

WATCH Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ANITA ANAND MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE, CANADA ONLY ON CHANNEL Y





**YUDHVIR JASWAL**  
Group Editor - Y MEDIA

I CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN ENHANCING CANADA-INDIA RELATIONSHIP

ONE OF MY FIRST PRIORITIES IS TO MAKE SURE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES IS PLACE WHERE ALL MEMBERS FEEL SAFE, RESPECTED & PROTECTED

CANADA HAS ENOUGH BOOSTERS AND ADDITIONAL VACCINES IN CASE FOURTH DOSE IS EVER REQUIRED

CANADA'S PRIORITY IS TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL RULES-BASED ORDER IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALLIES & INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS:

TOGETHER WITH OUR ALLIES, CANADA ENSURING TO SUPPORT A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC UKRAINE GOVERNMENT



**ANITA ANAND**  
MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE, CANADA



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MIDWEEK NEWSPAPER

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## 'THE WORLD IN CONFLICT': 7 HOTSPOTS TO WATCH IN 2022

BY VIKAS DATTA

Amid the severest public health emergency the world has seen in a century running rampant for the second year in a row and set to impact the third, the practice of politics and statecraft, by any means, never missed a beat. At its very outset, 2021 saw the unprecedented spectre of a violent insurrection in the very heart of the world's most powerful democracy, heralding a spate of crisis and conflict across all continents that seems to spill into 2022, if not longer. As the New Year begins, let us take a tour of seven political/geopolitical hotspots that seem certain to figure in the headlines across the coming months, amid Covid. As the Kingston Trio once sang: "What nature doesn't do to us will be done by our fellow man" (Merry Little Minuet)

**The US:** The relief that followed Joe Biden's triumph over Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential polls was dissipated by the January 6, 2021, storming of the US Capitol. While the resulting outrage could have eclipsed the political career of anyone, Trump not only emerged unscathed through another unprecedented impeachment, but continues to hold a stranglehold over the Republican Party.



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## 2 INDO-CANADIANS HONOURED WITH ORDER OF CANADA

**TORONTO, (IANS)** Two Indo-Canadians — top realtor Bob Dhillon of Calgary and clean energy scientist V.I. Lucky Lakshmanan of Mississauga — have been honoured with the Order of Canada. The two are among 39 persons who have been honoured with the Order of Canada by Governor General Mary Simon. The award citation says Dhillon has been awarded for "his achievements in business, and for his unwavering commitment to philanthropy and higher education", and Lakshmanan for "his philanthropy and for his expertise in hydrometallurgy and business, which have greatly benefited his profession, community and Canada-India relations". Dhillon, who founded the real estate group Mainstream Equity, is the biggest landlord in Canada in the mid-segment rental market today. His group owns more than 15,000 units across the country.

One of the richest Indo-Canadians, Dhillon comes from a family from Tallewal village near Barnala in Punjab. Lakshmanan is an internationally renowned clean energy scientist and innovator in sustainable development. Born in Chennai, he went to the UK for higher studies and came to Canada in 1974. He founded Process Research ORTECH which is a global leader in sustainable process technologies. It runs its laboratory and pilot plant in Mississauga on the outskirts of Toronto.



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## WATCH Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DR. SWAIMAN SINGH ONLY ON CHANNEL Y





**YUDHVIR JASWAL**  
Group Editor - Y MEDIA

FARMERS SHOULD NOT FORM ALLIANCE WITH AAP AS KEJRIWAL DID NOT SUPPORT US DURING THE PROTEST

I WAS OFFERED DEPUTY CM AND HEALTH MINISTER BY AAP

IF ANY FARM LEADER WOULD JOIN HANDS WITH AAP, I WILL NOT SUPPORT THAT DECISION & WILL BACK-OUT

WE CANNOT ALLOW ANY POLITICAL PARTY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SACRIFICES MADE BY THE FARMERS

I STRONGLY BELIEVE FARMERS CAN WIN THE UPCOMING PUNJAB ELECTIONS ON THEIR OWN

WE WELCOME Y MEDIA'S SUGGESTION TO HOLD ALL-PARTY LEADERS' DEBATE IN INDIA ELECTIONS



**DR. SWAIMAN SINGH**  
PRESIDENT/FOUNDER 5 RIVERS HEART ASSOCIATION AND RESEARCH SCIENTIST



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## CANADA'S 100 HIGHEST-PAID CEOs WERE PAID AN AVERAGE OF \$10.9 MILLION IN 2020

**OTTAWA**—Canada's 100 highest-paid CEOs from the S&P/TSX Composite recorded their second-best year ever for compensation in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). The report, Another Year in Paradise: CEO Pay in 2020, shows those 100 CEOs got paid an average of \$10.9 million in 2020, which is higher than their pay in 2019. They now make 191 times more than the average worker wage in Canada. "At this rate, it will take the average worker the entire year to accrue what Canada's highest-paid CEOs will rack up just before lunch (11:54 a.m.) on January 4—the first official working day of the year," says the report's author, CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald. "2020 was a horrible year for many workers hit hard by the pandemic, but CEO pay appears to be impervious to any shock to the system."

