

**UNITY FOR POWER: ISRAEL'S UNITY GOVERNMENT****Israel's Rival Factions Have Ended A Deadlock By Joining Hands But Challenges Remain**

Israel's new unity government, which has ended a protracted political deadlock, after three inconclusive elections in a year, is likely to oversee worsening tensions with the Palestinians as annexation of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank is high on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's agenda. Mr. Netanyahu, Israel's longest serving leader who just began his fourth consecutive term, has already initiated discussions on this plan. The man behind the revival of the political fortunes of Mr. Netanyahu, who has been indicted for corruption, was his one-time nemesis, Benny Gantz, leader of the centrist Blue and White party. The former Army Chief of Staff entered politics with the sole mission to oust the Likud party head from office and proposed legislation to set term limits for the premier. In his election campaigns and during difficult coalition negotiations, Mr. Gantz was adamant that he would never work under a Prime Minister who faced criminal charges. He was even ready to join a unity government with Likud, provided that Mr. Netanyahu stepped aside. Ironically, the judicial trial into Mr. Netanyahu's indictment for corruption, bribery and breach of trust begins on May 24. The courts are also hearing challenges to his choice as Prime Minister, as Mr. Netanyahu could influence the nomination of judges and the prosecutor.

In a turn of events in late March, Mr. Gantz first petitioned the court against moves to stall the election of the new Speaker and, within 24 hours, nominated himself to the position; a step that led to the splintering of the Blue and White. But the decision that has been described as his capitulation and a betrayal of his centre-left supporters is his failure to secure a veto on the annexation of the settlements on the West Bank in the coalition agreement. All other pieces of legislation except those relating to the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the occupied territory, require mutual consultation between the governing parties. An advocate of a united Jerusalem and not a vocal supporter of a two-state solution, it is doubtful if Mr. Gantz would block Mr. Netanyahu's annexation bid. And any move to annex West Bank territories, which the Palestinians see as part of their future state, could worsen an already fragile situation. As per the deal brokered in April, Mr. Netanyahu will serve as Prime Minister for the first 18 months and hand over the role to his erstwhile opponent for the remainder of the three-year term. This is, however, a potential grey area, given the uncertainty that would arise for the coalition from a judicial verdict against Mr. Netanyahu. If that happens, he could again play the victim, as when he accused investigating agencies after charges were framed against him. The months ahead will test the real strength of the unity government.

**Meanings of Difficult Words:**

- rival** (noun as modifier) – opponent, adversary, contender, competitor.
- faction** (noun) – group, division, sector.
- deadlock** (noun) – stalemate, impasse, checkmate/stand-off.
- join hands** (phrase) – work together with.
- protracted** (adjective) – very long, lengthy, prolonged/extensive.
- inconclusive** (adjective) – indecisive, unresolved, unsettled; debatable.
- oversee** (verb) – supervise, administer, manage.
- annexation** (noun) – seizure, occupation, takeover, appropriation (of territory).
- settlement** (noun) – an uninhabited place where people established a community/colony.
- revival** (noun) – re-establishment, comeback, reintroduction, reappearance.
- fortunes** (noun) – circumstances (the success or failure of someone), state of affairs, conditions.
- indict** (verb) – charge with, accuse of.
- one-time** (adjective) – former, old, previous, erstwhile.
- nemesis** (noun) – enemy, rival, opponent.
- oust** (verb) – remove, topple, unseat, overthrow.

