were moved to emergency shelters, officials said.

Coast guard, police and firefighters rescued some villagers in flooded communities, including some who were trapped on their roofs. In central Cebu city, schools and work were suspended Monday and Mayor Michael Rama declared a state of calamity to allow the rapid release of emergency funds.

At least 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines each year, mostly during the rainy season that begins around June. Some storms have hit even during the scorching summer months in recent years.

The disaster-prone Southeast Asian nation also lies on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," where many of the world's volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur. MDT/AP

HOLIDAY RENTAL HOUSES

Lugar das Letras Lugar das Letras Casa de Gouvães Casa de Gouvães

The houses are set in the heart of the World Heritage Site of the Douro Valley and its famous winery landscape where the worlds Ports are produced. Both restored relics overlooking the Rio Douro, these eight rooms houses have been blessed with gorgeous wooden floors, plush queen beds and marble baths; the best have dazzling river views. But it is the welcome that makes this place stand out from the crowd.

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PUTIN'S WAR

'It's not the end': The children who survived Bucha's horror

CARA ANNA, BUCHA

THE coffin was made from pieces of a closet. In a darkened basement under a building shaking from the bombardment of war, there were few other options.

Six-year-old Vlad watched as his mother was carried out of the shelter last month and to the yard of a nearby home. The burial was hurried and devastating.

Now Russian forces have withdrawn from Bucha after a monthlong occupation, and Vlad's father, Ivan Drahan, dropped to his knees at the foot of the grave.

He reached out and touched the dirt near his wife Maryna's feet. "Hi, how are you?" he said during the visit last week. "I miss you so much. You left so soon. You didn't even say goodbye."

The boy also visits the grave, placing on it a juice box and two cans of baked beans. Amid the stress of war, his mother barely ate. The family still doesn't know what illness caused her death. They, much like their town, barely know how to move on.

Bucha witnessed some of the ghastliest scenes of Russia's invasion, and almost no children have been seen in its silent streets since then. The many bright playgrounds in the once popular community with good schools on a far edge of the capital, Kyiv, are empty.

The Russians used a children's camp in Bucha as an execution ground, and bloodstains and bullet holes mark a basement. On a ledge near the camp entrance, Russian soldiers placed a toy tank. It appeared to be connected to fishing wire — a possible booby trap in the most vulnerable of places.

Steps away from Vlad's home, some of the Russians used a kindergarten as a base, leaving it intact while other nearby buildings suffered. Casings of used artillery shells were left along a fence in the yard. In a nearby playground, white and red tape marked off unexploded ordnance. The booms of de-mining operations were so strong they set off car alarms.

At the apartment block where Vlad, his older brother Vova and sister Sophia live, someone had spray-painted "CHILDREN" in child-high letters on an outside wall. Under it, a wooden box once used for ammunition held a teddy bear and other toys.

It is here that Bucha's fragile renewal can be seen.

A small group of neighborhood children gathered, finding distraction from the war. Bundled up in winter coats, they kicked a football, wandered around with bags of snacks handed out by visiting volunteers, called out from a glass-less window above.

Their parents, taking in

the feeble warmth of spring after weeks in freezing basements, reflected on how they tried to protect the children. "We covered his ears," said Polina Shymanska of her 7-year-old great-grandson Nikita. "We hugged him, kissed him." She tried to play chess and the boy let her win.

Upstairs, in a neighbor's apartment where Vlad's father for now has merged his family with that of the neighbor to help manage their collection of children, Vlad curled up on a bed with another boy and played cards. The radiator gave off no heat. There was still no gas, no electricity, no running water.

Not everyone in Vlad's family can stand to return to their own apartment nearby. The memories of Maryna are everywhere, from the perfume bottles on the table by the front door to the quiet kitchen.

In the living room, time has stopped. Limp balloons dangled from the overhead light. A string of colorful flags still hung on the wall, along with a family photo. It showed Ivan and Maryna holding Vlad on the day he was born. They celebrated his birthday on Feb. 19.

Five days later, the war began. And the family's life shrank to a dank concrete half-room in the basement, lined with blankets and scattered with sweets and toys. It was very, very cold, Ivan remembers. He and Maryna did what they could to muf-

fle the sounds of shelling for Vlad and keep him calm. But they were afraid, too.

