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Netanyahu will resign ministerial posts by 1-1-20, not his prime minister post
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Liberman ,Gantz & Rivlin offer Netanyahu pardon in exchange for retirement from politics
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United Kingdom votes to decide the fate of Brexit, again

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The Lunar Eclipse In Cancer Takes Place Jan. 10 At 2:21 p.m. ET

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New Zealand White Island volcano erupted Monday killed at least 16

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Liberman & Gantz have distorted politics saying We will consider pardon if he quits

12.12.19

Gantz: We will consider pardon for Netanyahu if he quits politics

Blue & White leader says there is no desire 'to see another prime minister behind prison walls,' takes responsibility for his inability to form government as country heads into third election in 12 months

Yuval Karni| Updated: 12.12.19 , 21:55

Blue & White will consider agreeing to a pardon for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been indicted for alleged corruption, if he agrees to retire from political life, party leader Benny Gantz said **Thursday evening**.

"We don't want to see another prime minister behind prison walls," Gantz said at a party function, referring to former premier Ehud Olmert, who served a 16-month jail sentence for bribery and fraud.

"When relevant, we will consider things in accordance with the recommendations of the justice system," **Gantz** said of a potential pardon for Netanyahu.

"If we can save ourselves from that shameful spectacle, so much the better."

Gantz also expressed regret at his inability to form a government, which he said contributed to Israel's third election cycle within 12 months.

"I did not manage and **we have still not managed to extricate the country from the mire into which we have been dragged**," he said.

The pardon proposal was raised earlier in the day by Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Liberman.

Netanyahu was charged three weeks ago with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three cases in which he is accused of trading legislative or regulatory favors in exchange for gifts or favorable media coverage.

"No immunity, pardon in exchange for honorable retirement," Liberman told Ynet on Thursday, also saying he does not want to see "Netanyahu or any other prime minister" in prison.

Liberman's remarks echoed the comments made by President Reuven Rivlin over a week ago, who said he would consider pardoning the prime minister if Netanyahu was to confess to his crimes and retire from political life.

The Yisrael Beytenu leader said that many Israeli lawmakers, including some of Netanyahu's fellow **Likud members**, felt a "sense of disgust" at the prime minister's **demands for immunity at the expense of the country's interests**.

"He has become a burden," said Liberman. "Everyone is prepared to give him an opportunity to retire in dignity. If this initiative [a pardon in exchange for retirement] were to be tabled in the Knesset, I have no doubt everyone would be in agreement," he said

12.12.19

Planes grounded, trees collapse as strong gusts and thunderstorms rip through Israel

12.12.19

Planes grounded, trees collapse as wild weather rips through Israel

An El Al plane had to make **emergency landing**, a soldier was hurt in southern Israel and several people were injured by **tree collapse** across the country as **extreme wind gusts and heavy showers spread all across the country**, causing delays and traffic jams
Ynet| Updated: **12.12.19** , 16:41

An Israeli passenger plane on route from Rome had to make an emergency landing at an airport near the Dead Sea as **strong gusts and thunderstorms** hit most parts of the country.

The El Al flight was on course to land at Ben Gurion Airport but entered the Israeli airspace just as the storm system hit the region, forcing the crew to touchdown at Ramon International Airport. The plane refueled and continued to the airport in Tel Aviv.

Strong wind **collapse tent in southern Israel injuring a soldier**

In addition, an Israeli soldier was injured **Thursday** after a tent was swept by extreme wind at a military base near the Egyptian border.

Heavy showers spread throughout the entire country, causing power outages and tree collapse in many areas, blocking some roads and causing traffic jams.

A 41-year-old man had been severely injured by a **tree that fell on his vehicle** in the city of Kiryat Bialik near Haifa in northern Israel. The Magen David Adom paramedics who arrived at the scene evacuated him to Rambam Hospital in Haifa. He appears to be suffering from multiple injuries to his upper body.

According to the Meteo-Tech meteorological company, the winds in the southern parts of the country reached on average 65 kph (**40 mph**).

In addition, the Mount Hermon ski resort will be closed for visitors over the weekend due to fears of heavy snowfall.

In the northern city of Haifa, the temperatures will range from 16 degrees celsius during the day Sunday to 12 degrees at night. In Tel Aviv, the weather will be similar with a range of 18 degrees during the day and 12 degrees at night. In the southern city of Be'er Sheva, temperatures will range from 18 degrees throughout the day to 8 degrees at night. In Jerusalem, the temperatures will be cooler, reaching 13 degrees during the day and falling to 8 overnight, while in the southernmost city of Eilat the weather will remain relatively warm with 22 degrees during the day and 13 at night.