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## SCIENTISTS IDENTIFY ANTIBODIES THAT CAN NEUTRALIZE OMICRON & OTHER VARIANT

An international team of scientists have identified antibodies that neutralise Omicron and other SARS-CoV-2 variants. These antibodies target areas of the virus spike protein that remain essentially unchanged as the viruses mutate. The Omicron variant has 37 mutations in the spike protein, which it uses to latch onto and invade cells. The highly unusually high number of mutations likely explain why the variant has been able to spread so rapidly, to infect people who have been vaccinated and to reinfect those who have previously been infected.

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## HERE'S HOW MUSK HIRED INDIAN-ORIGIN, ASHOK ELLUSWAMY, AS TESLA'S AUTOPILOT HEAD

**SAN FRANCISCO, (IANS)** Tesla founder and CEO Elon Musk took to Twitter to reveal how he chose Ashok Elluswamy from India to work as an autopilot team director at his electric vehicle company.



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## SUSPENSE OVER NON-YADAV OBC VOTES IN UP, WHICH WAY THEY ARE MOVING?



**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** After Brahmins it's non-Yadav OBCs which are talked of in UP as this chunk of OBC voters have been decisive in BJP's victory in the state. The OBC comprises of around 43 per cent of the total votes and have castes like Kurmi, Maurya, Shakya, Kushwaha, Nishad and Rajbhar among others.

| CONTD. ON PAGE 5

## THE 12 THEMES FOR 2022 TO DECIDE THE POLITICAL DESTINY OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** The year 2022 will be a defining year to decide the political destiny of India. Assembly elections in five states including the decider state of Uttar Pradesh and Presidential elections will reveal the ruling BJP's play and also test the Opposition unity. The X factor for the year continues to be Covid like the previous two years. The year 2022 has already started on an ominous note for India with fresh infections touching six month high in major cities and more restrictions being imposed on mobility and public gatherings.

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## Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT

- **Ontario Moves To Modified Step-2 Of Roadmap To Reopening; Reduces Social Gathering Limits To Five People Indoors, 10 People Outdoors.**
- **All Ontario's Publicly Funded & Private Schools Moves To Remote Learning Until At Least January 17.**
- **Ontario Closes Indoor Dining At Restaurants, Bars; Retail Settings, Including Shopping Malls Permitted At 50% Capacity.**
- **Ontario Hospitals Pauses All Non-emergent & Non-urgent Surgeries & Procedures In Order To Preserve Critical Care & Human Resource Capacity.**
- **USFDA Authorizes Pfizer-BioNTech Boosters For Kids Aged 12-15.**



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POLITICAL SENSEX STATES ELECTIONS INDIA 2022



MEGA COVERAGE ON ALL Y MEDIA PLATFORMS

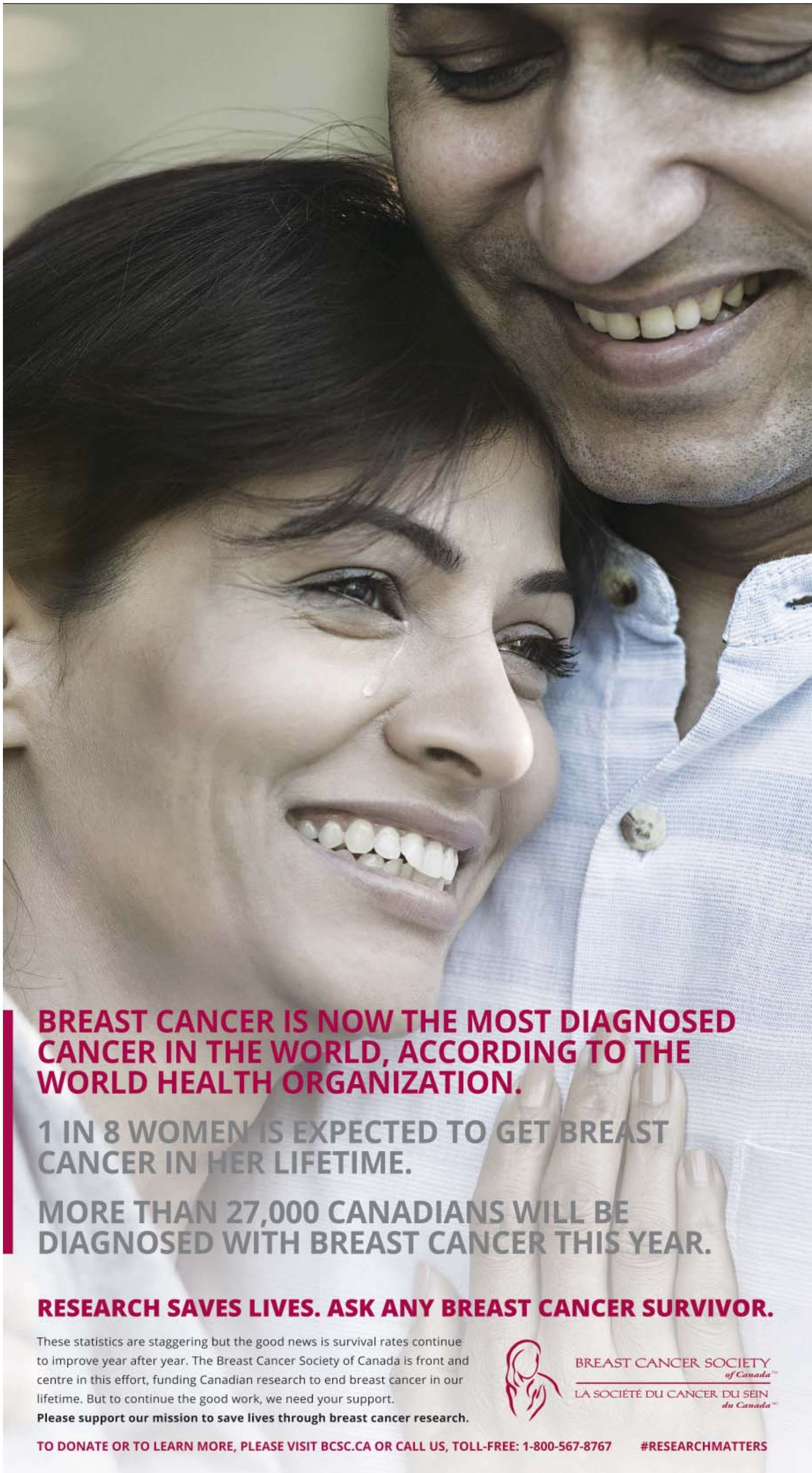
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**BREAST CANCER IS NOW THE MOST DIAGNOSED CANCER IN THE WORLD, ACCORDING TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.**