Two weeks ago, Ivan took Vlad to the makeshift toilet in the shelter and visited neighbors. Then he came to Maryna to tell her that he was going outside. "I touched her shoulder, and she was cold," he said. "I realized she was gone."

At first, he said, Vlad appeared not to understand what had happened. The boy said his mother had moved away. But at the burial, the boy watched Ivan kneel and cry, and now he knows what death is.

Death is inseparable from Bucha. Local authorities told The Associated Press that at least 16 children were among the hundreds of people killed. Those who survived face a long recovery.

"They've realized that now it's calm and quiet," Ivan said. "But at the same time, older children understand that it's not the end. The war is not finished. And it's hard to explain for the smaller ones that war is still going on."

The children are adapting, he said. They have seen a lot. Some even saw dogs killed.

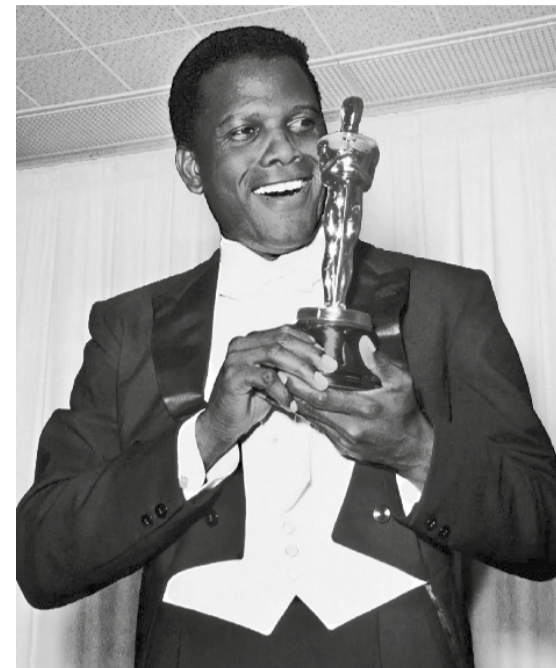
Now the war has slipped into the games they play.

In a sandbox outside the kindergarten, Vlad and a friend "bombed" each other with fistfuls of sand.

"I'm Ukraine," one said. "No, I'm Ukraine," said the other. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1964 POITIER BREAKS NEW GROUND WITH OSCAR WIN



The acting profession's top award has gone to a black actor for the first time.

Sidney Poitier won the best actor Oscar for his role in *Lilies of the Field*.

In the film, released last year, he played construction worker Homer Smith whom a group of nuns believe was sent to them by God to build their church.

The only other black person to win an Oscar was the best supporting actress award given to Hattie McDaniel in 1939 for her role in *Gone with the Wind*.

Alongside 'Rat Pack' actor Sammy Davis Jr and, earlier, Paul Robeson, Poitier is one of only a handful of black men to gain recognition in Hollywood for roles not involving singing or dancing.

It was the second time he had been in the running for an Oscar after losing out in 1959 when he was nominated for his part in *The Defiant Ones*.

"It has been a long journey to this moment," the actor said after he was presented with the prized statuette by actress Ann Bancroft.

Sidney Poitier's early life seemed unlikely to spawn a Hollywood star.

He grew up in poverty in the Bahamas in the Caribbean where his father was a tomato farmer.

In his first months in New York he was so poor he slept in the toilets of a bus station.

He was hampered in his efforts to break into acting by his strong Bahamian accent and was initially rejected by the American Negro Theatre.

His first film was *No Way Out* alongside Richard Widmark in 1950 in which he played a doctor.

But his big breakthrough came five years later in *The Blackboard Jungle*.

His roles have been a big move away from the stereotypical dim-witted Negro characters made famous in the 1930s and 1940s by Stepin Fetchit.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Much of America was scandalised by the chaste congratulatory peck on the cheek Ann Bancroft gave Sidney Poitier when presenting his award.

Three years later the actor took part in the first on-screen interracial kiss in the film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*

The film was among a string of hit movies Sidney Poitier starred in during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

They included *In the Heat of the Night* and the role for which Poitier is probably most famous, Detective Virgil Tibbs.

In 2002 Denzel Washington and Halle Berry won the best actor and best actress Oscars - the first black actors to win since Poitier.