12.12.19

Netanyahu will resign ministerial posts by 1-1-20, not his prime minister post Thursday

12.12.19

Netanyahu says he'll resign from all ministerial posts by January 1, 2020

The indicted leader - who currently holds health, welfare, agriculture and diaspora affairs portfolios - announces his decision to the Supreme Court following a petition; adds he will not quit his post as prime minister

Yael Freidson, Itamar Eichner | Updated: 12.12.19 , 10:42

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said he will resign from all ministerial positions by January 1, 2020. He is not expected to quit his post as prime minister.

Netanyahu, who currently holds health, welfare, agriculture and diaspora affairs portfolios, is expected to appoint ministers who will take over the posts.

The move comes three weeks after the prime minister was charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three corruption cases in which he is accused of trading legislative or regulatory favors in exchange for gifts or favorable media coverage.

Netanyahu announced his decision to the Supreme Court after a petition had been launched by The Movement for Quality Government, demanding the indicted prime minister vacate all his post. The petition also demanded the court orders Netanyahu to resign from his post as Israel's premier and appoints a temporary replacement.

Netanyahu's attorneys emphasized that under Israeli law, a sitting prime minister charged with a crime is not required to step down or vacate any of his ministerial posts, but he nonetheless decided to respect the wishes of those urging him to resign.

"It's unfortunate that the prime minister knowingly violated the law for weeks and only announced the resignation following our petition," said The Movement for Quality Government said in response. "We call on the court to order the prime minister to resign immediately from all his duties, including as prime minister."

"Netanyahu must fight to prove he's an innocent man as a private individual and not as prime minister ... and not drag the entire country with him to the defendant's bench."

12.11.19

Netanyahu mulls forgoing immunity in last-minute bid to avert elections
Wednesday

12.11.19

Netanyahu mulls forgoing immunity in last-minute bid to avert elections

Announcement comes after Blue and White head Gantz says PM triggered year-long political crisis due to his desire for parliamentary immunity for criminal charges he is now facing, calls on veteran leader to drop bid and join unity government

Moran Azulay | Updated: 12.11.19 , 17:10

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was Wednesday considering forgoing a request for parliamentary immunity in an effort to push the rival Blue and White party into unity government talks before a midnight deadline forces a third round of elections in a 12-month period.

Netanyahu was last month indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

However, there was a slim possibility that this move would halt the expected dissolution of the Knesset before the midnight deadline.

Blue and White have made clear they would not be part of a Netanyahu-led government as long as the prime minister was under criminal indictment.

Likud, meanwhile, claimed Wednesday that, "Blue and White was on a rampage of spin after foiling every possible effort for a national unity coalition and having failed to form a narrow government with support from Arab MKs.

"If Blue and White agrees to extend Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and West Bank settlements, a government can be agreed upon and elections avoided," Likud officials said.

Israel's political leaders blamed one another on Wednesday for the country's political morass as the country braced for a third round of elections in less than 12 months.

Blue and White leader Benny Gantz earlier Wednesday accused Netanyahu of triggering the political crisis due to his desire for parliamentary immunity for the criminal charges.

"The fight for [Netanyahu's] immunity will have been a constant throughout all three election campaigns," Gantz said.

Under Israeli law, members of parliament do not have automatic immunity from prosecution but can seek it through the Knesset House Committee.

Netanyahu has been accused of trying to secure a Knesset majority and then pack the committee with allies who would approve his request for immunity.

Gantz on Tuesday called on the prime minister to forgo his immunity so that a government could be formed before the Wednesday midnight deadline.

"Netanyahu, you promised on the eve of the last elections, that you would not hide behind parliamentary immunity and would defend yourself in court," he said.

He added that the prime minister had every right to defend himself "but cannot turn the Knesset into a refuge."

Following the September elections, both Netanyahu and Gantz failed during their officially mandated time to form a governing coalition on their own. Then, in a final three-week window, they could not join forces to avoid another vote.

Both sides said they were working until the last minute to find some way out of the deadlock. However, a breakthrough seemed highly unlikely.

Meanwhile, the Knesset was voting Wednesday on a fast-tracked piece of legislation that would allow lawmakers to dissolve parliament and hold elections on March 2, 2020.