**1 IN 8 WOMEN IS EXPECTED TO GET BREAST CANCER IN HER LIFETIME.**

**MORE THAN 27,000 CANADIANS WILL BE DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER THIS YEAR.**

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These statistics are staggering but the good news is survival rates continue to improve year after year. The Breast Cancer Society of Canada is front and centre in this effort, funding Canadian research to end breast cancer in our lifetime. But to continue the good work, we need your support.

**Please support our mission to save lives through breast cancer research.**



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**ANITA ANAND**  
MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE, CANADA

## Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE: DEFENCE MINISTER, ANITA ANAND, COMMITTED TO MAKE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES A SAFE, RESPECTED & PROTECTED PLACE

POOJA LUTHRA

In an exclusive interview with Y Media's Group Editor and CEO, Yuthvir Jaswal, Canada's Minister of Defence, Anita Anand, opened up about the significance of apology offered to victims of sexual misconduct, Canada's relationship with India and allies, and procurement of Covid-19 vaccines. Read on.

**Yuthvir Jaswal: What is the significance of apology offered to victims of sexual misconduct?**

Hon. Minister Anita Anand: As Minister of National Defence, one of my priorities is to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces is a place where all members feel safe, respected and protected. In order to undertake the institutional reforms, I thought it was essential to begin this journey by offering an apology to all victims and survivors of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in the Canadian military and the Department of National Defence.

**Yuthvir Jaswal: Are you anticipating an increase in the budget or any new purchases in the Defence Department?**

Hon. Minister Anita Anand: In addition to cultural reform of the Canadian military, my other two priorities are supporting the Canadian military and international rules-based order. The feds have increased defence spending by 70% for a robust, secure, and engaged defence policy. Defence spending is critical to our government, and I will continue to advocate for our Canadian Armed Forces because their work in our country and worldwide is very important.

**Yuthvir Jaswal: What is Canada's strategy in the Indo-Pacific area?**

Hon. Minister Anita Anand: The Indo-Pacific is an important area of our world, and Canada's goal is to support it. Our relationship with India is important, and as a daughter of Indian descent, I can play an important role in that area.

**Yuthvir Jaswal: Why is there a sluggishness in getting the third dose in the provinces?**

Hon. Minister Anita Anand: Our job as a federal government is to support the provinces and territories. Since the pandemic's beginning, Canada procured 2.5 billion articles of personal protective equipment for frontline health care workers, 95 million rapid tests for provinces and territories and millions of vaccines. As a former procurement minister, I had signed seven contracts with leading vaccine suppliers. Because of this, we had enough vaccines for all eligible Canadians, ahead of most other countries, by July 2021. I put into place long-term contracts with vaccine suppliers to supply booster doses. We have secured enough boosters and additional vaccines if fourth doses are ever required to be administered.