At the same ceremony Sidney Poitier was given a lifetime achievement award.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You are best to be discreet. Be sure to look into travel opportunities that will provide you with mental stimulation. Travel and learning should be on your agenda today.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Try to find another time to present work or ideas today. You can make drastic changes in your professional direction today. You can't do everything on your own.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Electrical problems may be an issue. Romantic opportunities will flourish through travel or communication. Don't evade issues or twist the truth around.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You may be ill-treated if you have to deal with institutional environments. This could be a difficult day to deal with coworkers. Don't hesitate to voice your opinions when it comes to matters pertaining to work.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Emotionally you won't see things accurately. Don't believe everything you hear. Brunch, a long walk, or a quiet dinner will secure your position in the relationship.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Changes in your domestic scene are evident. This day was meant for love. Make creative changes to your residence. Travel could be in order. Avoid lending or borrowing.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You may want to put everyone to work on a project that will keep them all too busy to complain. Keep your wits about you and be sure that you can trust those you confide in.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You are apt to meet someone special on your journey. Uncertain changes regarding your personal life are evident. You will both have to bend if you want this union to work.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

This is not the time to lend or borrow money or possessions. Don't torment yourself. Disharmony in the home will be extremely stressful. Don't take sides if you wish to remain on good terms with both parties.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

The distance may make you both appreciate each other more. You must try to help. You should avoid getting involved in the personal problems of colleagues.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You have to let go of your past if you wish to get out of any sentimental mood that might be hanging over your head. Your tendency to vacillate will drive everyone crazy.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Sudden changes could result in estrangements. Control your temper by getting immersed in your work. Pamper yourself; the self esteem it brings you will be most gratifying.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY				EASY+			
9	3		7		8		
			3	8	4	7	
8	4		5	6	1		
3	6	1	8				
6		9	2				
7	3	2	4				
5	6	7	8	1			
8	1	5	2				
3		8		5	9		

MEDIUM				HARD			
5	8	2		2	7		4
	7		9			3	1
		1	5	4			
			6	3	8		
	8		2			2	
2	6	3					1
2	3	7				7	6
		4		3			
			2	9	1		

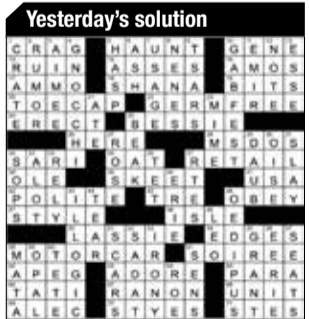
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	8	19	cloudy
Changchun	0	14	cloudy
Chengdu	16	24	overcast
Chongqing	14	27	cloudy
Fuzhou	19	30	rain
Guangzhou	20	27	thunderstorms
Guiyang	10	22	cloudy
Haikou	23	28	cloudy
Hangzhou	19	22	rain
Harbin	-2	13	cloudy
Hefei	11	17	rain
Nanjing	13	15	rain
Shanghai	19	21	rain
Taipei	20	24	rain
Wuhan	13	19	overcast
Hong Kong	20	24	showers
WORLD			
Moscow	1	7	showers
Frankfurt	11	24	overcast
Paris	10	18	rain
London	8	19	overcast
New York	14	19	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Writing fluid; 4- Syrian president; 9- Point in question; 14- O Sole ____; 15- Entire; 16- Bring about; 17- At hand; 19- Cinder; 20- Balls; 21- Windows predecessor; 23- Enthusiastic vigor and liveliness; 24- Type of sanctum; 27- Somewhat; 30- Forsake; 32- Clay today; 33- Substance used for polishing; 37- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 39- Prankish; 40- Reasonable; 42- Supple; 43- Inattentive; 44- Tempe sch.; 45- No matter who; 48- Old card game; 50- Actor Ryan; 51- Genesis shepherd; 55- Sarge's superior; 57- Bear; 58- Elite group; 60- Done; 64- Bowling alley button; 65- Emerge; 66- Chang's twin; 67- Domesticates; 68- Museum piece; 69- Dallas-to-Houston dir.;

