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Professor Gamzu has all options to test, investigate & quarantine to avoid lockdown

PM: Coronavirus czar will be given full authority to tackle epidemic

Netanyahu says coronavirus task force chief given carte blanche with Israel's virus response apparatus; Gamzu says gov't tries all available options before re-imposing general lockdown on the economy

Ynet reporters| Published: 07.23.20 , 21 :53

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that Prof. Ronni Gamzu, who was appointed chief of the national coronavirus task force, will be given full authority to tackle the COVID-19 epidemic.

"Prof. Gamzu has one major mission – to break the chain of contagion," said Netanyahu. "For this purpose, he will be given full authority in three areas – testing, [epidemiological] investigations, and quarantine."

The government will rule on future closures and restrictions in accordance with the policies that Prof. Gamzu will devise."

The premier also said that the IDF will help Prof. Gamzu carry out his policies and that he had agreed with Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz to cut by half the number of panel members at the Coronavirus Cabinet which directs the government's response to the epidemic.

Moreover, Netanyahu promised to roll out **further stimulation packages** to help encourage employment as the Israeli economy experiences deep turmoil due to prolonged closures and restrictions.

Incoming coronavirus czar Gamzu said that the government is trying its best to fight off the pathogen while avoiding another general lockdown on the economy.

"The **mission** is to **get through this with minimal harm to** society and the **economy**. Lockdown may be an easy fix and is being done in some countries today," said Gamzu. "The Israeli government, and I say this with a lot of respect, **tries everything** it can **without lockdown.**"

07.23.20 – Th - - -

**Israel virus research in India will examine technology that gives instant results tests**

**Israeli researchers to examine instant coronavirus tests in India**

Expert says success of technologies could mark watershed moment in global battle against coronavirus, allowing Israel and other countries to substantially increase testing capacity

Itamar Eichner, Yoav Zitun | Published: **07.23.20**, 18:07

The Defense Ministry said **on Thursday** it **will send a research delegation to India to test out different diagnostic technologies able to determine almost immediately whether a person has been infected** with coronavirus.

The ministry says a delegation led by its Directorate of Defense Research and Development (DDRD) will travel to India in the coming weeks to experiment with different **tests that use voice recordings, breathalyzers, isothermal technology and analysis of polyamino acids.**

Experts say widespread **testing is key** to containing the pandemic, but **delays in getting results make it difficult** for many countries to detect new outbreaks **in time to stop them.** **A test that gives instant results could help** countries to more quickly reopen their economies.

DDRD chief Dani Gold said that the success of these technologies could mark a watershed moment in the global battle against coronavirus.

"We would be able to test 100,000-200,000 thousand people a day and get results within minutes so that people can go back to work if they are found to be clean," Gold said.

"We had begun our trials in Israel but want to accelerate the process, that is why we will be traveling to India where we expect to test 5,000 to 10,000 people daily. Testing masses of people is vital for our machine learning capabilities."

Gold could not say when are regulators **expected to greenlight the technology**, but the equipment's **production, which is inexpensive, was already underway.**

Over 100 Indian scientists will conduct trials at a state-run medical center that has treated Indian officials in the past.

The ministry said the delegation to India will also bring "cutting-edge equipment" donated by the government and the private sector, including ventilators as a sign of goodwill between the countries. The sale and export of such medical equipment are illegal.

India is experiencing a surge in coronavirus cases and reported 45,720 confirmed new cases reported on Thursday. More than 1.24 million Indians have already been exposed to the virus and the country's death toll has exceeded 30,000.

07.22.20 – We - - -

Gantz backed bill to outlaw conversion method psychologists use to straiten gays

Haredi coalition parties rage as bill outlawing gay conversion passes initial vote

Ultra-Orthodox lawmakers direct ire at Blue & White, Gantz for backing legislation, despite many Likud MKs' absence from vote; UTJ halts cooperation with centrist party, while Shas boycotts Knesset votes indefinitely

Moran Azulay, Kobi Nachshoni | Published: 07.22.20 , 16:26

The Knesset plenum on Wednesday passed the preliminary vote on a bill outlawing gay conversion therapy in Israel, with the backing of Blue & White, sparking outrage among the Haredi parties in the coalition.

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After the vote, which ended with 42 lawmakers voting in favor of the legislation and 36 opposed, ultra-Orthodox MKs directed their criticism at Blue & White and its leader Defense Minister Benny Gantz for backing the bill.

United Torah Judaism MK Moshe Gafni warned that his party is considering its next steps, and soon after announced after that UTJ would no longer cooperate with Blue & White, and urged other ultra-Orthodox lawmakers to follow suit.

Housing Minister and UTJ co-leader Yaakov Litzman lambasted Blue & White's "rotten conduct against coalition discipline" and called it "a challenge to the political partnership between them."

Shas announced it will not take part in plenum votes until further notice.

Likud minister Dudi Amsalem said that Blue & White's behavior puts the coalition in jeopardy and may send Israel into another round of elections.