12.12.19

Lieberman & Rivlin offer pardoning Netanyahu in exchange for retirement from politics Thursday

12.12.19

Lieberman says he'll support pardoning Netanyahu in exchange for retirement from politics

The Yisrael Beytenu leader claims he doesn't want to see PM, indicted on 3 corruption charges, in prison but many Israeli parliamentarians, including some Likud lawmakers, feel Netanyahu has become a 'burden'

Ynet| Updated: 12.12.19 , 12:00

Yisrael Beytenu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman said on Thursday that he would support pardoning Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the three corruption cases against him in exchange for Israel's leader retirement from political life.

The comments came three weeks after Netanyahu had been charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three cases in which he is accused of trading legislative or regulatory favors in exchange for gifts or favorable media coverage.

"No immunity, pardon in exchange for honorable retirement," Lieberman told Ynet in an interview, adding he does not want to see "Netanyahu or any other prime minister" in prison.

Lieberman's remarks echoed the comments made by President Reuven Rivlin over a week ago, who said he would consider pardoning the prime minister if Netanyahu was to confess to his crimes and retire from political life.

The 61-year-old went on to say that many Israeli lawmakers, including some of Netanyahu's fellow Likud members, feel a "sense of disgust" in the wake of the prime minister's demands for immunity at the expense of the country's interests.

"He has become a burden," said Lieberman. "Everyone is prepared to give him an opportunity to retire in dignity. If this initiative [pardon in exchange for retirement] was to be tabled in the Knesset, I have no doubt everyone would be in agreement," he said. "Ultimately, Netanyahu really has made an important contribution to the State of Israel."

Earlier on Thursday, the Knesset approved a motion to dissolve itself and hold an unprecedented third national vote in less than a year on March 2, 2020 after Netanyahu and his main rival Benny Gantz failed to parlay the previous two ballots into a new coalition government.

Lieberman said he does not regret not aligning himself politically with either Likud or Blue and White during the failed attempts to form government after the September 17 vote, insisting that his faction will only support a unity government.

12.12.19

United Kingdom votes to decide the fate of Brexit, again

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United Kingdom votes to decide the fate of Brexit, again

Britons go to polls to decide between PM Johnson, who says he will 'get Brexit done', and main rival Corbyn who promises Brexit referendum; opinion polls suggest Johnson's Conservatives win

Reuters| Updated: 12.12.19 , 11:06

Voters go to the polls on Thursday in an election that will pave the way for Brexit under Prime Minister Boris Johnson or propel Britain towards another referendum that could ultimately reverse the decision to leave the European Union.

After failing to deliver Brexit by an Oct. 31 deadline, Johnson called the Dec. 12 election to break what he cast as political paralysis that had thwarted Britain's departure and sapped confidence in the economy.

The face of the "Leave" campaign in the 2016 referendum, 55-year-old Johnson fought the election under the slogan of "Get Brexit Done", promising to end the deadlock and spend more on health, education and the police. His main opponent, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, 70, promised higher public spending, nationalization of key services, taxes on the wealthy and another referendum on Brexit. All major opinion polls suggest Johnson will win, though pollsters got the 2016 referendum wrong and their models predict outcomes ranging from a hung parliament to the biggest Conservative landslide since the era of Margaret Thatcher.

"We could have a Conservative majority government which will get Brexit done and unleash Britain's potential," Johnson told campaigners. "This election is our chance to end the gridlock, but the result is on a knife-edge."

Corbyn said the Conservatives were the party of "billionaires" while Labour represented the many.

"You can vote for despair and vote for the dishonesty of this government, or you can vote Labour and get a government that can bring hope to the future," he said.

Polls open at 7 am GMT (9 am Israel time) and close at 10 pm GMT (midnight Israel time) when an exit poll will give the first indications of the result. Official results from the bulk of United Kingdom's 650 different constituencies begin to come in from 11 pm GMT to 5 am GMT.

While Brexit framed the United Kingdom's first December election since 1923, the tortuous exit from the EU has variously fatigued, enthused and enraged voters while eroding loyalties to the two major parties.

A majority would allow Johnson to lead the country out of the club it first joined in 1973, but Brexit would still be far from over. He faces the daunting task of negotiating a trade agreement with the EU in a self-imposed deadline of 11 months.

After Jan. 31, Britain would enter a transition period during which it would negotiate a new relationship with the other 27 EU member countries. He has pledged to do that by the end of 2020.

BREXIT AND BORIS

Sterling markets are pricing in a Johnson win, but a five-year flurry of two historic referendums - on Scottish independence in 2014 and Brexit in 2016 - and two national elections in 2015 and 2017 have delivered often unexpected results that ushered in political crises.

