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No mass gatherings, no hospital visits, police to enforce airport quarantine

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No mass gatherings, no hospital visits, police to enforce quarantine

New guidelines come following all-embracing government directive for all arrivals from overseas, nationals and non-nationals, to self-quarantine regardless of port of origin

Ynet| Published: 03.10.20 , 19:38

Israeli authorities have introduced on Tuesday a host of new directives aimed at fighting the spread of the novel coronavirus across the country.

The Health Ministry tightened its restrictions on the number of participants in public events, further reducing the maximum attendance allowed from 5,000 people to 2,000 people, while also urging the public to reconsider holding mass gatherings of any kind.

The ministry also advises the public to refrain from visiting hospitals, nursing homes or any other location where senior citizens may be found.

“The Health Ministry recommends that the elderly population, especially those with a history of health problems, reduce contact with [members of the general public] as possible while still maintaining their routine,” the ministry said in a statement.

The Welfare Ministry also announced earlier Tuesday that visiting nursing homes will be barred indefinitely in light of the virus outbreak.

“Due to the vulnerability of the elderly population and the need to maintain their health, family visits will only be allowed to take place outside the nursing homes,” the ministry said.

Israel Police announced that it will receive all information on nationals returning to the country to assist its units in enforcing the mandatory 14-day home quarantine for all arrivals from overseas.

In addition, Israel Police and the Health Ministry have set up designated task forces, consisting of police officers and health inspectors to prevent quarantine violations.

Also, passengers arriving from abroad will no longer be allowed to use the Ben Gurion Airport train station starting Wednesday, Israel Railways announced on Tuesday.

The station will still be available for airport workers as well as Israelis traveling within the country who will be required to show their plane ticket before being allowed into the station.

Earlier Tuesday, the Health Ministry confirmed that eight more Israelis have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, bringing the country's total number of cases to 58.

Five of the patients have recently returned from overseas, while three others have contracted the virus after coming in direct contact with a confirmed COVID-19 patient.

Israel has taken some of the most extreme precautions to prevent a local coronavirus outbreak, forcing tens of thousands of Israeli travelers returning from a host of destinations in Asia and Europe into home quarantine.

On Monday, the government said any person entering the country from abroad, whether an Israeli national or not, must spend two weeks in quarantine.

The Health Ministry website has full details of the locations visited by coronavirus sufferers in Israel.

03.10.20 – Tu -

Lapid 3 short of the 61 MKs it needs: Minority government or fourth elections

03.10.20 – Tu -

Lapid: Minority government or fourth elections

Blue & White No. 2 takes aim at party MKs opposed to alliance with mainly Arab Joint List, says ideal situation would be unity government with rotating PM, but Netanyahu would not allow that as his main concern is escaping his legal woes

Yuval Karni | Published: 03.10.20 , 15:07

Blue & White No. 2 Yair Lapid on Tuesday said that the party faces two options: Either forming a minority government with external support from Joint List or holding Israel's fourth election since April 2019.

Lapid made the comments on Facebook while discussing Blue & White efforts to form a government despite the refusal by its MKs Yoaz Hendel and Zvi Hauser to rely on Knesset votes from the predominantly Arab Joint List.

"Both options are difficult, while one is unacceptable," wrote Lapid on his Facebook page. "The best option is the one Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected outright, a national unity government."

"That is what we strove for from the very beginning, and that is what we still strive for today," he wrote. "A stable unity government with a rotation [for prime minister], starting with [Blue & White leader] Benny Gantz since Netanyahu will most probably be in court."

According to Lapid, Netanyahu vehemently rejected a proposal for a unity government because it would scupper his plans to escape prosecution by changing the law to be granted immunity from his criminal charges. His trial is set to begin on March 17.

"The only thing he is interested in is his three indictments," Lapid said. "He doesn't want unity because he knows he will be unable to legislate an immunity law [that would exempt him from prosecution while serving as prime minister] along with legislation that will effectively destroy the authority of the Supreme Court."