The new law would strip psychologists using gay conversion therapy of their medical licenses. Repeat offenders will be fined and sentence to jail time.

Blue & White and Labor announced their support for the bill shortly before the vote, with Gantz tweeting, "We promised and we followed through."

He wrote: "Conversion therapy was born in sin and its place is outside of the law and the public norm. We will make sure that everyone, from every background and sexual orientation in Israel, has free choice and security over their identity."

Likud Public Security Minister Amir Ohana, who is openly gay, was the only member of his party to vote in support of the bill. Many Likud lawmakers were absent from the vote.

Meretz leader Nitzan Horowitz, who promoted the law, said that the results of the vote were "amazing news for the Israeli public and the LGBTQ+ community as a whole." "Today, a historic change is beginning in Israel," said the openly gay Horowitz. "I thank the MKs who voted in support of freedom and equality and stop the horror of conversion therapy."

07.21.20 – Tu - - -

Social Workers Union rally thousands in Tel Aviv as strike enters third week

Thousands of social workers rally in Tel Aviv as strike enters third week

The strike over low wages and overload during coronavirus intensifies, after talks with Finance Ministry stall; union chief says thousands of Israelis cannot access valuable welfare services, including rape victims, as long as the strike is ongoing

Hadar Gil-Ad | Published: 07.21.20 , 18:51

Thousands of social workers blocked one of the main streets in Tel Aviv to traffic on Tuesday as the strike over low wages and overload during the coronavirus outbreak, enters its third week.

Israel's social workers have been on strike since June 6 after failing to reach an agreement with the Finance Ministry on improved working conditions. The workers say the salaries in some instances hover below the minimum wage while the number of cases during the COVID-19 crisis has skyrocketed.

The head of the Social Workers' Union, Inbal Hermoni, said as long as the strike is ongoing, thousands of citizens cannot access valuable welfare services.

"For 16 days, there was no one to help the woman domestic suffering from domestic violence, who can't leave the place where her life is in danger," said Hermoni. "There's no one to help at-risk youth, elders in isolation, or write custody agreements - allowing divorced couples to freely use their children against one another."

Hermoni added this time the workers "will not settle for crumbs" like in previous year, although she regrets that thousands of cases go untreated as a result.

One of the cases Hermoni referred to was the alleged rape of a 9-year-old boy at a Holon country club on Monday.

Prof. Carmit Katz of the School of Social Work at Tel Aviv University said the boy must first see a juvenile investigator, who is a social worker in training, so he receives proper

treatment after experiencing a traumatic event and provides an accurate description of the incident.

"His entire world fell apart and it's the **social worker's** job to fix it and show him that this is a moral society. A society that is willing to take care of him after he went through such an injustice," said Katz.

"When that is not the case, the child starts to forget and as more and more people talk to him about what happened and pollute his narrative, the testimony he gives in the criminal proceedings could be skewed."

General Federation of Labor Chairman Arnon Ben-David announced on Tuesday that other **sectors of the economy are expected to join the strike** as a sign of **solidarity**, if the **deadlock between the Social Worker's Union and the Finance Ministry** is not resolved by the end of the day.

**07.20.20** – Mo - - -

**Iran executes man accused of spying & three men participating in protests**

**Iran executes man accused of spying for U.S., Israel**

Mahmoud Mousavi-Majd was **convicted of spying after** Revolutionary Guard commander Qassem **Soleimani**, who **was killed** in a U.S. raid; it's **alleged** he **shared security information** on the Guard **with CIA and Mossad**

Reuters| Published: **07.20.20** , 09:09

An **Iranian** accused of spying for U.S. and Israeli intelligence was **executed on Monday**, according to Iran's official IRIB news agency.

Last month, the judiciary said Mahmoud Mousavi-Majd, who was **arrested in 2018**, had spied on former Revolutionary Guard commander Qassem Soleimani, adding however that the case was **not connected to Soleimani's killing** earlier **this year**.

The country's judiciary had said in June that Majd was "linked to the CIA and the Mossad," the Israeli intelligence agency, and alleged that Majd shared security information on the Guard and its expeditionary unit, called the Quds, or Jerusalem Force, which Qassem Soleimani commanded.

On **Jan. 3**, a **U.S. drone** strike in Iraq **killed Soleimani**, leader of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force. Washington had accused Soleimani of masterminding attacks by Iran-aligned militias on U.S. forces in the region.

The execution comes at a time when millions of Iranians have taken to social media to protest against the **death sentences awarded to three men** accused of **participating in** anti-government **protests** last November.

Their executions have been suspended, one of their attorneys, Babak Paknia, said on Sunday. Rights activists said the sentences for the three men were aimed at intimidating future protesters.

Witnesses said security forces fired tear gas last Thursday to disperse demonstrators in the southwestern city of Behbahan who were protesting against economic problems but also the death sentences against the three men.