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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 awash 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 halt the controversial probe launched by Bianco, a Republican running for governor.

Affidavits in support of the warrants “did not identify any specific felony offense the Sheriff had probable cause to believe had been committed or that a particular person had committed a felony” as

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JURUPA VALLEY

Use of Grapppler tool ends chase, but with a crash

Device failed to create safe stop; Sheriff's Department defends tech

By Brian Rokos
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The Riverside County Sheriff's Department on Thursday said it is standing by its use of the Grapppler tether device that's intended to safely end police chases, a day after the technology failed to stop a driver whose car instead was sent careening out of control, crashing through a wall into the yard of a Jurupa Valley home.

The man then shot himself to death during a standoff with the sheriff's SWAT team, a depart-

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MOON MISSION

Artemis II crew prepares to return to Earth

Astronauts describe lunar voyage as surreal, profound

By Marcia Dunn
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — Drawing ever closer to Earth, the Artemis II astronauts tidied up their lunar cruiser for its upcoming “fireball” return and reflected on their historic journey around the moon, describing it as surreal and profound.

As the next-to-last day of their flight dawned Thursday, humanity's first lunar explorers in more than half a century were less than 150,000 miles from home with the odometer clicking down.

“We have to get back. There's so much data that you've seen already, but all the good stuff is coming back with us. There are so many more pictures, so many more stories,” said pilot Victor Glover, adding that “riding a fireball through the atmosphere is profound

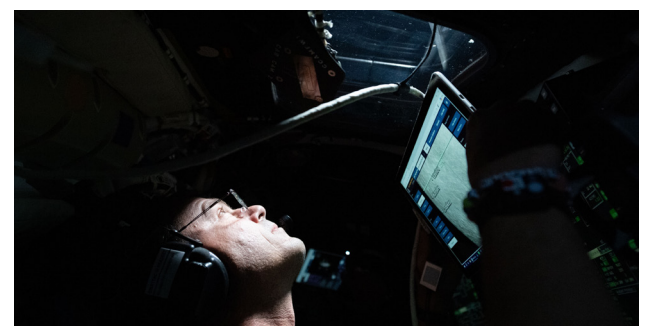
as well.”

Being cut off from all of humanity for nearly an hour while behind the moon was especially “surreal,” according to commander Reid Wiseman.

“There's a lot that our brains have to process ... and it is a true gift,” Wiseman said late Wednesday during the crew's first news conference since before lift-off.

While out of contact behind the

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Astronaut and Artemis II commander Reid Wiseman takes a moment during Monday's seven-hour lunar observation period, when the crew reported to the ground team their observations including color nuances, which will help enhance scientific understandings of the moon. NASA VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORECAST

Riverside
77/55

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Desert: High 88 Low 61
Mountains: High 56 Low 32

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