**Yuthvir Jaswal: Amid Ukraine and Russia crises, what role can Canada play?**

Hon. Minister Anita Anand: Canada's priority is to support the international rules-based order in conjunction with our allies and international partners, including the United States. Together with our allies, we are ensuring to keep a free and democratic Ukraine government. In each of my meetings with Defence ministers of the US and Ukraine, I emphasized Canada's steadfast support for Ukraine. For the rules-based international order, the G7 Foreign Ministers issued a statement warning Russia of consequences if it showed any military aggression against Ukraine. Canada and Ukraine share a very close defence relationship, and Canada is committed to supporting Ukraine as it takes the necessary steps to establish itself as a democratic country. We will continue to be there for Ukraine and our international multilateral alliances.

## US could be under right-wing dictator by 2030: Canadian Prof



**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** The US could be under a right-wing dictator by 2030, a Canadian political science professor has warned, urging his country to protect itself against the "collapse of American democracy", The Guardian reported.

"We mustn't dismiss these possibilities just because they seem ludicrous or too horrible to imagine," Thomas Homer-Dixon, founding director of the Cascade Institute at Royal Roads University in British Columbia, wrote in the Globe and Mail.

"In 2014, the suggestion that Donald Trump would become president

would also have struck nearly everyone as absurd. But today we live in a world where the absurd regularly becomes real and the horrible commonplace."

Homer-Dixon's message was blunt: "By 2025, American democracy could collapse, causing extreme domestic political instability, including widespread civil violence. By 2030, if not sooner, the country could be governed by a rightwing dictatorship," the Guardian reported.

The author cited eventualities centred on former President Donald Trump returning to the White House in 2024, possibly including Republican-held state legislatures refusing to accept a Democratic win. Trump, he warned, "will have only two objectives, vindication and vengeance" of the lie that his 2020 defeat by Joe Biden was the result of electoral fraud, the report said.

A "scholar of violent conflict" for more than four decades, Homer-Dixon said Canada must take heed of the "unfolding crisis".

"A terrible storm is coming from the south, and Canada is woefully unprepared. Over the past year we've turned our attention inward, distracted by the challenges of Covid-19, reconciliation and the accelerating effects of climate change.

## END OF AN ERA: BLACKBERRY DEVICES STOP WORKING



BlackBerry, one of the most popular phone brands of the era before smartphones took over, has announced that it is ending support for BlackBerry 7.1 OS and earlier, BlackBerry 10 software, BlackBerry PlayBook OS 2.1 and earlier versions from January 4.

The company said that as of January 4, devices running these legacy services and software through either carrier or WiFi connections will no longer reliably function, including for data, phone calls, SMS and 9-1-1 functionality. "We thank our many loyal customers and partners over the years," the company said.

These devices will lack the ability to receive over the air provisioning updates and as such, this functionality will no longer be expected to reliably function, including for data, phone calls, SMS and 9-1-1 functionality. Applications (BlackBerry Link, BlackBerry Desktop Manager, and BlackBerry Blend) will also have limited functionality. The company mentioned that BBM Enterprise and BBM Enterprise for Individual Use (BBMe) will continue to be available on other platforms. It also said that on BlackBerry 7.1 OS and earlier, the service changes will not impact users ability to access their Password Keeper data, as it is stored locally. "If you are looking to move to another Password Management Application or BlackBerry Password Keeper for Android, you will need to manually create new entries on your new smartphone," the company said.

## Here's how Musk hired Indian-origin, Ashok Elluswamy, AS Tesla's autopilot head

**CONTD. ON FROM PAGE 1**

"I tweeted that Tesla is about to launch an auto pilot team. Through that tweet, Ashok was the first to be selected in the auto pilot team," Musk said in a tweet.

Before joining Tesla, he has worked with WABCO Vehicle Control System and has interned with Volkswagon Electronic Research Lab. He holds a bachelor's degree in Electronics and Communication Engineering from the College of Engineering Guindy, Chennai and a Master's degree in Robotics System Development from Carnegie Mellon University.

As per a LinkedIn endorsement from Elluswamy's professor at CMU, John Dalon, he was one of the top students and showed initiative in learning a wide variety of topics.

Recently, Musk tweeted that he is hiring Artificial Intelligence (AI) engineers who are passionate about solving day-to-day problems through AI. "As always, Tesla is looking for hardcore AI engineers

who care about solving problems that directly affect people's lives in a major way," Musk tweeted along with a link to apply for the job.

Interested candidates can apply by filling in fields like name, email, exceptional work done in software, hardware or AI, dropping their resume in the PDF format and hitting the Apply option.

In a 2014 interview, Musk said he looked for "evidence of exceptional ability" in a potential employee, rather than a degree from a prestigious university. "There is no need even to have a college degree at all, or even high school," Musk said during an interview with the German automotive publication Auto Bild about his hiring preferences more broadly.



## OUTLOOK 2022: REAL ESTATE SECTOR IN INDIA TO TOUCH 'NEW' HEIGHTS; RESIDENTIAL SPACE IN FOCUS



**BY ANIMESH DEB AND VENKATACHARI JAGANNATHAN**

**NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, (IANS)** After facing a body blow due to pandemic, the real estate sector seems to have come out of the woods lately and the growth momentum in the realty space is expected to continue in 2022.

