Israel: Eisenkot bloc names Matan Kahana for Knesset Speaker

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News

Israel's 26th Knesset (parliament) was sworn in on 10 November 2026. The same day, Gadi Eisenkot, leader of the Yashar party and holder of the mandate to form a government, announced on X that he had reached agreement with allied leaders Naftali Bennett, Yair Lapid, Avigdor Liberman and Yair Golan. Under it, former Religious Services Minister Matan Kahana is the bloc's nominee for Speaker of the Knesset. The bloc wants to replace the incumbent Speaker, Amir Ohana (Likud), quickly; Ohana has said he will hold a vote within a week if 61 members ask – so Kahana has not yet been formally elected. Under the same deal, Liberman is to chair the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee and Liran Avishar Ben-Horin the Finance Committee. Eisenkot had earlier listed a commission of inquiry into the 7 October attack, compulsory military service for all and repeal of the judicial-overhaul laws as the principles of his government (reported). He received the mandate on 8 November and has 28 days to form a government.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Event	26th Knesset sworn in – 10 November 2026
Speaker nominee	Matan Kahana (Yashar) – Eisenkot bloc's choice; vote pending
Incumbent Speaker	Amir Ohana (Likud)

Point	Details
Kahana profile	Sayeret Matkal soldier, F-16 fighter pilot; Religious Services Minister 2021–22
Other posts (deal)	Foreign Affairs & Defence: Liberman; Finance: Liran Avishar Ben-Horin
Mandate	Gadi Eisenkot – 8 November; 28 days (extendable by 14)
Eisenkot's principles (reported)	Oct 7 inquiry commission; military service for all; repeal of judicial-overhaul laws
Precedent	In 2020 Speaker Yuli Edelstein refused a vote on his replacement and resigned after a Supreme Court order

Background

- Israel has no single codified constitution. 'Basic Laws' passed by the Knesset over time do the work of a constitution; the first was 'Basic Law: The Knesset' (1958). In January 2024 the Supreme Court struck down the 2023 'reasonableness' amendment to 'Basic Law: The Judiciary'.
- The Knesset Speaker runs the House and controls its agenda and the timing of votes, which is why a majority bloc seeks the post. The Speaker also acts as President when the President is unavailable.
- In India the Lok Sabha Speaker is elected by members under Article 93. Under Article 94, even when the House is dissolved the Speaker stays in office until the new House first meets. Under the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law, 1985) the Speaker decides disqualification – subject to judicial review (Kihoto Hollohan case, 1992).
- Israel lies on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean; independence was proclaimed on 14 May 1948. India recognised Israel in 1950 and established full diplomatic relations in January 1992. The two are close partners in agriculture, defence and water management.

Tamil Nadu link: Bulusu Sambamurti was the first Speaker of the Madras Legislative Assembly formed in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935. The Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker is elected under Article 178 of the Constitution; the present Speaker is J.C.D. Prabhakar (since May 2026).

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Event: 26th Knesset sworn in – 10 November 2026; Speaker nominee: Matan Kahana (Yashar) – Eisenkot bloc's choice; vote pending; Incumbent Speaker: Amir Ohana (Likud); Kahana profile: Sayeret Matkal soldier, F-16 fighter pilot; Religious Services Minister 2021–22.

What is the background to this news?

Israel has no single codified constitution. 'Basic Laws' passed by the Knesset over time do the work of a constitution; the first was 'Basic Law: The Knesset' (1958).

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Matan Kahana was Israel's Religious Services Minister in 2021–22 under which Prime Minister?

A) Benjamin Netanyahu

B) Ehud Olmert

C) Ariel Sharon

D) Naftali Bennett

Answer: D – Explanation: Bennett (2021–22) of Yamina, then Kahana's party; Kahana is an ex-F-16 pilot. Olmert served 2006–09; Sharon 2001–06.

2. Under Article 94, if the Lok Sabha is dissolved, until when does the Speaker continue in office?

A) Till dissolution day

B) Till new House meets

C) Till President names one

D) Six more months

Answer: B – Explanation: Until just before the new House first meets. In Israel too, Ohana stays on until a successor is elected.

3. Under the Tenth Schedule, who decides on disqualifying a Lok Sabha member for defection?

A) President of India

B) Election Commission

C) Supreme Court

D) Speaker

Answer: D – Explanation: The Speaker decides (Para 6); Kihoto Hollohan (1992) held the decision open to judicial review.

4. Israel has no single written constitution. Which set of laws serves as its constitutional framework?

A) Common Law Code

B) Halakha (religious law)

C) Basic Laws

D) Ottoman Mejelle

Answer: C – Explanation: Basic Laws – the first was 'The Knesset' (1958). Eisenkot has pledged to repeal the judicial-overhaul laws.

5. Who was the first Speaker of the Madras Legislative Assembly formed in 1937?

A) S. Satyamurti

B) Bulusu Sambamurti

C) J. Shivashanmugam Pillai

D) C. Rajagopalachari

Answer: B – Explanation: Bulusu Sambamurti (Congress), under the 1935 Act. Shivashanmugam Pillai was Speaker in 1946–55; Rajaji was 1937's Premier.

Sources: The Tribune; The Times of Israel; Israel Hayom; Jerusalem Post; Ynetnews; DT Next; News On AIR. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.