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MIDDLE EAST WAR

Israel OKs talks with Lebanon

PM Netanyahu's move aims to boost ceasefire efforts 'as soon as possible'

By Jon Gambrell, Elena Becatoros and Mike Corder
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — In a potential boost to Middle East ceasefire efforts, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that he authorized direct negotiations with Lebanon “as soon

as possible” aimed at disarming Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants and establishing relations between the neighbors.

The two countries have technically been at war since Israel was established in 1948, and Netanyahu later stressed that there was no ceasefire between them. In a video statement, he said Israel will keep striking Hezbollah until security is

restored in northern Israel. There was no immediate response from Lebanese authorities. But Israel-Lebanon negotiations were expected to begin next week at the State Department in Washington, according to a U.S. official and a person familiar with the plans who both spoke on condition of anonymity due to the delicacy of the matter.

The prospect of talks appeared to bolster the tentative ceasefire in the Iran war

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A government supporter weeps during a mourning ceremony marking the 40th day since the death of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the U.S. and Israel strikes in Tehran, Iran, on Thursday. VAHID SALEMI THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIO

Coachella festival back for 25th year



Fans of Junior H react to his performance on the main stage during Weekend 2 of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio's Empire Polo Field last year. PHOTOS BY DREW A. KELLEY — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Today launches 2 sold-out weekends of world-famous music showcase

Staff reports

When fans step onto the Empire Polo Field in Indio today, they'll be participating in a cultural milestone — the 25th version of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, which has grown from a fledgling event to a global gathering that shapes the tastes of music fans worldwide.

It wasn't a seamless transition. After the first festival in October 1999 was washed in red ink, it took promoter Goldenvoice a year and a half to try again — and then in a stripped-down, one-day format. From that uneven start, the festival began to grow steadily, expanding to three days and adding the



Weekend 2 of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio on April 20.

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RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Warrants to seize ballots were flawed, experts say

Sheriff Bianco dismisses their criticism of his election probe

By Jeff Horseman
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The reasoning behind search warrants used to seize more than 650,000 Riverside County ballots as part of a closely watched criminal investigation is dubious and relies on baseless allegations, several legal scholars said.

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco dismissed the criticisms, calling blog posts by two professors “obvious political commentary” steeped in narcissism.

The critics' concerns mirror those of California Attorney General Rob Bonta, who is suing to

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ORANGE COUNTY

Food world recalls Rainer Schwarz as mentor, friend

Acclaimed chef of The Deck and Driftwood Kitchen died in crash

By Brock Keeling
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Rainer Schwarz, the Austrian-born chef and restaurateur who helped shape Laguna Beach's culinary scene and beyond through Driftwood Kitchen and The Deck, died this week in a car crash. He was 59.

For the chefs, fellow restaurateurs and friends who knew him best, Schwarz, who cut his teeth in

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MOON MISSION

Artemis II crew readies return

The astronauts tidied up their lunar cruiser for the upcoming “fireball” return and reflected on their historic journey around the moon. A2

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