

Sports

Homeless to be moved out of Paris ahead of 2024 Olympics

Govt plan sparks criticism from some mayors

PARIS: The French government plans to move homeless people out of Paris ahead of the 2024 Olympic Games in the capital, sparking criticism from some mayors of regional towns and villages which are expected to house them. From mid-March, the government began asking officials around France to create "temporary regional accommodation facilities" that can handle an outflow of homeless people from the capital, many of them migrants. Housing Minister Olivier Klein explained to parliament earlier this month that the changes were necessary because of an expected accommodation crunch in the City of Light during the Rugby World Cup from September and the Olympics next July and August.

Many low-end hotels that authorities use to provide emergency accommodation to homeless people plan to rent their rooms at market rates to sports fans and holiday makers. The government estimates that hotel capacity available to accommodate the homeless "will fall by 3,000-4,000 places due to these

events," Klein told MPs on May 5. He said the expected fall "obliges us to ask questions and prepare for the situation... It's about opening accommodation spaces in provincial areas for people who require emergency accommodation."

But some of the proposed locations are already sparking concern among local elected figures. The mayor of Bruz in northwest Brittany, Philippe Salmon, voiced his opposition on Tuesday to the idea of a new centre in his town of 18,000 people near regional capital Rennes. "We are not in favor of the creation of a facility in our area, in conditions that we consider unacceptable," he said. The proposed site was next to a railway line and "polluted by hydrocarbons and heavy metals," he said.

'Positive in principle'

Pascal Brice, the head of the Federation for Solidarity Workers, a homelessness charity, said that "putting people up in good conditions all over France

rather than in the streets of the Paris region is positive in principle. "But will they put in the necessary resources?" He said there was danger of "putting people on buses" then failing to look after them.

Hadrien Clouet, an MP from the hard-left France Unbowed party, accused the government of adopting "the method of all authoritarian regimes: moving the homeless by force to hide them from sight of those taking part in the 2024 Olympics." Authorities in China cleared an unknown number of beggars, hawkers and the homeless from the streets of China before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, with many shipped back to their home regions, reports said at the time. Brazilian campaign groups also said Rio de Janeiro's homeless were being forced out of tourist areas in the middle of the night as the city hosted the games in 2016.

The French initiative to create emergency housing capacity in small towns around the country fits a pattern under President Emmanuel Macron of trying

to disperse migrants and others requiring social support from the densely populated Paris region. Efforts to create housing facilities for asylum seekers in provincial areas have already proved an explosive issue, sparking fierce resistance from some local people, far-right activists and mayors. A French mayor who supported a migrant centre in his area of northwest France had part of his house burned down in an arson attack, leading him to resign earlier this month.

Housing Minister Klein said the fight against homelessness was "a priority" of the president and that funds allotted to solving the problem had "increased by five between 2012 and 2022." After coming to power in 2017, Macron gave himself to the end of the year to end rough sleeping once and for all. He later admitted that he had failed, citing an influx of migrants from Africa and South Asia as the reason. Many of Paris's bridges and parks are used for shelter by the homeless, with camps and tents regularly cleared away by security forces. — AFP

News in Brief

Chelsea struggles 'a warning'

MANCHESTER: Erik ten Hag says Chelsea's struggles are a stark warning of how difficult life can be after a change of ownership as Manchester United's takeover process drags on. As the Glazers continue to consider a full or partial sale of United, Chelsea will visit Old Trafford on Thursday limping to the end of a hugely disappointing first campaign under their new regime. The London club have spent about \$600 million (\$740 million) since a group headed by Todd Boehly bought the club last year but are languishing in 12th place in the Premier League under interim boss Frank Lampard, their third manager of the season. Chelsea have been criticized for a scattergun approach in the transfer market and United boss Ten Hag said their experience showed money is not the answer if spent unwisely. — AFP

Dainese takes stage 17 win

CAORLE: Italian rider Alberto Dainese edged the sprint on Wednesday's stage 17 of the Giro d'Italia as Geraint Thomas finished in the pack to keep the leader's pink jersey. Mark Cavendish, who announced on Tuesday that he would be retiring at the end of the season, made an error a kilometer out from the finish of the flat 197km ride from Pergine Valsugana. The 38-year-old lost his lead-in man and finished well back, most probably ending his record of winning a stage at every Giro he has ridden unless he can survive the mountains over the next three days and take Sunday's finale in Rome. Dainese's DSM team led the peloton around the last bend with 400m to go but it was Michael Matthews (Jayco-AlUla) who then came to the front. Dainese, 25, caught the Australian while Jonathan Milan (Bahrain Victorious) put in a fierce burst that meant the three of them crossed the line together. — AFP