Lapid said that his party would form a narrow government with Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beytenu and the Labor Party.

"Contrary to the lies Netanyahu is trying to spread, the Joint List will not be part of that government," he said.

Lapid said that such a move would be far from optimal but still better than a fourth election, which he said was Netanyahu's true goal.

"Netanyahu wants more hatred, more incitement, more violence and more money wasted," Lapid wrote. "This is the only option we have; we must think about what is best for Israel."

Hendel and Hauser have apparently voiced opposition to the possibility of forming a minority center-left government backed by the Joint List, despite numerous attempts to persuade them otherwise.

Following their apparent disagreement with Gantz regarding a coalition government, the party's No. 3, Moshe Ya'alon, said he expected the two to draw their own conclusions regarding their future in the party should they try to sabotage Gantz's efforts.

According to sources close to the two MKs, they remain adamant in their refusal to accept a narrow government.

While Hendel and Hauser are the ones leading the opposition within Blue & White to a government backed by the Joint List, sources close to the party claimed there are other MKs who feel "uncomfortable" with such a move.

The sources named MK Hili Tropper, a close associate of Gantz who has behind closed doors expressed his reluctance to accept a narrow government.

While Tropper's aversion to Gantz's plans is apparently common knowledge within the party, sources claim he will nevertheless vote in line with Blue & White's official position.

On **Monday**, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attacked the rival party's plans for a government, in a video posted online.

"**Gantz is sending his messengers to negotiate with the likes of Balad,**" said Netanyahu, referring to one of the **more extreme factions** that comprises **Joint List**.

Integration Minister Yariv Levin of Likud has also attacked Gantz's plans, calling members of the **Joint List** "**supporters of terrorism.**"

He, like Netanyahu, is seeking to frame the election results as a victory for the right-wing bloc, despite its inability to form a stable government as it is **three short of the 61 MKs it needs.**

According to Levin, Gantz is "unwilling to accept the public's choice in the elections."

**Blue & White's center-left bloc has 55 MKs,** and it too is unable to reach the 61 mark without the support of Liberman and his party's seven lawmakers.

"The Likud is the biggest party with 36 seats, it is a clear knock out victory," said Levin.

**03.10.20** – Tu -

**Jerusalem court rejects Netanyahu bid to delay corruption trial**

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Proceedings to begin as planned on March 17; lawyer for PM, who is charged with fraud, bribery and breach of trust, had **sought postponement** over what he said was prosecution's **failure to provide evidentiary material**

Yael Friedson | Published: **03.10.20** , 13:57

Jerusalem District Court on Tuesday rejected Benjamin Netanyahu's request to delay his corruption trial on the grounds that his defense team has not received all of the relevant material from the prosecution.

The trial will begin in the same court as scheduled on March 17. The prime minister, who is facing criminal charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, submitted his request on Sunday through his attorney Amit Hadad.

Hadad cited technical reasons for the request, claiming evidentiary material sought by the defense team months ago has still not been delivered to them.

The start of the trial is set to be similar to a pre-trial, in which both sides attempt to put into the record documents and evidence that are mutually agreed upon.

It is also expected that the list of 333 witnesses named in the indictment will be substantially reduced.

Netanyahu described his indictment as an attempted coup by the judiciary, calling the investigation "tainted and politically motivated" and casting aspersions on Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit and the prosecution.

"The public has lost its faith in the judiciary," Netanyahu said last week, claiming he has no intention of seeking a plea bargain or a pardon and is determined to prove his innocence in court.

03.10.20 – Tu -

Israel's coronavirus cases up to 58, health officials confirm

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Health Ministry says that for the first time one of the patients recently returned from a trip to Azerbaijan; 3 others recently arrived from Germany and 1 from Austria; 3 others contracted COVID-19 in Israel, joining a host of others who became infected the same way

Ynet| Published: 03.10.20 , 13:52

Another eight Israelis have been diagnosed with the coronavirus, bringing the total number of cases in the country to 58, the Health Ministry confirmed on Tuesday.