Among various segments, residential space saw a huge uptick in 2021. "The year 2021 was a watershed moment for India's real estate sector. Even when the going was tough, the sector not only remained resilient but also emerged stronger than expected," said Ramesh Nair, CEO, India and Managing Director, Market Development, Asia at Colliers, a global real estate consultancy. The consultancy expects 2022 to be even better for the realty sector, even if it is marred by the new Covid-19 variant - Omicron.

"We have now learned to live with uncertainty. Gross absorption in 2022 should be about 15-20 per cent higher than this year as occupier confidence is back in the market," Nair said.

The residential segment has witnessed green shoots of recovery and is expected to gain further momentum in 2022.

"The residential segment is expected to reach pre-Covid quarterly sales volumes in 2022 and given the strong momentum may also match the pre-demonetization quarterly sales in the latter half of 2022," said Samantak Das, Chief Economist and Head of Research and REIS (India) at real estate consultancy firm JLL.

Besides, industrial and warehousing are expected to strengthen in 2022 aided by strong business fundamentals.

Further, investment in life sciences and data centres businesses are also gaining traction. "New projects are coming up. One of the trends is that people are going in for bigger apartments than what they earlier had following the work-from-home norm since the Covid-19 pandemic struck India in 2020," said T.Chitty Babu, Chairman and CEO, Akshaya.

## 41% OF PAKISTANIS ARE LESS HOPEFUL ABOUT 2022: GLOBAL HOPE, HAPPINESS AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY INDEX SURVEY



**NEW DELHI, (IANS):** A recent survey found that the net hope in Pakistan is lower than the global average, Samaa TV reported. The Global Hope, Happiness and Economic Prosperity Index survey was conducted by Gallup International. A total of 41,560 respondents from 41 countries participated in the survey. In Pakistan the survey was conducted by Gallup Pakistan, the report said. The survey measures three constructs: hope, happiness, and economic optimism. Although a majority of respondents reported themselves to be hopeful, optimistic, and happy, their score on Hope Index and Happiness Index was less than that of global average. However, Pakistanis fared better on the Economic Optimism index, the report said. The respondents were asked — "As far as you are concerned, do you think that 2022 will be better, worse or the same as 2021?" In response to the question, 43 per cent Pakistanis said that they are optimistic about 2022, 41 per cent said they believe that 2022 will be worse than 2021, and 9 per cent said that it will be the same. At least 7 per cent did not know or did not wish to respond. Globally, 38 per cent said that 2022 will be better than 2021, 28 per cent said that it will be worse, and 27 per cent said they think it will be the same as 2021, while 7 per cent did not know or did not wish to respond. Comparing Pakistan's figure with the global average figure, Pakistan's net hope of 2 per cent is significantly less compared to global net hope of 10 per cent, Gallup Pakistan reported. Respondents were asked if they feel very happy, happy, neither happy nor unhappy, unhappy or very unhappy about their life. In response to this question, 38 per cent Pakistanis said that they feel very happy about their life, 27 per cent said they feel happy, 12 per cent said neither happy nor unhappy, 12 per cent said unhappy, and 11 per cent said very unhappy. Net happiness for Pakistan in 2021 was 42 per cent. Globally, 13 per cent said that they feel very happy about their life.

## ONLY ONE WOMAN IN PARLIAMENTARY PANEL EXAMINING PROPOSAL TO RAISE WOMEN MARRIAGE AGE



**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** The Parliamentary panel which will examine a bill seeking to raise the legal age of marriage of women from 18 to 21 and submit its recommendations has only one woman member.

As per the Rajya Sabha website, the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports, headed by BJP's Rajya Sabha member Vinay Sahasrabudde, has its full complement of 31 members and Trinamool Congress member of the upper house, Sushmita Dev is only woman among them.

Of the 31 members, 10 are from the Rajya Sabha and 21 from the Lok Sabha. During the Winter session, the government introduced the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha and it was referred to the standing committee on the opposition's demand.

A committee member said that it would be better if a few more women parliamentarians are members of the committee which is going to discuss the law increasing the legal marriage age of women to 21 years from 18. "Currently there is no vacancy to nominate new women MPs in the committee. But the committee Chairman has power to invite any one and we wish he will invite everyone for wider consultation on the proposed law," said the member, who did not want to be identified.



Y MEDIA COVID & VACCINE REPORT



Ontario has temporarily moved to a modified **Step Two** of the Roadmap to Reopen



# ONTARIO REDUCES CAPACITY LIMIT, MOVES SCHOOL ONLINE, SHUTS INDOOR DINING, GYMS

**TORONTO** — In response to recent trends that show an alarming increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, is temporarily moving the province into Step Two of its Roadmap to Reopen with modifications that take into account the province's successful vaccination efforts. These time-limited measures will help blunt transmission and prevent hospitals from becoming overwhelmed as the province continues to accelerate its booster dose rollout.