Olympic Committee in turmoil

PARIS: Sports Minister Amelie Oudea Castera on Thursday called on the French National Olympic Committee (CNOSF) to rally together after their president Brigitte Henriques quit her post only 14 months before Paris hosts the Olympic Games. Henriques' dramatic resignation at the committee's general assembly comes after a year-and-a-half of internal squabbling and a very public disagreement with her predecessor Denis Masseglia. Her resignation will not affect the organizing of the Games which is handled by the Paris Olympics organizing committee headed by France's three-time canoeing gold medalist Tony Estanguet. Henriques had insisted prior to the assembly she had no intention of resigning but to the astonishment of the attendees she said she would step down on June 29. She had taken a few weeks off at the end of 2022 to recover after her right hand man Didier Seminet had been cast aside in September but the atmosphere had not improved when she returned to her post. — AFP

Iniesta to leave Japan's Kobe

KOBE: Barcelona legend Andres Iniesta said Thursday he will make an early exit from Japanese side Vissel Kobe but intends to keep playing aged 39. The Spanish World Cup winner's contract with Vissel runs until the end of the year but a tearful Iniesta said he will leave in July after seeing little action this season. Iniesta has made only three substitute appearances totaling 38 minutes this term for Vissel, who are three points clear at the top of the table. The midfield maestro said he did not know where his next move would be, but ruled out retiring. Widely considered one of the greatest players of his generation, he has been linked with a non-playing role at Barcelona. "First I want to finish my time here properly and then see what options are available to me," he told reporters, pausing to wipe away tears at times. "I want to keep playing and then retire while I'm still active. That's difficult for me to do here, so I want to find a place where I can eventually retire." — AFP

Players, fans support Vinicius

MADRID: Vinicius Junior's Real Madrid team-mates showed him support after he was racially abused, by wearing his number 20 shirt before their La Liga match against Rayo Vallecano on Wednesday. The 22-year-old Brazilian winger was present at the Santiago Bernabeu although not part of the squad for the game because of a knee problem, and his colleagues applauded him as he watched from the side of the pitch. Vinicius faced off with a supporter at Valencia's Mestalla stadium on Sunday after being abused during the match, and was later sent off for hitting Hugo Duro. However the Spanish football federation's Competition Committee revoked his red card late Tuesday because some images from the VAR video were not shown to the referee who sent him off. — AFP

Madhwal - Tennis-ball cricketer who entered IPL record books

CHENNAI: Akash Madhwal was working as an engineer and playing tennis-ball cricket just a few years ago — now he is in the Indian Premier League record books. The 29-year-old fast bowler returned stunning figures of 5-5 in the playoffs to lead five-time champions Mumbai Indians to victory over Lucknow Super Giants on Wednesday. Mumbai will face Gujarat Titans on Friday for a place in Sunday's final against Chennai Super Kings.

With Jasprit Bumrah and Jofra Archer both injured, the previously unheralded Madhwal has grabbed his chance to shine. He joined Mumbai last year as an injury replacement but remained confined to playing practice matches, before skipper Rohit Sharma introduced him to the big stage this season. "The team has given me the responsibility so I am trying to do it," Madhwal told reporters after his man-of-the-match performance. "It's not that I can take his (Bumrah's) place, but whatever I can do in my capacity, I am doing."

Madhwal's route into IPL folklore — the first to take a five-wicket haul in the playoffs — came by way of an unusual path. He was working as a civil engineer when he quit a steady job and joined his

Mumbai knock Lucknow Super Giants out of IPL

CHENNAI: Akash Madhwal took five wickets for as many runs to lead Mumbai Indians to a crushing 81-run win in the second IPL playoff game and knock Lucknow Super Giants out of the tournament on Wednesday. Australia's Cameron Green (41) and Suryakumar Yadav (33) put on 66 to help guide five-time champions Mumbai to 182-8 after they elected to bat first in the knockout contest in Chennai. Madhwal then returned figures of 5-5 in 3.3 overs to dismiss Lucknow for 101 as Mumbai booked a meeting with holders and regular season table-toppers Gujarat Titans in the next play-off encounter on Friday in Ahmedabad.

The winners of that clash will meet Chennai Super Kings in the final on Sunday. "It's nice that it's going well at the moment," Green said. "Our batting's been really good. Madhwal has been the game changer for us: five today, and got four for the other day." Green, who was the second-most expensive player bought in the auction at \$2.11 million, added: "Gujarat are the best team. It's going to be a tough challenge, especially on their home turf." Lucknow's innings imploded as they collapsed from 69-2 to be bowled out in 16.3 overs, losing three key wickets to run outs.

Green, who hit his maiden T20 century in Mumbai's previous win, looked in control during a 23-ball knock laced with six fours and one six until his departure. Naveen-ul-Haq, who took four wickets for Lucknow, sent back Suryakumar and Green, bowled by a slower off-cutter from the Afghanistan pace bowler, in the space of three deliveries to push Mumbai onto the back foot. Tilak Varma hit back with a quickfire 26 and a 43-run stand with Tim David, who

Alonso seeking to end Red Bull winning streak

MONACO: Fernando Alonso will seek to break Max Verstappen and Red Bull's winning streak and claim his first win since 2013 as Formula One resumes this weekend with the 80th running of the classic Monaco Grand Prix. After floods forced the cancellation of last week's European 'season opener', the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola, the F1 circus was happy to be greeted by blue skies and warm sunshine in the Mediterranean principality on Wednesday.