Five of the newly-diagnosed have recently returned from overseas, while three others had contracted the virus by coming in direct contact with a person already infected with COVID-19.

In a first, an Israeli contracted the virus after a trip to the country of Azerbaijan. The patient, 40, is a resident of southern Israel who returned to Israel on February 27 and was hospitalized with flu-like symptoms on March 5. On February 29 he visited the Ikea store in the southern city of Be'er Sheva.

Three other patients, aged between 30 and 40, have recently returned from Germany. All three are residents of central Israel.

Another patient is a Tel Aviv resident who returned from a trip to Austria on March 7 and has been in self-quarantine since then.

In addition, at least six of the those who were diagnosed on Monday appear to have contracted the virus inside the country and continued to lead ordinary lives for days before becoming aware of the infection. The Health Ministry said the development leaves many Israelis at risk of catching the virus.

A patient, whom the Health Ministry refers to as Case 45 (in order of diagnosis), is a 60-year-old woman from Jerusalem who was in contact with a tourist from France infected with the virus. On March 7, she was hospitalized with flu-like symptoms, leaving her unaware of her illness for five days.

Case 47 is a 40-year-old woman from central Israel who worked as a children's caregiver in Moshav Einav. She was in contact with a person infected with coronavirus on March 2 and continued her daily routine until being admitted to hospital with flu-like symptoms on March 8. Among the locations visited by the patient are Renanim Mall in the city of Raanana and Rav Shefa Mall in Jerusalem.

Another patient, Case 48, is a man in his 20s who lives in central Israel. He came in direct contact with a person infected with the virus on February 28 and continued his daily life until being admitted to a medical center on March 7. Among the places visited by the man are Mivchar, the Haredi College in Bnei Brak, Kiryat Ono Mall and a synagogue in Moshav Einav.

Case 57 is a 30-year-old man from central Israel who also contracted the disease through another virus carrier sometime in the end of February and was only hospitalized on March 9 with flu-like symptoms. During that period, he visited "Bilu" outdoor outlet mall in Rehovot, two different HMO branches in Rehovot as well as several local grocery shops.

The Health Ministry website has full details of the locations visited by coronavirus sufferers in Israel.

03.09.20 – Mo -

Netanyahu announces 14-day home quarantine for all arrivals from abroad

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Netanyahu announces 14-day home quarantine for all arrivals from abroad

New directive applies to both Israeli nationals and non-nationals, regardless of their port of origin, starting 8pm Thursday; El Al senior executives convene emergency meeting

Itamar Eichner, Itay Blumenthal | Published: 03.09.20 , 20:56

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Monday that all arrivals from abroad, starting 8pm (Israel time), must self-quarantine for 14 days after arrival, regardless of the destination they arrived from.

"After a whole day of complex discussions, we've reached a decision: every person arriving in Israel from abroad must enter a 14-day quarantine," Netanyahu told reporters. "This is a difficult decision, but it is necessary to maintain public health, and public health is above all else. The decision will be in effect for the next two weeks."

Travelers who are not permanent residents of Israel will not be allowed in the country and will be sent back.

The decision is not retroactive and goes into effect in 72 hours, Channel 12 reported. The decision was preceded by a heated argument between Security ministers, as they failed earlier Monday to reach an agreement over whether to extend the preventive measures against the virus, namely, the extension of the quarantine obligation imposed on arrivals from countries hit by the pathogen to the United States as well. Some of the ministers strongly opposed the move and Interior Minister Aryeh Deri claimed the new measures will put an additional 240,000 people in quarantine. The discussion was suspended and Netanyahu moved on to discuss medical and technological solutions to the coronavirus crisis.