In response, the province will return to the modified version of Step Two of the Roadmap to Reopen effective Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 12:01 a.m. for at least 21 days (until January 26, 2022), subject to trends in public health and health system indicators.

**These measures include:**

- Reducing social gathering limits to five people indoors and 10 people outdoors.
- Limiting capacity at organized public events to five people indoors.
- Requiring businesses and organizations to ensure employees work remotely unless the nature of their work requires them to be on-site.
- Limiting capacity at indoor weddings, funerals, and religious services, rites and ceremonies to 50 per cent capacity of the particular room. Outdoor services are limited to the number of people that can maintain 2 metres of physical distance. Social gatherings associated with these services must adhere to the social gathering limits.
- Retail settings, including shopping malls, permitted at 50 per cent capacity. For shopping malls physical distancing will be required in line-ups, loitering will not be permitted and food courts will be required to close.
- Personal care services permitted at 50 per cent capacity and other restrictions. Saunas, steam rooms, and oxygen bars closed.
- Closing indoor meeting and event spaces with limited exceptions but permitting outdoor spaces to remain open with restrictions.
- Public libraries limited to 50 per cent capacity.
- Closing indoor dining at restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments. Outdoor dining with restrictions, takeout, drive through and delivery is permitted.
- Restricting the sale of alcohol after 10 p.m. and the consumption of alcohol on-premise in businesses or settings after 11 p.m. with delivery and takeout, grocery/convenience stores and other liquor stores exempted.
- Closing indoor concert venues, theatres, cinemas, rehearsals and recorded performances permitted with restrictions.
- Closing museums, galleries, zoos, science centres, landmarks, historic sites, botanical gardens and similar attractions, amusement parks and waterparks, tour and guide services and fairs, rural exhibitions, and festivals. Outdoor establishments permitted to open with restrictions and with spectator occupancy, where applicable, limited to 50 per cent capacity. Closing

indoor horse racing tracks, car racing tracks and other similar venues. Outdoor establishments permitted to open with restrictions and with spectator occupancy limited to 50 per cent capacity. Boat tours permitted at 50 per cent capacity. Closing indoor sport and recreational fitness facilities including gyms, except for athletes training for the Olympics and Paralympics and select professional and elite amateur sport leagues. Outdoor facilities are permitted to operate but with the number of spectators not to exceed 50 per cent occupancy and other requirements.

All publicly funded and private schools will move to remote learning starting January 5 until at least January 17, subject to public health trends and operational considerations.

School buildings would be permitted to open for child care operations, including emergency child care, to provide in-person instruction for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated remotely and for staff who are unable to deliver quality instruction from home.

During this period of remote learning, free emergency child care will be provided for school-aged children of health care and other eligible frontline workers.

Please view the regulation for the full list of mandatory public health and workplace safety measures.

In addition, on January 5, 2022 the Chief Medical Officer of Health will reinstate Directive 2 for hospitals and regulated health professionals, instructing hospitals to pause all non-emergent and non-urgent surgeries and procedures in order to preserve critical care and human resource capacity.

In recognition of the impact the Omicron variant and additional public health measures have on small businesses, the government is expanding the new Ontario Business Costs Rebate Program. Eligible businesses that are required to close or reduce capacity will receive rebate payments for a portion of the property tax and energy costs they incur while subject to these measures. Eligible businesses required to reduce capacity to 50 per cent, such as smaller retail stores, will receive a rebate payment equivalent to 50 per cent of their costs, while businesses required to close for indoor activities, such as restaurants and gyms, will receive a rebate payment equivalent to 100 per cent of their costs. A full list of eligible business types will be made available when applications for the program open later this month. To improve cash flows for Ontario businesses, effective January 1, 2022, the government is also providing up to \$7.5 billion for a six-month interest- and penalty-free period for Ontario businesses to make payments for most provincially administered taxes, supporting businesses now and providing the flexibility they will need for long-term planning.

## JOHNSON & JOHNSON COVID-19 VACCINE DEMONSTRATES 85% EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST HOSPITALIZATION IN SOUTH AFRICA WHEN OMICRON WAS DOMINANT

**NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.**, – Johnson & Johnson (NYSE: JNJ) (the Company) today announced new preliminary results from the South African Phase 3b Sisonke study which showed that a homologous (same vaccine) booster shot of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine (Ad26.COV2.S) demonstrated 85 percent effectiveness against COVID-19-related hospitalization. The study, conducted by the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), showed that the Johnson & Johnson booster reduced the risk of hospitalization from COVID-19 among healthcare workers in South Africa after Omicron became the dominant variant. During the months studied (mid-November to mid-December) the frequency of Omicron increased from 82 to 98 percent of COVID-19 cases in South Africa as reported by GISAIID, an initiative that provides COVID-19 data.

