

Israel will see 2-4 million COVID infections in current wave: PM

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Israel could see up to nearly 40 percent of the population infected by coronavirus during the current wave, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Sunday, as testing facilities nationwide buckled.

"Data presented at the cabinet meeting indicates that here, in Israel,

between two to four million citizens in total will be infected during this current wave," Bennett wrote on his Twitter account.

A country of just 9.4 million, Israel has seen infections nearly quadruple over the past week compared to the previous one. The [health ministry](#) reported 17,518 new infections on Saturday.

A lack of testing sites created huge pressure on the existent ones, causing the government to revise its testing policy and as of Friday designate the PCR tests, the most accurate, only for people at risk and over 60.

Anyone else is to take an [antigen test](#), whether at home or applied by a medic.

But even the new guidelines proved impossible to follow. Antigen tests are in scarce supply at pharmacies around the country, and people spend hours in line waiting to get one administered.

Bennett reiterated he would do everything possible to avoid a lockdown, which he said has not proven an efficient measure against the spread of the highly-infectious Omicron variant, and could deal a heavy blow to the economy.

"Our goal remains the same goal—to keep the economy functioning as much as possible, and safeguard the most vulnerable," he said.

Also Sunday, Israel began allowing vaccinated visitors into the country, six weeks after shutting its borders entirely in a bid to prepare for the inevitable fifth wave of COVID cases by vaccinating and obtaining medication.

Health ministry data showed that more than 4.3 million Israelis were fully vaccinated with three shots, while 204 people are hospitalised in

serious condition as a result of COVID-19 illness on Sunday.

More than 1.5 million COVID cases, including 8,269 deaths, have been officially recorded in Israel.

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