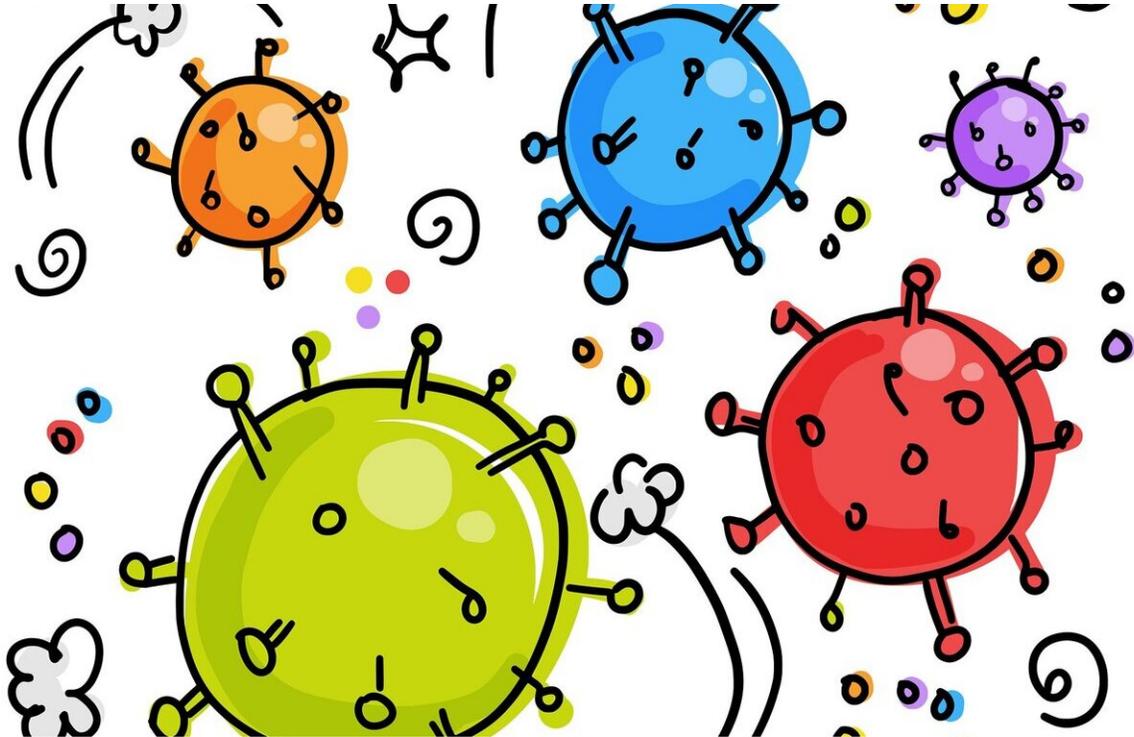


Israel heads for tightened lockdown

January 7 2021



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Israel's parliament on Thursday approved new restrictions to tighten its coronavirus lockdown as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced additional vaccine procurements he said could result in near complete inoculation by March.

Israel had last month imposed its third national lockdown since the start

of the pandemic, but decided not to close schools and to allow a wide range of businesses to remain open.

But the daily caseload has remained high—often around 8,000 in the country of about nine million people—prompting Netanyahu to push for a more comprehensive closure, notably shuttering schools and all non-essential businesses.

Israel's parliament late Thursday approved the new restrictions, which come into affect at midnight (2200 GMT) and will be in place for two weeks, with an option to renew.

Israelis will remain confined to within 1,000 metres (yards) from their home, excluding a range of exceptions, including medical visits and grocery shopping.

Hours before the lockdown was approved Israel received its first shipment of the Moderna [vaccine](#).

Israel has already given a first dose of the Pfizer vaccine to more than 1.5 million people, a pace Netanyahu has claimed is the world's fastest.

The premier on Thursday announced an additional deal with Pfizer to procure more doses that he claimed would be enough to vaccinate all Israelis over the age of 16 by March.

"We will become the first country in the world to exit the [coronavirus](#) (crisis)," Netanyahu claimed.

The veteran premier, in power since 2009, will be also facing re-election again in a March 23 vote, Israel's fourth election in less than two years.

Some human rights groups have called on Israel to supply the

coronavirus vaccine to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and in Gaza, which is under Israeli blockade.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank, home to some 2.8 million Palestinians, has not publicly asked for Israeli assistance in vaccine procurement.

Hamas Islamists, who control the Gaza strip, where about two million Palestinians live, are highly unlikely to publicly coordinate with Israel in any vaccination effort.

Israel has so far recorded nearly 467,000 coronavirus cases, with more than 3,500 deaths.

More than 100,000 cases have been recorded in the West Bank, including more than 1,100 deaths, while Gaza has registered more than 44,000 cases, including 416 deaths.

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