On Sunday, Netanyahu said the **government will decide on extended measures** within one day, in a joint press conference with Health Minister Yaacov Litzman.

"This is a very difficult decision to make," the prime minister said. "We have had extensive discussions on the course of action. **We are not talking about closing our gates completely but considering quarantine for anyone coming into the country** – Israelis, and foreigners."

At the center of the debate was Netanyahu's alleged reluctance to annoy the American administration.

Such a decision to restrict entry from the United States alone could undermine Netanyahu's efforts, as he appears to be focused on **coordination with the White House**, and a wider ban on all arrivals would mitigate the damage.

Following Netanyahu's announcement, senior executives of Israel's flag carrier, El Al, convened an emergency meeting Monday evening to discuss ways for the state to maintain its aerial routes in light of the new directive.

The company reported it is studying Netanyahu's decision and examining the list of destinations that will operate in the coming days.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry is preparing to evacuate families of diplomats serving at the Israeli embassy in Italy. The diplomats themselves will remain in their posts.

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The **Israeli embassy in Athens has been closed for a two-week period** as the facility is **undergoing disinfection** after an envoy was found to have contracted the coronavirus while **traveling on the same plane with a group of Greek pilgrims**, many of whom had been infected.

03.08.20 – Su -

## Gantz & Liberman agree on conversion to Judaism & businesses on the Sabbath

03.08.20 – Su -

### Gantz accepts Liberman's coalition demands

Yisrael Beytenu chair refuses to back down from election promises regarding state-religion affairs, significantly diminishing chances of negotiation talks with religious parties

Moran Azulay, Yuval Karni | Published: 03.08.20 , 14:16

Blue & White Chairman Benny Gantz agreed on Sunday to a set of prerequisites published by Yisrael Beytenu Chairman Avigdor Liberman for joining a center-left coalition government.

Gantz shared on his Twitter account a screenshot from Liberman's Facebook page, detailing his party's conditions for joining a Gantz-led government, accompanied by a caption reading, "Agreed, we must move forward."

Liberman made it clear he would not back down from his election promises regarding conversion to Judaism and opening businesses on the Sabbath, which significantly diminishes chances he will enter negotiation talks with the religious parties.

This move is likely to make the establishment of a government more difficult for Gantz and will narrow down the possibilities available to him even further.

Yisrael Beytenu's conditions for joining a coalition:

1. Income support and pensions for the elderly from the state will be equaled to a minimum of 70% of the current minimum wage in the labor market.
2. The operation of public transportation and businesses on the Sabbath will be delegated to the local authorities.
3. The implantation of a draft bill for ultra-Orthodox men which was approved by first reading in the 20th Knesset.
4. The introduction of civil marriage in Israel.
5. The introduction of a more lenient conversion process to Judaism.

The Yisrael Beytenu chair and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are in the midst of an incandescent campaign against one another after Liberman announced he will back legislation offered by Blue & White and other parties on the center-left to ban any members of the Knesset who are criminally indicted from serving as prime minister.

With the Soviet-born politician's support; alongside Blue & White, Labor-Gesher-Meretz and the Joint List; the bill can muster a potential 62-lawmaker majority in the 120-strong Knesset who are in support of the bill.

Right-wing politicians have denounced the law, claiming that it is legislation specifically designed to prevent Netanyahu from forming a government.

Sources close to Blue & White claimed that the party intends to make the law applicable only from the next parliament so that it would not be perceived as a personal move against Netanyahu.



In response, Netanyahu's Likud party petitioned the Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit on Thursday to launch a criminal probe into Liberman's alleged involvement in a corruption case involving his party, known as the "Yisrael Beytenu Affair."