The election pitches two of the most unconventional British politicians of recent years against each other, both have been repeatedly written off by opponents and both offer starkly different visions for the world's fifth-largest economy.

Johnson's pitch is Brexit, but he shrank from anything more radical in a heavily choreographed campaign. **Corbyn pitched what he calls a radical transformation** for a country long wedded to free-market liberalism.

Johnson, the New York-born former mayor of London, won the top job in July. His predecessor, Theresa May, resigned after failing to get parliamentary backing for her Brexit deal with the EU and then losing her party's majority in a snap election.

Johnson defied critics by striking a new deal with the EU but was unable to navigate the maze of a divided British parliament and was defeated by opponents whom he portrayed as traitors subverting the will of the people.

The United Kingdom voted by 52%-48% in 2016 to quit the EU, but parliament has been deadlocked since May's failed bet on a 2017 snap election over how, when and even whether to leave.

MISSTEPS

Corbyn, once an opponent of the EU who now says he would remain neutral if he was a prime minister overseeing another referendum, was repeatedly grilled over his Brexit plans. He pledged to overthrow a "rigged system" he said was run by billionaires and tax dodgers.

Both made missteps during the campaign.

Johnson in one interview refused to look at a picture of a sick four-year-old boy forced to lie on the floor of a hospital and then inexplicably took the phone from a reporter and pocketed it. He later apologized.

Corbyn, a veteran campaigner for Palestinian rights, repeatedly avoided apologizing for what some party members, lawmakers and Jewish leaders say is his failure to tackle anti-Semitism from some elements within the party. He apologized eventually.

Johnson's strategy was to breach Labour's so-called "Red Wall" of seats across the Brexit-supporting areas of the Midlands and northern England where he described his political opponents as the out-of-touch enemies of Brexit.

12.12.19

The Lunar Eclipse In Cancer Takes Place Jan. 10 At 2:21 p.m. ET

12.12.19

Full moons are a wild ride. Despite how gorgeous they look glowing in the night sky, there's a highly volatile and emotional undercurrent coursing through them. You never know what to expect and anything can happen, which tends to make it a very dramatic experience. I don't know about you, but when a new full moon takes place, I still haven't even fully processed the last full moon. These lunations take place roughly once a month, so by the time each one comes around, I'm already bracing myself for the next full moon, which, in this case, is set for January 2020.

Whether you plan your life around intense astrological activities, there's not much you can do to prepare for what's in store during the first full lunation of the new decade. Instead of a traditional full moon, there will be a lunar eclipse (aka a blood moon). Aside from the fact that the moon will literally be drenched in a deep and ominous red, this lunation is definitely no joke.

Astrologically speaking, a lunar eclipse is similar to a full moon, except its energy is amplified and magnified. A lunar eclipse speeds you up to your ultimate destiny. Connecting with the Nodes of Fate (aka the point toward which the collective is moving), a lunar eclipse is the harbinger for sudden twists, unexpected endings, and changes that have the power to alter the course of your life. You might resist these changes, but what's done under the energy of a lunar eclipse is done. Just surrender to what the cosmos have in store and trust in what comes next. This decade is starting off with a bang.

The Lunar Eclipse In Cancer Takes Place Jan. 10 At 2:21 p.m. ET

Time series of total Lunar eclipse on 31 January 2018 as it appeared as supermoon at perigee and also a blue Moon as a second full moon of January 2018

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hutterstock

Eclipses are climactic turning points that are part of a larger story. Think back to where you were during July 2019, when the solar eclipse in Cancer took place. Did you go through a breakup? A job change? The start of a new relationship? By the time of the lunar eclipse in Cancer, you will come to understand the meaning behind what took place back then. Think of the solar eclipse as the season premiere, while the lunar eclipse is the season finale. What have you learned? How have you changed? You're about to find out.

This lunar eclipse forms an opposition to not just the sun, but also logical Mercury, karmic Saturn, and transformative Pluto. All of these oppositions can stir much inner conflict as you struggle to find meaning and an outlet for your feelings. You might feel as though no one is on the same page and everyone's emotions and perspectives are coming from different directions. Even though this can create pent-up rage and leave you feeling confused about how to find common ground, this full moon is supported by a trine to compassionate and spiritual Neptune. This will help you approach conflict with kindness and empathy. It will also remind you of the big picture, which is so much larger than whatever may be going on. Either way, this blood moon is bound to be a memorable and deeply affecting experience.