As visitors sought shade, Alonso and his Aston Martin team contemplated how to gamble on delivering his third win on the old, but glamorized street circuit, where he triumphed with Renault in 2006 and McLaren in 2007. After four third-place finishes from five races, the 41-year-old Spaniard has emerged as not only the biggest threat to double champion Verstappen and his team-mate Sergio Perez, but also this year's box-office attraction, a wily wolf with unrivalled experience.

"We have a car that maybe isn't the fastest on the straights, but very good in the corners," he explained

state team, before the IPL came calling. "Cricket is my passion and not a burden," he said. "So I am enjoying cricket after leaving engineering and a job to follow my passion without having much at home." Madhwal is also a product of tennis-ball cricket, a variant of the sport using tennis balls.

It is popular among budding cricketers across India and Madhwal said it played a part in his breakout display. "I have learnt to bowl yorkers in tennis-ball cricket and I try to implement that (here) because that's the only ball to save yourself (from getting hit for runs)," said Madhwal, who hails from the north Indian state of Uttarakhand. "My strength is my yorker and bhaiyya ('brother') Rohit used me where my strength lies and where the team needs me." His feat on Wednesday came on the back of 4-37 against Sunrisers Hyderabad — eclipsed only by Mumbai big-buy Cameron Green's match-winning 100 not out.

'Grab your opportunity'

Standing at 1.75 meters, Madhwal is not your usual tall and burly fast bowler, but his accuracy and grit more than makes up for the lack of size. "We knew what he had, and we needed somebody to bowl at the back end," said Rohit. "Having seen him, I was confident he could get the job done for us." The bearded and often-smiling Madhwal struck twice in two balls, including getting the dangerous Nicholas Pooran out, caught behind for a duck to break Lucknow's back.

Former India quick Zaheer Khan tweeted:



CHENNAI: Lucknow Super Giants' Marcus Stoinis (left) plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 eliminator cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on May 24, 2023. — AFP

was out caught for 13 after unsuccessfully reviewing a full toss for being over waist-height.

Run-outs and more

Naveen finished with 4-38 and Yash Thakur took three wickets but despite their efforts Mumbai's impact sub Nehal Wadhwa boosted the total with his 12-ball 23. Lucknow lost their openers early including impact player Kyle Mayers for 18 before Australia's Marcus Stoinis attempted to

pull the chase together in his 27-ball 40. But Madhwal struck with successive balls, including getting the dangerous Nicholas Pooran caught behind for a golden duck. An engineer by profession, Madhwal learned the game while playing tennis-ball cricket in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand but is filling in for Mumbai's injured pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. "Bumrah bhai (brother) has his own place, and I'm just trying to play the role assigned to me," said the 29-year-old Madhwal. — AFP

'Anything possible for Leclerc'

Local hero Charles Leclerc of Ferrari, who has never tasted success at his home event, on what was once his bus-route to school, will hope for a change of fortune as he bids for a third consecutive Monaco pole position. Since 2017, he has accumulated only 12 points — for finishing fourth in 2022 — and is long overdue a result that reflects his precious talent, Ferrari's form and reliability notwithstanding. "Unfortunately, we have had problems from the first three races," he conceded, reflecting on his meagre total of 34 points and seventh place in the title standings. "But here, anything is possible."

He conceded that he will face a ferocious battle with the Red Bulls—"cars that are operating on another planet"—in Saturday's qualifying session and warned of the threat from Alonso's sleek green machine. "Aston Martin are capable of making a splash," he added. De-



CHENNAI: Mumbai Indians' Akash Madhwal prepares to catch a ball during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 eliminator cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on May 24, 2023. — AFP

"Looking forward to a lot more from the young lad." Opportunity has not come easy for Madhwal. He played as a net bowler for Royal Challengers Bangalore in 2019 before joining Mumbai in the same capacity. But Madhwal, who has led his state team in the 50-overs format, said he never lost hope. "When a scouting team picks you as a net bowler, they give you a chance as well as one has to showcase your skills in the practice matches and show your potential," he said. "It's just about grabbing your opportunity." — AFP



MONACO: Aston Martin's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso speaks during the drivers press conference of the Monaco Formula One Grand Prix in Monaco on May 25, 2023. The race will take place on May 28, 2023. — AFP

spite the introduction of a major package of upgrades on their car, Mercedes are expected to remain in pursuit of their rivals with seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton unlikely to add to his three Monaco triumphs and record 103 overall. "We have the first step in a new direction," said team chief Toto Wolff, who is in talks with Hamilton on renewing his contract. "It won't be a silver bullet... But it may give the drivers a little more stability." — AFP