03.07.20 – Sa -

Bethlehem deserted; Gaza schools universities and colleges close for a month by decree

03.07.20 – Sa -

Bethlehem deserted after Palestinians declare coronavirus emergency

Both the Palestinian Authority and Defense Minister Naftali Bennett have taken measures to contain the spread of the virus as Bethlehem sees the Church of the Nativity closed and shop owners stand to lose substantial income with one calling the situation a catastrophe Reuters, Ynet| Published: 03.07.20 , 09:02

The streets of Bethlehem were near-empty on Friday as Palestinian police wearing masks patrolled the traditional birthplace of Jesus, hit hard by a state of emergency declared over coronavirus.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced the 30-day measure across the occupied West Bank on Thursday after seven coronavirus cases were found in Bethlehem among hotel workers thought to have caught it from tourists.

Under the order, the movement of Israelis and Palestinian Arabs into and out of the city is prohibited.

Defense Minister Naftali Bennett also ordered the closure of Bethlehem Thursday night over concerns of the Coronavirus in the city.

In other parts of the West Bank, Palestinian security forces staffed checkpoints and turned some foreigners away.

The full impact of the order to close schools and colleges and cancel foreign tourist reservations will only be felt after Friday when most offices were closed for the weekend. South of Jerusalem, the gate was closed at the main Israeli checkpoint into Bethlehem, where tourist coaches were turned away. While some visitors got in through other entrances they found the heart of the town, the Church of the Nativity closed.

"It is sad because we really wanted to visit and see the city," said Leonardo Cairolì, a tourist from the Netherlands as he stood in a near-deserted Manger Square.

Seeing Cairolì's disappointed family, Father Essa Thalgi came out to talk to them. He said the church was being sanitized and would likely reopen in 14 days.

With 1.5 million tourists and pilgrims visiting Bethlehem annually, many local businesses face huge losses.

"You're talking about a catastrophe economically but we should take care of our health," said Nabil Giacaman, a souvenir shop owner.

Nearby, Alaa Salameh's falafel restaurant was empty.

"All the time we are ready for the political situation like the war in Gaza or some clashes on the checkpoints or on the wall, but this," Salameh said, "it's something new for us."

Religious authorities closed around 30 mosques, conferences were canceled and national parks shut across the West Bank.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said movement between areas should only be done "in cases of extreme necessity".

There were lower numbers than usual praying at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque on Friday, but observers cited different factors, including heavy rain, checkpoint closures, and health fears.

Elsewhere, West Bank towns such as Jericho have seen foreigners turned away at checkpoints and some visitors have reported feeling uncomfortable.

"I don't feel safe. If I go out, people shout 'corona' or some people follow me for five minutes taking pictures," said one East Asian student.

No coronavirus cases have been reported in Gaza, which is ruled by the Islamist group Hamas. Nonetheless, the U.N. agency which aids Palestinian refugees said it would close its 274 schools there on Saturday to assess the situation.

Eight Gaza universities and colleges said they would close for a month in accordance with Abbas's emergency decree.

03.05.20 – Th -

Court rejects multiple hearings; will not delay demolishing homes of militants

03.05.20 – Th -

Israel razes homes of 2 terrorists responsible for Rina Shnerb killing

Clashes erupt between IDF forces and Palestinians in the West Bank during operation to demolish houses of Walid Hanatsheh and Yazan Mughamis, who placed a bomb on a hiking train, killing the 17-year-old

Associated Press, Ynet| Published: 03.05.20 , 10:10

The IDF on Thursday said its forces demolished the homes of two Palestinians responsible for a deadly blast in the West Bank that killed an Israeli teen last year.

Israel says Walid Hanatsheh and Yazan Mughamis were part of a cell that carried out the attack in August, which killed 19-year-old Rina Shnerb and wounded her father and brother as they hiked down to the Danny Spring - named for another Israeli terror victim - in the West Bank.

Hanatsheh and Mughamis, along with other alleged members of the cell, are currently facing trial in an Israeli court.

The demolition was finally greenlit after appeals filed by the families of the attackers to the Supreme Court against the razing had been rejected. The court also rejected the request to hold another hearing on the issue.