DOWN 1- Picture; 2- Growing in snow; 3- Eucalyptus eater; 4- Hole-making tools; 5- Doo-wop syllable; 6- Whimper; 7- Tie-score word; 8- Judged; 9- Secured, as victory; 10- Mead subject; 11- Physical matter; 12- Employ, utilise; 13- Always, poetically; 18- Singer Janis; 22- Box-office letters; 24- Large wading bird; 25- Fleet; 26- Compass dir.; 28- Rap sheet info; 29- Clock faces; 30- Out of line; 31- Chad neighbor; 33- Brother of Prometheus; 34- Quick and active; 35- Adherence to ceremony; 36- Rhine whine; 38- Lubricate; 40- Hot rock; 41- Hurler Hersher; 43- Bee follower; 46- ____ pollio; 47- Kind of garage; 49- We're Off ____ the Wizard; 51- Jurist Fortas; 52- Seizes with teeth; 53- Paradises; 54- Flat shelf; 56- Ed and Mel of baseball; 57- A Baldwin brother; 58- This was produced by Van Gogh, for example; 59- Actress Thompson; 61- Metal-bearing mineral; 62- Wire measure; 63- Trident-shaped letter;



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- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
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- Telephone - Report 1000
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ENERGY DUBAI'S DEWA UTILITY GOES PUBLIC AFTER RAISING \$6B IN IPO

AYA BATRAWY, DUBAI

DUBAI'S Water and Electricity Authority, known as DEWA, began trading for the first time yesterday, after raising just over \$6 billion during its initial public offering, making it the second largest offering ever in the Middle East.

While that figure still trails far below the record \$29.4 billion raised by Saudi oil giant Aramco, it marks an inflection point for Dubai at a time when high oil prices are buoying the economies and spending power of energy-producing Gulf Arab states.

The government-owned utility opened trading on Dubai's stock exchange with a market cap of 124 billion dirhams, or what

is roughly \$33.7 billion. DEWA priced its shares at 2.48 dirhams each, or what is 68 cents a share, but traded, as expected, somewhat higher in its market debut before settling much of the day just under 2.9 dirhams a share. The company plans to pay dividends twice a year to investors.

The listing comes as DEWA, which is the exclusive electricity and water utility provider of Dubai, positions itself as central to the wider United Arab Emirates' energy transition to net zero by 2050.

Dubai is an energy-intensive city of skyscrapers and an endless stream of high-end hotels and sprawling malls — including one with an indoor ski slope and another with

an indoor ice skating rink — that require air-conditioning year-round to keep the Persian Gulf's heat and humidity out. The emirate, like other parts of the Gulf, also relies nearly entirely on desalinated water plants for potable water.

DEWA said it expects to supply all of Dubai's desalinated water capacity by 2030 using clean energy and waste heat. The money raised from the public sale of shares in DEWA could help offset some of the costs of the emirate's energy transition.

DEWA owns 70% of cooling services provider Empower, as well as bottled water manufacturer Mai Dubai, among other companies.

DEWA says it is ready to meet even greater increa-

sed demand for electricity and water in Dubai with the government aiming to grow the population of mostly foreigners and expatriates from around 3.5 million people to 5.8 million people by 2040.

Emirati nationals, who make up a fraction of the country's overall population, receive generous electricity and water subsidies, paying a sliver of what foreign residents pay in monthly DEWA bills.

The government initially said it would go public with 6.5% of the company, but raised that to 18% on the back of local and international investor demand.

The listing is part of a wider plan announced last November by Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, the son of Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, to list 10 state industries on the stock market to boost its profile and raise new capital for the emirate.

Also on Tuesday, Dubai Investments, another company listed on the Dubai stock market, said it was selling a 50% stake in its district cooling subsidiary Emicool to London-based investment firm Actis for \$1 billion. Emicool provides cooling services to a number of areas across Dubai, including its metro stations, Damac Hills and Dubai Motor and Sports cities.

In a shared statement by the companies, they said the sale is aimed at supporting Emicool in its vision towards becoming a leading provider of sustainable and efficient cooling services in the region.

MDT/AP

AUTOMAKER

JAPAN'S HONDA OUTLINES STRATEGY TO FORGE AHEAD ON EVS

HONDA is investing 5 trillion yen (\$40 billion) over the next decade in research, especially to realize a major shift to ecological electric vehicles, the Japanese automaker said yesterday.

The products and services in the works will account for more than half of its 8 trillion yen (\$64 billion) research and development budget in that time and will be tailored for each major market, the U.S., China and Japan.

Efforts in North America will focus on the collaboration with General Motors Co., under which Honda Motor Co. is jointly developing two midsize to large EV models, set for sale in 2024.

