

Ynet-News, July 28, 2020 – Tuesday

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Ynet studios & ILTV network begin a daily English news show around the world

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NEW: Ynetnews and ILTV team up for daily English news show

Broadcasting directly from Ynet's own studios in central Israel and integrating our own original reportage, ILTV offers expert insight into the biggest issues and events from the region

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ILTV Netanyahu

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Gamzu presents national experts panel using contact tracing managed economy

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Coronavirus czar presents national plan to combat pandemic

New 'Magen Israel' outline moves contact tracing to IDF control, more autonomy to municipalities over restrictions; Gamzu acknowledges eroded public trust, promises no 'illogical moves'

Adir Yanko, Yael Friedson | Published: 07.28.20 , 21:29

Five months since the beginning of the pandemic in Israel, Coronavirus czar Prof. Ronni Gamzu presented on Tuesday the key aspects of his "Magen Israel" (Israel Protector) plan which aims to curb the spread of the disease resurging across the country.

The press conference also included Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Benny Gantz, and Health Minister Yuli Edelstein, which all pledged their support for the outline.

Gamzu said that as part of his plan, the country's contact tracing program will now be handled by the IDF, which has "the technology, the tools, the ability," adding that this is "at the heart of stopping the pandemic.

Commenting on the decreasing public's trust in the government's ability to manage the pandemic, Gamzu said the plan was a "new contract" between the administration and the citizenry.

"We will limit the restrictions as much as possible," he said, adding that there would be no "illogical" government rules that "harm the economy" on his watch.

Gamzu said that there will be more oversight and transparency regarding coronavirus decisions, along with the establishment of a panel of experts that will help determine policy.

Gamzu also stressed the importance of wearing masks, showing data from the U.S. claiming that as adherence to face masks went down, the virus' morbidity increased. Another chart showed that 70% of Israelis were using masks, which Gamzu said is good, "but not enough."

Another part of "Israel Protector" includes a new model that will see local authorities given more autonomy in dealing with the pandemic.

Gamzu presented the plan to Haim Bibas, the Modi'in mayor who also heads a national coalition of local leaders.

Under the plan, nicknamed the "traffic light model," cities marked as "green," meaning low morbidity, would be given the go-ahead to allow restaurants, theaters and other businesses and venues to open, or to shut them if they see fit.

Cities marked as "yellow," which are in danger of a major outbreak, would get more money to help them deal with the issue, while "red" cities, where there are confirmed outbreaks, would be managed at the national level.

In addition, the IDF's Home Front Command will be given more control in helping with "red" cities and would possibly even be given a dedicated budget to assist in the matter. The budgeting of the plan has not yet been decided, with a meeting planned in the coming days between Gamzu, Health Ministry No.2 Prof. Itamar Grotto and Home Front Command chief Major General Ori Gordin, to decide on the criteria for "traffic light model."

According to reports, one of the provisions planned to be discussed in the meeting is allowing "green" cities to not only open all businesses fully, but also their educational facilities.

The Health Ministry on Tuesday evening reported eight new coronavirus-related fatalities since midnight, raising the national death toll from the pathogen to 486.

Also reported were 1,363 new diagnoses of the virus, bringing Israel's total number of cases since the start of the pandemic to 65,791.

Of the 33,148 patients currently battling the virus, 316 are in serious condition, with 97 connected to ventilators