Bulldozers tore down one home in the West Bank city of Bir Zeit. At the second home in the city of Ramallah, soldiers used jackhammers to destroy the interior walls of the apartment.

During the operation overnight, the military said dozens of Palestinians burned tires and threw stones and Molotov cocktails at the Israeli forces. It said its forces responded with "riot dispersal means," which usually means tear gas and stun grenades.

Israel says demolishing the family homes of alleged militants deters violence. Critics say the tactic amounts to collective punishment.

03.09.20 – Mo -

Italy decree restricts travel to necessities &, closure of schools until April 3

03.09.20 – Mo -

Italy imposes nationwide restrictions to contain virus

New government decree, which is similar to limitations already in effect in north, applies to all of country's 60 million citizens and will expire on April 3

Associated Press| Published: 03.09.20 , 23:52

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said on Monday travel restrictions and other strict public health measures will be imposed nationwide starting Tuesday to try to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Conte said that a new government decree will require people throughout the country of 60 million people to demonstrate a need to work, health conditions or other limited reasons to travel outside the areas where they live.

The restrictions will take effect on Tuesday and, like those already in place in northern Italy, will last until April 3., Conte said.

"There won't be just a red zone," Conte told reporters referring to the quarantine order he signed for a vast swath of northern Italy with a population of 16 million over the weekend. The nationwide decree also extends school closures in Italy until April 3. Schools in the center and south of Italy that were closed because of the virus had been slated to reopen on March 16.

Italy registered 1,807 more confirmed cases as of Monday evening, for a national total of 9,172. With those numbers, Italy again overtook South Korea as the country with the most cases outside China. The number of people with the virus who died increased to 463. The premier also took to task the young people in much of Italy who have been gathering at night to drink and have a good time during the public health emergency that started on Feb. 21.

"This nightlife...we can't allow this anymore," Conte said.

Under the weekend decree that applied to regions in the north, pubs, restaurants and cafes are required to close at dusk. Now the mandatory early hours will affect all of a locked-down Italy.

On Saturday night, alarmed at rumors over a quarantine in the north, many Italians fled the targeted regions in the northern "red zone." was put under lockdown on Sunday. Some 16 million residents live in that first lockdown, in the north, in populous Lombardy, which includes Milan, and 14 provinces in the north, including that of Venice.

Tuesday's restrictions also extend the closure of schools until April 3. Until Tuesday, schools in the center and south of Italy were slated to reopen on March 16.

03.06.20 – Fr -

UN & WHO urge world to fight virus which infected 98,000 & killed over 3,300  
China's totals to 3,042 deaths and 80,552 cases, more than 80% of the world's cases.

03.06.20 – Fr -

'This is not a drill': WHO urges the world to fight coronavirus

UN health agency urges all nations to 'push this virus back,' a call to action reinforced by dramatic surges in new cases of virus that has now infected 98,000 people and killed over 3,300 more

Associated Press| Published: 03.06.20 , 13:58

BANGKOK - The global march of the new virus triggered a vigorous appeal from the World Health Organization for governments to pull out "all the stops" to slow the epidemic, as it drained color from India's spring festivals, closed Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity and blocked Italians from visiting elderly relatives in nursing homes.

As China, after arduous weeks, appeared to be winning its epic, costly battle against the coronavirus, the fight was revving up in newly affected areas of the globe, unleashing disruptions that profoundly impacted billions of people.

The UN health agency urged all countries to "push this virus back," a call to action reinforced by dramatic surges in new cases. The virus has infected 98,000 people and killed over 3,300.

"This is not a drill. This is not the time for giving up. This is not a time for excuses. This is a time for pulling out all the stops," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in Geneva.

"Countries have been planning for scenarios like this for decades. Now is the time to act on those plans."

As Chinese manufacturers gradually reopened their factories, anti-virus barriers went up elsewhere.