Taking place in caring, intuitive, and protective Cancer, this lunar eclipse is all about the home and the hearth. Expect changes relating to your heart and your private life to take the center stage. If your birth chart contains placements in cardinal zodiac signs, it's you who might be affected by this eclipse the most.

12.13.19

New Zealand White Island volcano erupted Monday killed at least 16

12.13.19

New Zealand troops retrieve six bodies from volcano in daring mission
image:

13 Dec 2019 03:00AM (Updated: 13 Dec 2019 07:29AM)

WHAKATANE: A team of elite New Zealand soldiers airlifted six bodies from the volatile **White Island volcano** on Friday (Dec 13), police said, in a mission carried out under the ever-present threat of another eruption.

AFP witnessed two military helicopters set off from Whakatane airport at first light for the offshore volcano, where an **eruption last Monday is believed to have killed at least 16** people and severely injured dozens more.

The eight-strong military team was dispatched to recover eight bodies that remained on New Zealand's most active volcano, which sits semi-submerged 50km out to sea.

After a tense wait of more than five hours, word came through from police that the majority of the bodies had been recovered and sent to a naval frigate anchored off the coast.

"Six bodies have been successfully recovered from Whakaari-White Island and are now on board HMNZS Wellington," deputy commissioner John Tims said.

An airforce helicopter leaves Whakatane airport as it assists with the recovery of the eight bodies on White Island following a volcanic eruption in New Zealand. (Marty MELVILLE/AFP)

It was unclear whether the team would return to try to recover the two sets of remains still believed to be there.

Drone flights had helped locate six of the bodies before the operation began and they were the team's priority as they laboured on the island in heavy protective gear that slowed them down and restricted movement.

Police said on the eve of the operation that they would search for the remains of the other two missing people but had limited time in such a dangerous environment.

As the military began their grim task, police took grieving families out near the volcano on a boat to perform a Maori blessing and locals chanted karakia, or prayers, on the shore as the island smouldered in the distance.

Locals wait for the return of victims after the White Island volcanic eruption, at Whakatane, New Zealand. (AP Photo/Mark Baker)

As the mission was under way, deputy police commissioner Mike Clement warned "there are many things that could go wrong" but added it was so far "playing out as we hoped".

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern also provided an update, saying the mission was being carried out to bring home grieving families' loved ones.

"It has been an incredibly difficult operation but it's been such a priority. We just want to bring everybody home," she told Australia's ABC Radio.

After coming under pressure from the families, authorities approved a recovery mission despite a 50 to 60 per cent chance of another blast from the volcano in the next day or so.

Vulcanologists monitored live feeds from the mountain, ready to abort the operation if signs pointed to another eruption.

As they began the mission, White Island was at "Alert level 2" – the highest before an eruption.

"Of course I'm worried. I would be inhuman if I did not worry," Clement said on the eve of the mission, adding "we have a job to do".

"People are putting themselves on the front-line to do the right thing... our thoughts and our prayers and our love will be with them," Clement said.

The bodies on the island are thought to include New Zealand tour guide Hayden Marshall-Inman.

His brother Mark Inman had epitomised relatives' frustrations with stalled recovery efforts, criticising "red tape, bureaucracy" but on Friday praised the daring recovery attempt.

"It's going to allow us to grieve and send our loved ones off in the manner they deserve," he told the New Zealand Herald.

On White Island, poisonous gases are still billowing from the volcanic vent and the island is blanketed in a thick layer of acidic ash.

GeoNet volcanologist Nico Fournier said the dangers facing recovery teams if an eruption occurred included magma, superheated steam, ash and cannonball-like rocks thrown from the caldera at supersonic speed.

While troops were recovering the bodies, another 28 people – mostly tourists who had been on a day trip to see the natural wonder – were still being treated in hospitals across New Zealand and Australia, many in a critical condition suffering severe burns.

The survivors' injuries are so severe New Zealand doctors initially estimated they would need to import 1.2 million sq cm of skin for grafts – although that was likely to be revised down as victims were moved overseas to ease the strain on hospitals.

A total of 47 day-trippers and guides were on the island during the eruption, with police saying they were in two groups, one of which was closer to the volcanic vent and worst hit.

Those caught by the eruption hailed from Australia, the United States, Britain, China, Germany, Malaysia and New Zealand.

While Australian officials have only confirmed one dead, they say a further 10 were missing and presumed to have perished.

A coronial process has begun to identify those confirmed dead but police have said it could "take some time".