A second, separate analysis of the immune response to different vaccine regimens, conducted by Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), demonstrated that a heterologous booster (different vaccine) of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine in individuals who initially received the BNT162b2 mRNA vaccine generated a 41-fold increase in neutralizing antibody responses by four weeks following the boost and a 5-fold increase in CD8+ T-cells to Omicron by two weeks. A homologous boost with BNT162b2 generated a 17-fold increase in neutralizing antibodies by four weeks following the boost and a 1.4-fold increase in CD8+ T-cells by two weeks. The increase in CD8+ T-cells generated by the Johnson & Johnson vaccine may be key to explaining the high levels of effectiveness against severe COVID-19 disease and hospitalization in the Sisonke 2 study, as the Omicron variant has been shown to escape neutralizing antibodies.[1]

## BOOSTERS RAISE VAX EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST OMICRON BY 88%: UK STUDIES

**LONDON, (IANS)** Although the Omicron variant of Covid has been shown to evade vaccines, two new studies led by the UK health agency showed that a third booster dose increases vaccines' effectiveness by 88 per cent.

The studies, led by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), found a substantial reduction in risk of hospitalisation for Omicron cases after three doses of vaccine compared to those who are unvaccinated.

The first study showed that the risk of hospitalisation is 81 per cent lower after three doses compared to unvaccinated Omicron cases. Previous studies note that vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease continues to be lower for Omicron than for Delta with waning by 10 weeks after the third dose.

In the second study, the researchers linked symptomatic cases to hospitalisation data.

They found that after three doses of vaccine, the risk of hospitalisation for a symptomatic case identified with Omicron through community testing was estimated to be reduced by 68 per cent when compared to similar individuals with Omicron who were not vaccinated. However, combined with the protection against becoming a symptomatic case, this gives a vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation of 88 per cent for Omicron after 3 doses of vaccine, the study showed.

"That's a big boost of protection for third dose vaccine vs hospitalisation from Omicron infection," Eric Topol, a physician-scientist and professor of molecular medicine and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, said in a tweet.

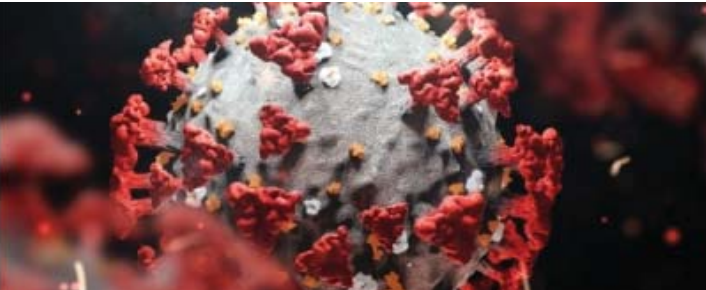
"Vaccine effectiveness increased from 52 per cent (due to 2-dose waning after 6 months) to 88 per cent after the third dose," he added. Although waning is seen in the effectiveness against symptomatic disease, there is insufficient data to assess the duration of protection against hospitalisation, which is expected to last longer, the researcher said.

The study also showed that effectiveness of booster doses was lower for Omicron compared to Delta. Among those who had received 2 doses of AstraZeneca, there was no effect against Omicron from 20 weeks after the second dose.

Among those who had received 2 doses of Pfizer or Moderna, effectiveness dropped from around 65 to 70 per cent down to around 10 per cent by 20 weeks after the second dose.

Two to four weeks after a booster dose vaccine effectiveness ranged from around 65 to 75 per cent, dropping to 55 to 70 per cent at 5 to 9 weeks, and 40 to 50 per cent from 10+ weeks after the booster, the studies showed. "These estimates suggest that vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease with the Omicron variant is significantly lower than compared to the Delta variant and wanes rapidly," the UKHSA said. "Nevertheless, protection against hospitalisation is much greater than that against symptomatic disease, in particular after a booster dose, where vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation is close to 90 per cent," they added.

## HOW HEAVILY MUTATED OMICRON VARIANT IS SPREADING SO FAST, SPARING LUNGS



**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** As India braces for the peak of the third Covid wave with Omicron taking over all other existing variants, scientists are scrambling to find how this heavily-mutated virus spreads so quickly and affects people at an alarmingly high rate, yet spares lungs that have been the key organ being hit by the Covid-19 respiratory disease.

The Omicron variant multiplies about 70 times faster inside human respiratory tract tissue than the Delta variant, according to scientists at the University of Hong Kong.

Omicron also reaches higher levels in the tissue, compared with Delta, 48 hours after infection.

"The finding indicates that mutations in Omicron have sped up the process of entering or replicating (or both) inside the tissue," reports NPR.

However, it is less severe than the previous variants because it does not cause as much damage in the lungs, a spate of studies have suggested. A study by a consortium of US and Japanese scientists on hamsters and mice, has found those infected with Omicron had less lung damage, lost less weight and were less likely to die than those who had other variants. The Omicron variant, harbouring up to 36 mutations in spike protein, is known to evade vaccine efficacy.