In Italy, the epicenter of Europe's outbreak, workers in latex gloves pinned "closed" notices on school gates, enforcing a 10-day shutdown of the education system. Italy's sports-mad fans are also barred from stadiums until April 3.

A government decree urged the country's famously demonstrative citizens to stay at least 1 meter (3 feet) apart from each other, restricted visits to nursing homes and urged the elderly not to go outside unless absolutely necessary.

That directive appeared to be widely ignored, as school closures left many Italian children in the care of their grandparents.

Parks in Rome overflowed with young and old, undercutting attempts to shield older Italians from the virus that has proven riskier with age. Italy has the world's second-oldest population after Japan.

"It's an absolute paradox!" said Mauro Benedetti, a 73-year-old retiree called upon to watch his grandson. "They tell us to stay home. How can we help our kids and grandkids at the same time?"

"Grandparents are now at risk," he said.

Italy's death toll climbed Thursday to 148, and its confirmed cases to 3,858, third behind South Korea and China, where the virus was first detected in December.

Iran, which has registered 107 deaths from COVID-19, also closed schools and universities and introduced checkpoints to limit travel between major cities.

Iranians were urged to reduce their use of paper money. Iranian state TV also reported that Hossein Sheikholeslam, a 68-year-old diplomat who was an adviser to Iran's foreign minister, had died of the virus.

Amid the string of bad news, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani urged state television to offer "happier" programs to entertain those stuck at home.

Palestinian officials closed the storied Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem indefinitely, weeks ahead of the Easter holiday.

And virus fears may dull India's vibrantly colorful spring festival of Holi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders said they wouldn't attend Holi events and the Holi Moo Festival in New Delhi was canceled.

In the United States, where 12 have died from the virus, hundreds were placed in self-quarantines due to cases in a New York suburb.

A suburban Seattle school district with 22,000 students will close for up to two weeks because of coronavirus concerns, and Seattle's highways were nearly vacant for

Thursday's morning commute as large tech employers like Amazon encouraged employees to work from home.

In Seattle, health officials recommended that the elderly and people with weak immune systems not attend games after an employee at the 72,000-seat football stadium tested positive for the coronavirus.

Off the coast of California, a cruise ship carrying about 3,500 people was ordered to stay put until passengers and crew could be tested because a traveler from its previous voyage died and another three were infected. A helicopter lowered testing kits by rope to the Grand Princess, where people on board have flu-like symptoms.

Financial markets remained volatile, as investors continued to weigh the size of the epidemic's dent on the global economy.

Outbreak fears led to a sharp U.S. stock selloff, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average falling 969 points, or 3.6%, nearly wiping out gains from a day earlier. Analysts said more yo-yo moves on global markets are likely.

OPEC called for a deep production cut to keep crude oil prices from falling further as business disruptions globally slash demand from air travel and industry -- deciding Thursday to push for a cut of 1.5 million barrels a day, or about 1.5% of total world supply.

As travelers faced ever-greater disruptions, the outlook for the industry was increasingly grim. The International Air Transport Association said the outbreak could cost airlines as much as \$113 billion in lost revenue. British airline Flybe collapsed amid sinking demand. Australia, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates banned entry of travelers coming from countries with large outbreaks. Japan announced a quarantine of people from China and South Korea, prompting Seoul to warn of countermeasures for the "excessive" restrictions.

Germany's Lufthansa and its subsidiaries Austrian Airlines and Swiss warned of flight cancellations to and from Israel after it announced tough restrictions on travelers from several countries because of the virus.

As the impact deepened globally, China is releasing more and more patients from the virus-dedicated hospitals it hastily built at the peak of its crisis. It has released 53,726 people who were declared cured, while about 6,000 virus patients are still hospitalized in serious condition.

On Friday, China reported 143 new cases of infection and 30 new deaths, almost all in the epicenter of Wuhan and surrounding Hubei province.

That brings China's totals to 3,042 deaths and 80,552 cases, more than 80% of the world's cases.