16. **centrist** (adjective) – relating to a person whose political opinions are not extreme, falling between those of liberals and conservatives.
17. **sole** (adjective) – only.
18. **legislation** (noun) – statute, act, bill, law.
19. **term limit** (noun) – a legal restriction that limits the number of terms an officeholder may serve in a particular elected office.
20. **premier** (noun) – head of government, prime minister, president.
21. **step aside** (phrasal verb) – leave, quit, withdraw, resign.
22. **ironically** (adverb) – paradoxically, unexpectedly, strangely.
23. **indictment** (noun) – a formal charge, accusation, allegation (of a serious misconduct/ wrongdoing).
24. **breach** (noun) – contravention, violation, breaking, non-compliance.
25. **influence** (verb) – persuade, convince, have an effect on.
26. **prosecutor** (noun) – a lawyer who presents the government’s case against someone accused of a crime.
27. **stall** (verb) – check, stop, halt, restrict.
28. **splinter group** (noun) – a separation of a large group into smaller units, mainly due to disagreement; faction, dissenting camp, group, section/wing.
29. **capitulation** (noun) – surrender, submission, yielding.
30. **betrayal** (noun) – disloyalty, breach of faith/trust, double-dealing.
31. **centre-left** (adjective) – moderately left-wing.
32. **veto** (noun) – an official right/power to reject a decision/proposal (by a governing body).
33. **fallout** (noun) – adverse results; after-effects, repercussions.
34. **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
35. **territory** (noun) – area, region, domain.
36. **advocate** (noun) – upholder, supporter, backer, proponent.
37. **vocal** (adjective) – vociferous, outspoken, forthright; relating to someone who expresses his/her views freely.
38. **bid** (noun) – attempt, effort, endeavour/try.
39. **annex** (verb) – attach, add, take over, expropriate.
40. **fragile** (adjective) – vulnerable, insecure, unreliable, feeble, unsound.
41. **broker** (verb) – settle, negotiate, arrange (an agreement).
42. **erstwhile** (adjective) – old, previous, former, then.
43. **potential** (adjective) – possible, likely, probable.
44. **grey area** (noun) – unclear situation/condition.
45. **uncertainty** (noun) – unpredictability, unreliability, riskiness/precariousness.
46. **play the victim** (phrase) – when a person plays being a victim, he is looking for attention and mostly use it as a tool to manipulate situations.

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## **WORKING SAFELY: ON WORKPLACES DURING THE PANDEMIC**

### **Employers Should See The Value Of Reduced Attendance And Encourage Staff Protection**

Opening up economic production from a lockdown, even partially, when the COVID-19 pandemic has not peaked in the country poses an extraordinary challenge. Countries around the world are focusing on making the workplace safe, and issuing guidelines to help workers return to their jobs. Reducing the number of people present at any given time is a universal principle, either through resort to shifts, or arrangements to enable employees to work from home. The Union Health Ministry has addressed the issue through a manual of preventive measures that covers all types of workplaces and depends heavily on behavioural change, with some additional requirements for confined spaces such as offices. Fortunately, the first line of defence against the novel coronavirus is a set of simple measures that involves little expenditure: physical distancing of at least one metre,

mandatory use of face masks or cover, frequent hand washing with soap, respiratory etiquette, sanitising contact surfaces and self-monitoring of health. These requirements have by now become familiar to everyone, and employees need only be nudged into adopting them through persistent communication, free provisioning of masks and sanitising materials, and organising office space suitably. Physical distancing of even one metre, if not the 'do gaz' or six feet that Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocated, does pose difficulties because of the lack of space and density of workers in many places. But employers should see the value of keeping staff attendance at safe levels even within the legally permitted ceiling, which now extends to 50% in specified sectors and even in some government offices. Failure to maintain distancing, more so in a poorly-ventilated, closed environment, gives the virus a free run, as Chennai's wholesale vegetable market showed starkly.