By 2027, also under its alliance with GM, Honda plans to offer an affordable electric vehicle that's competitive with gas-powered models in performance and pricing.

Top automakers are accelerating electric car offerings amid pressing concer-

ns about climate change, while also employing new kinds of fuel, such as biofuel and hydrogen-powered fuel cells.

Honda will launch 30 EV models globally by 2030, targeting production of more than 2 million vehicles a year, according to the maker of the Accord sedan, Asimo robot and Gold Wing motorcycles.

They will span the whole range of models, from tiny vans to muscular sports-cars.

"We will continue to deliver the kind of fun in driving that our customers have come to expect from Honda," said Chief Executive Toshihiro Mibe.

In China, where the move to electric vehicles is especially bullish, Honda is introducing 10 new EV models by 2027.

In Japan, a market dominated by gas-electric hybrids, Honda will start with small commercial vehicles, such as delivery vans. MDT/AP



AP PHOTO

CORPORATE BITS

Melco's roadshow series generates MOP3m revenue for local SMEs



Melco Resorts & Entertainment has generated over MOP3 million revenue for local small & medium enterprises (SMEs) in the first quarter of 2022 through its Heart of House

(employee area) roadshow series, benefitting 54 local SMEs and NGOs.

The Heart of House roadshows allow local SMEs to promote their brands and businesses by

selling directly to 16,000 colleagues working at Melco properties including City of Dreams, Studio City and Altira Macau.

In its most recent Women's Day sale series hosted during the month of March, the roadshow helped generate more than MOP2 million in additional revenue for local SMEs, offering Personal & Skin Care products, Clothing & Accessories and Electronic products, according to a statement issued by the gaming operator.

Melco has planned a series of further roadshows for the remainder of the year to support SMEs with additional revenue generating opportunities.

MGM donates another MOP300,000 to Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop



MGM has donated MOP300,000 to the Macau Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop project for the 10th consecutive year — in

a bid to fund the distribution of food hampers to nearly 400 local households in need.

To date, MGM has dona-

ted a total of MOP3 million to the project.

To comply with the Macau government's anti-epidemic guidance, the food hampers distribution was completed across two days from April 11 to 12.

Each food hamper contains daily necessities such as rice, noodles, canned food, oats, cooking oil, among others, and will be delivered to local families in need, referred by Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM), General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau (UGAMM), the Macau Holy House of Mercy, and the Associação dos Familiares Encarregados dos Deficientes Mentais de Macau.

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Atlético needs attack to start clicking again against City

TALES AZZONI, MADRID

Thursday, 03:00
Atletico v Man City
H 5.1, D 3.75, A 1.82

Thursday, 03:00
Liverpool v Benfica
H 1.3, D 6.6, A 11.5

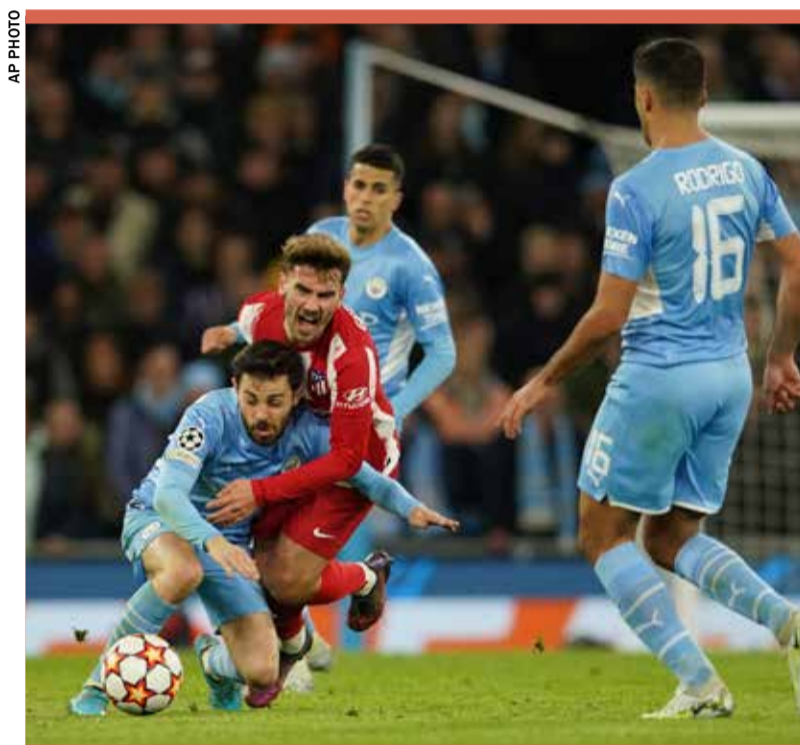
ODDSCHECKER.COM

THIS time, defense alone won't be enough to keep Atlético Madrid alive in the Champions League.

