Israel: President Herzog tasks Gadi Eisenkot with forming the government – a setback for Netanyahu

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News

After the Knesset election of 27 October 2026, President Isaac Herzog announced on 7 November that opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot would be tasked with forming the new government; the formal mandate was handed over on 8 November. In the 120-seat Knesset, parties with 67 members recommended Eisenkot, while parties with 46 backed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu's Likud emerged as the largest party with 27 seats; Eisenkot's 'Yashar' ('Straight') party came second with 21; no party won the 61-seat majority. Eisenkot has 28 days (until 6 December) to build a coalition, extendable by 14 days. Netanyahu stays on as caretaker Prime Minister until a new government is sworn in, so the end of the Netanyahu era is not yet final. Eisenkot served as Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from 2015 to 2019.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Election	27 October 2026 – 26th Knesset
Announced / mandate	Announced 7 Nov 2026; formal mandate 8 Nov
Invited by	President Isaac Herzog (since 2021)
Recommendations	Eisenkot – 67 MKs; Netanyahu – 46

Point	Details
Leading parties	Likud 27; Yashar 21
Majority	61 of 120 seats
Deadline	28 days (to 6 Dec) + possible 14-day extension
Eisenkot	IDF Chief of Staff 2015–19; joined 2023 war cabinet, left in 2024
Netanyahu's status	Caretaker Prime Minister

Background

- Constitution: Israel has no single written constitution; 'Basic Laws' serve instead. Parliament is the unicameral 'Knesset' (120 members, four-year term). Elections use nationwide party-list proportional representation with the whole country as one constituency; the threshold is 3.25%.
- Government formation: after the poll the President consults parties and gives a 28-day mandate to the member most likely to form a government. If he fails, another member gets a chance; if that fails too, fresh elections follow. Israel's presidency is largely ceremonial; executive power lies with the Prime Minister.
- History: David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel's independence on 14 May 1948 and became its first Prime Minister; the first President was Chaim Weizmann. Benjamin Netanyahu is Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister (1996–99, 2009–21, and from December 2022).
- India link: in World War I, on 23 September 1918, the Jodhpur and Mysore Lancers liberated Haifa; Delhi's 'Teen Murti Haifa Chowk' commemorates them. The Indian Army marks 23 September as 'Haifa Day'.

Tamil Nadu link: Under the Indo–Israel Agriculture Project, a Centre of Excellence for cut flowers was set up at Thally in Krishnagiri district in 2013 and inaugurated on 6 December 2017; the Embassy of Israel calls it India's first Indo–Israel joint programme for cut flowers.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

After the Knesset election of 27 October 2026, President Isaac Herzog announced on 7 November that opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot would be tasked with forming the new government; the formal mandate was handed over on 8 November.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Election: 27 October 2026 – 26th Knesset; Announced / mandate: Announced 7 Nov 2026; formal mandate 8 Nov; Invited by: President Isaac Herzog (since 2021); Recommendations: Eisenkot – 67 MKs; Netanyahu – 46.

What is the background to this news?

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Practice questions (with answers)

1. What is the name of Israel's 120-member unicameral parliament?

A) Majlis

B) Knesset

C) Riksdag

D) Cortes

Answer: B – Explanation: The Knesset sits in Jerusalem. Majlis – Iran; Riksdag – Sweden; Cortes – Spain.

2. Which key post did Gadi Eisenkot, invited to form the government, hold earlier?

A) Head of Mossad

B) IDF Chief of General Staff

C) President of Israel

D) Head of Shin Bet

Answer: B – Explanation: Eisenkot was IDF Chief of General Staff in 2015–2019. Mossad is the foreign intelligence agency; Shin Bet handles internal security.

3. Who proclaimed Israel's independence in 1948 and became its first Prime Minister?

A) Golda Meir

B) Chaim Weizmann

C) David Ben-Gurion

D) Menachem Begin

Answer: C – Explanation: Ben-Gurion – 14 May 1948. Weizmann was the first President; Golda Meir the first woman PM; Begin shared the 1978 Peace Nobel (Camp David with Egypt).

4. By which system are members of Israel's parliament elected?

A) Single-member FPTP

B) Two-round system

C) Mixed-member system

D) Nationwide proportional list

Answer: D – Explanation: The whole country is one constituency with party-list proportional representation and a 3.25% threshold, so coalitions are the norm. India's Lok Sabha uses FPTP.

5. Thally, home to the Indo–Israel Centre of Excellence for cut flowers, is in which district of Tamil Nadu?

A) Krishnagiri

B) Dharmapuri

C) Nilgiris

D) Dindigul

Answer: A – Explanation: Thally (Krishnagiri, near Hosur) – set up in 2013, inaugurated on 6 Dec 2017; India's first Indo–Israel joint programme for cut flowers. Its cool upland climate suits floriculture.

Sources: AP via St. Louis Public Radio; Israel Hayom; i24NEWS; Embassy of Israel. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.