The Centre's protocol for symptomatic cases at the workplace, requiring testing, and, where warranted, quarantining of both the worker and close contacts, and a two-day closure of offices experiencing an outbreak, should underscore to employers the importance of prevention. Responsibility, however, does not devolve entirely on offices and establishments, and it is imperative for other activities, such as public transport used by many workers, to meet COVID-19 requirements. Some institutions are mandating installation of the Aarogya Setu app by employees returning to work, when the legal basis of this monitoring mechanism remains shaky and there are no assured benefits in terms of health care. At this stage of the pandemic, when a gradual resumption of economic activity in multiple sectors ranging from construction to food takeaways is a necessity, the most feasible interventions at the workplace are voluntary and those that cost the least. There may still be occasion to resort to intermittent lockdowns if opening up leads to mounting cases. A prudent course would be to navigate the present with a minimalist approach, as the quest for a medical breakthrough makes progress.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
2. **open up** (phrasal verb) – begin/start doing business again and make it available for the customers to get involved in it; restart/reopen (economic activity).
3. **lockdown** (noun) – an emergency protocol implemented by the authorities that prevents people from leaving from a place; An extended state of confinement/encirclement/isolation of a person by the authority.
4. **pose** (verb) – raise, ask, put (a question/matter for consideration).
5. **extraordinary** (adjective) – huge, massive, mighty, tremendous.
6. **at any given time** (phrase) – at any particular time.
7. **resort** (noun) – recourse to, turning to, the use of, utilizing.
8. **address** (verb) – tackle, deal with, attend to, try to sort out.
9. **behavioural change** (noun) – (in public health) it refers to efforts put in place to change people's personal habits and attitudes, to prevent disease.
10. **novel coronavirus (nCoV) (SARS-CoV-2)** (noun) – a new strain (type/variety) coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. (Courtesy: WHO)
11. **social/physical distancing** (noun) – a term means actively avoiding crowded public places, is a key element in decreasing the rapid spread of COVID-19. This is an effort intended to limit exposure by reducing face-to-face contact and preventing spread among people in community settings.
12. **respiratory** (adjective) – relating to or affecting breathing (or organs of breathing).
13. **etiquette** (noun) – proper behaviour, good manners, rules of conduct/protocol.

14. **sanitise** (verb) – disinfect, cleanse, sterilize.
15. **nudge** (verb) – prompt, encourage, stimulate, coax.
16. **persistent** (adjective) – continuous, constant, steady, unrelenting.
17. **provision** (noun) – supplying, providing, giving.
18. **advocate** (verb) – recommend, advise, support, promote, champion/espouse.
19. **lack of** (noun) – absence, insufficiency, shortage, deficiency.
20. **ceiling** (noun) – upper limit, maximum, highest permissible level.
21. **more so** (phrase) – to a greater degree; to a greater extent.
22. **poorly-ventilated** (adjective) – (of a room) provided with a bad/poor supply of fresh air.
23. **give a free run** (phrase) – make someone/something to move uninterruptedly.
24. **starkly** (adverb) – sharply, clearly, simply/basically; grimly.
25. **symptomatic** (adjective) – relating to a condition/person with symptoms.
26. **asymptomatic** (adjective) – relating to a condition/person with no symptoms.
27. **pre-symptomatic** (adjective) – relating to a condition/person with mild illness/symptoms.
28. **warranted** (adjective) – justified, right, allowed/ permitted, appropriate/applicable.
29. **quarantine** (verb) – separate, set apart, segregate, detach (people, animals and things (such as plants) from others for a period of time in order to control/restrict the spread of a contagious disease). Separate and restrict the movement of persons, who may have been exposed to infectious disease, but not yet known to be ill.
30. **outbreak** (noun) – sudden appearance /occurrence, outburst, epidemic.
31. **underscore** (verb) – underline, emphasize, highlight.
32. **devolve on** (verb) – (of responsibility) pass to, transfer.
33. **imperative** (adjective) – vitally important, crucial/critical, essential.
34. **Aarogya Setu** (noun) – Aarogya Setu is a mobile application developed by the Government of India to connect essential health services with the people of India in their combined fight against COVID-19.
35. **mechanism** (noun) – procedure, process, method/technique.
36. **shaky** (adjective) – unreliable, unsound, doubtful.
37. **resumption** (noun) – restarting, recommencement, reopening.
38. **takeaway** (noun) – a restaurant that sells cooked food to be taken away & eaten at home or elsewhere.
39. **necessity** (noun) – (essential) requirement, prerequisite.
40. **feasible** (adjective) – practicable, viable, realistic.
41. **the least** (determiner) – slightest, smallest, minimum, littlest.
42. **occasion** (noun) – (a particular) time, moment, point.
43. **intermittent** (adjective) – irregular, occasional, periodic.
44. **mounting** (adjective) – increasing, growing, escalating.
45. **prudent** (adjective) – wise, sensible, well judged.
46. **navigate** (verb) – proceed, move, manage.
47. **minimalist** (adjective) – practical, useful, utilitarian. (Minimalism is a practical approach).
48. **quest** (noun) – pursuit; search.
49. **breakthrough** (noun) – advance, development, step forward, progress.
50. **make progress** (phrase) – move forward, proceed/continue, make strides.