Diego Simeone's team needs its attack to wake up if it wants to overcome the 1-0 first-leg loss to Manchester City in the quarter-finals of the European competition.

The team was held scoreless and managed a total of one shot on target in its last two matches. To reach its first Champions League semifinals since 2017, Atlético needs its stars to step up when City visits today (Thursday, 3:00).

João Félix, Antoine Griezmann and Luis Suárez have combined



AP PHOTO

to score only four goals since early March — two by Félix and two by Suárez in the same Spanish league game. Matheus Cunha and Ángel Correa, the other Atlético forwards, also haven't helped

much recently, being unable to score since February.

Other than the double against last-place Alavés on April 2, Félix is scoreless in six matches in all competitions. Suárez hasn't

found the net since Feb. 19. The 35-year-old Uruguay striker was key for Atlético in its Spanish league title-winning campaign last year but has played a reduced role this campaign.

Griezmann has been struggling the most, though, with no goals in nine consecutive matches in a scoreless streak that dates back to a Copa del Rey match in January. The 31-year-old France forward returned to Atlético this season after a lackluster stint with Barcelona but hasn't fully met expectations.

Simeone rested Félix against Mallorca on Saturday and started with Suárez and Griezmann in attack, but they struggled in a 1-0 loss that left the team fourth in the league standings with seven rounds to go, in danger of not securing a Champions League spot next season.

Atlético had only one shot on target against relegation-threatened Mallorca and none in the first leg against City.

Besides offensive struggles,

Atlético's recent home record in European competitions also has been disappointing. It hasn't won in its last six home games in the Champions League, with four draws and two losses. It lost to Liverpool and AC Milan this season, with draws against Porto in the group stage and Manchester United in the first leg of the round of 16.

To make it worse, the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium won't be at full capacity on Wednesday after UEFA charged the club with "discriminatory behavior" and ordered a 5,000-seat section of the stadium to be closed after an Atlético fan was filmed making a Nazi salute in the first leg in Manchester. Atlético will also have to display a UEFA banner there, saying "#NoToRacism."

Atlético's defense, which has carried the team under Simeone in recent years, was largely effective in Manchester and could be boosted by the return of José María Giménez, who missed the first leg because of a muscle injury. Midfielder Héctor Herrera was listed as doubtful because of a muscle injury.

Not having the away-goals rule in place this season could be key for Atlético after it failed to score in England.

Playing in the quarterfinals for the sixth time in nine seasons, the Spanish club is seeking its first Champions League title. **MDT/AP**

AD

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16.04.2022

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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS MORE TARGETED AND METICULOUS

How to balance the preventive measures for the control of the novel coronavirus and residents' needs for daily necessities is proving to be a challenge for many local governments.

Arrangements need to be as meticulous as possible to ensure that residents have the daily life essentials they need.

In Shanghai, a new detailed and targeted management strategy is being implemented to help ease the supply disruptions that have left some residents desperate and frustrated.

The announcement on Monday that local communities will be placed under three different levels of control and prevention measures in accordance with their different epidemic situations indicates that a more detailed and targeted zone management is being implemented that will progressively ease the restrictions as the spread of the virus is controlled in communities and neighborhoods.

Lockdown is the first level that applies to those buildings or neighborhoods where confirmed cases continue to exist, and residents are required to stay at home until there are zero confirmed cases for two weeks. Closed-neighborhood management is the second level for those blocks which are in the vicinity of locked down buildings or neighborhoods. Residents in these controlled zones are required to stay within their neighborhoods. Those buildings or neighborhoods that are close to areas under the second-level management belong to the third precautionary level, and residents there are required to stay within the extended area, including neighboring streets or communities. Such a division of management levels will reduce the inconvenience caused to local residents by the control and prevention measures.

