Netanyahu fails to secure majority, offer of coalition rejected by Gantz

Israel's weakened Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saw his offer on Thursday of a coalition with his strongest political rival swiftly rebuffed after failing to secure a governing majority in a tight election, *Reuters reports.*

Netanyahu's surprise move was an abrupt change of strategy for the right-wing leader. Former General Benny Gantz's rejection of the offer could spell weeks of wrangling after Tuesday's election, which followed an inconclusive national ballot in April.

Gantz's centrist Blue and White party emerged from the second round of voting this year slightly ahead of Netanyahu's Likud but lacking the numbers in the 120-member parliament to form a ruling bloc.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving leader, said in a video clip in which he urged Gantz, the country's former military chief, to meet him *"as soon as today"*, that he had pledged during the election campaign to form a right-wing, Likud-led government.

"But to my regret, the election results show that this is impossible," Netanyahu said. *"Benny, we must set up a broad unity government, as soon as today. The nation expects us, both of us, to demonstrate responsibility and that we pursue cooperation."*

Responding to Netanyahu's call, Gantz made no mention of the prime minister and said he himself would head a *"liberal"* coalition, political shorthand for one that excludes the Israeli leader's long-time ultra-Orthodox allies.

Source:
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