At the same time, central government departments have released documents prohibiting local governments from setting up acid nucleic testing points at expressway tollgates or adopting other measures that choke the smooth flow of goods along expressways.

Such efforts are already showing positive signs of achieving no transmission of the virus among communities in Shanghai, with the number of new confirmed infections and asymptomatic cases falling.

With the more precise zone management, more importance can also be given to ensure that vulnerable residents, such as the elderly and disabled, receive due care and attention.

With about 320,000 domestic cases reported in 30 provincial-level regions since March, it is more than necessary for local governments at all levels to sum up their experience and learn the lessons from the Omicron wave, so that the response to the pandemic can achieve the maximum effect in the shortest time and the negative effects on people's lives and economic development can be kept to the minimum.

With ever-rising costs for food, gasoline, housing and other necessities squeezing consumers and threatening the economy, inflation in the United States likely set yet another four-decade high in March.

The government's consumer price index being released yesterday is expected to show that prices shot up 8.4% from 12 months earlier, according to economists surveyed by the data firm FactSet. That would mark the fastest year-over-year inflation since December 1981. And it would surpass the 7.9% 12-month increase in February, which itself set a 40-year high.

Economists have also forecast that from February to March, con-

sumer prices jumped 1.1%. That would be the sharpest month-to-month jump since 2005.

The March numbers will be the first to capture the full surge in gasoline prices that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. Moscow's brutal attacks have triggered far-reaching Western sanctions against the Russian economy and have disrupted global food and energy markets.

According to AAA, the average price of a gallon of gasoline is up 44% from a year ago, though it has fallen back in the past couple of weeks.

AP PHOTO



Fireworks light up at Carrara Stadium during the closing ceremony of the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast, Australia

VICTORIA STATE IN AUSTRALIA TO HOST 2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES

THE Australian state of Victoria has been confirmed as the host of the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

It will be the first-ever predominantly regional Commonwealth Games with events in several cities and regional hubs including Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat and Gippsland. Australia has hosted five other times.

In yesterday's announcement, Commonwealth Games Federation president Louise Martin said Victoria and Commonwealth Games Aus-

tralia "set out a bold and innovative vision for hosting our major multi-sport event. In Victoria, we believe we have found the perfect partner for the next stage of our journey."

The opening ceremony will be at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The Commonwealth Games are held every four years involving 70-plus countries from the British Commonwealth of nations. It was scheduled for Durban this year, but Birmingham, England stepped in when financial constraints forced the South African

city to pull out.

The Gold Coast in Queensland hosted in 2018. Melbourne hosted the games in 2006 while other Australian editions included Sydney (1938), Perth (1962) and Brisbane (1982).

The Victoria proposal became the favorite in February when the state government entered into "exclusive negotiations" with the Commonwealth Games Federation.

Sixteen sports have been confirmed on the initial program and up to seven more could be added. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



India-USA President Joe Biden asked India's Narendra Modi yesterday not to accelerate the buying of Russian oil as the U.S. and other nations try to cut off Moscow's energy income following the invasion of Ukraine. The Indian prime minister made no public commitment to refrain from Russian oil, a source of tension with the U.S. Meeting by video call, Biden told Modi that the U.S. could help India diversify its sources of energy.

AP PHOTO



Britain sanctioned two leading Bosnian-Serb politicians, accusing them of encouraging ethnic hatred and jeopardizing the peace accord that ended the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina 25 years ago. Milorad Dodik and Zeljka Cvijanovic will be hit with asset freezes and travel bans in the first sanctions the U.K. has leveled in Bosnia. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine had emboldened the pair to further erode the international rules based system in the Western Balkans.

AP PHOTO



Kenya Monica Kariuki is about ready to give up on farming. What is driving her off her 10 acres of land outside Nairobi isn't bad weather, pests or blight — the traditional agricultural curses — but fertilizer: It costs too much. Despite thousands of miles separating her from the battlefields of Ukraine, Kariuki and her cabbage, corn and spinach farm are indirect victims of Putin's invasion. The war has pushed up the price of natural gas, a key ingredient in fertilizer, and has led to severe sanctions against Russia, a major exporter of fertilizer.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Xinhua/Attila Volgyi



A giant Easter Bunny made of hay is seen among giant painted Easter eggs in the main square of Kethely, Western Hungary, this week.