Another recent study led by researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), Harvard and MIT tested blood from people who received the Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines against a pseudovirus engineered to resemble the Omicron variant.

## IS INDIA SEEING THIRD COVID WAVE AS CASES RISE NEARLY MANIFOLD IN DAYS?

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** India's daily Covid caseload has risen over four-fold in the last six days, with 33,750 infections reported on Monday, around 6,000 more over the day before's tally.

The tally on December 28, 2021 was 6,358 after which surge began across the country with daily caseload increasing on every subsequent day - 9,195 cases on December 29, 13,154 on December 30 and 16,764 on December 31.

The first day of the new year saw 22,775, 27,553 fresh infection on January 2 and 33,750 cases on January 3 as per the Union Health Ministry.

Along with the spike in daily Covid cases, the active cases have also seen two-fold growth from the last week, crossing the 1 lakh mark to currently stand at 1,45,583 after being just over 75,000 around 10 days ago. India had 75,456 active cases on December 28, 77,002 the next day, 82,402 on December 30 and jumping up to 91,361 on the last day of 2021. The figure reached 1,04,781 on January 1 and 1,22,801 on January 2.

India has seen the sudden spike in the Covid cases after the outbreak of new Covid variant Omicron, thought the Delta variant is still the dominant variant in India which has contributed significantly in the surge. However, a Health Ministry source with the ministry said that Omicron will take over as the dominant variant soon.

## FRANCE DETECTS NEW COVID-19 VARIANT 'IHU' HAVING 46 MUTATIONS

**PARIS, (IANS)** French researchers have detected a new Covid variant, probably of Cameroonian origin, and have temporarily named it as 'IHU'.

The new variant from the lineage named B.1.640.2 is believed to have infected 12 people in the country, according to a yet-to-be peer-reviewed study supported by the French Government. It has 46 mutations and 37 deletions. "For twelve SARS-CoV-positive patients living in the same geographical area of southeastern France, qPCR testing that screen for variant-associated mutations showed an atypical combination," said Philippe Colson, from IHU Mediterranee Infection, Marseille, France.

However, "it is too early to speculate on virological, epidemiological or clinical features of this IHU variant based on these 12 cases," Colson said. According to the study, the index case (the first patient) was an vaccinated adult who had returned to France from a trip to Cameroon, in central Africa. Three days after returning he developed mild respiratory symptoms. His nasopharyngeal sample collected mid-November 2021, "revealed an atypical combination that did not correspond to the pattern of the Delta variant involved in almost all SARS-CoV-2 infections at that time", and later to Omicron as well, Colson said. Respiratory samples collected from seven other SARS-CoV-2-positive patients living in the same geographical area exhibited the same combination of mutations screened by qPCR. They were two adults and five children (below 15 years of age).

## LONG COVID STILL A RISK WITH OMICRON DESPITE MILD ILLNESS: FAUCI



**WASHINGTON, (IANS)** Even after causing mild illness, people infected with Omicron are likely to suffer from long Covid, top infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci has said.

Data emerging from studies in South Africa, the US and the UK, has shown that Omicron causes mild illness, as well as causes lower hospitalisation rates. However, it is still too early to affirm how severe omicron is. "Long Covid can happen no matter what virus variant occurs. There's no evidence that there's any difference between Delta or Beta or now Omicron," Fauci was quoted as saying in an interview with Spectrum News. "We should always be aware that when people get symptomatic infection - anywhere from 10 to up to 30 plus per cent of people will go on to have persistence of symptoms," he added, noting that even mild cases are included in that possibility.

Long-term symptoms usually include shortness of breath, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, insomnia, and brain fog.

Fauci also noted that the words used to define vaccination status could soon change. He said the label will likely evolve from "fully vaccinated" to "up to date," to identify when someone has been boosted, which Fauci called critical for protection against the virus, the report said.

"People should put aside this concern about a definition and say 'If I want to be optimally protected, I should get boosted'," he said.



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**Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE**

**FARMERS SHOULD NOT FORM ALLIANCE WITH AAP AS KEJRIWAL DID NOT SUPPORT US DURING THE PROTEST**

**I WAS OFFERED DEPUTY CM AND HEALTH MINISTER BY AAP**

**IF ANY FARM LEADER WOULD JOIN HANDS WITH AAP, I WILL NOT SUPPORT THAT DECISION & WILL BACK-OUT**

**WE CANNOT ALLOW ANY POLITICAL PARTY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SACRIFICES MADE BY THE FARMERS**

**I STRONGLY BELIEVE FARMERS CAN WIN THE UPCOMING PUNJAB ELECTIONS ON THEIR OWN**

**WE WELCOME Y MEDIA'S SUGGESTION TO HOLD ALL-PARTY LEADERS' DEBATE IN INDIA ELECTIONS**

**YUDHVIR JASWAL**  
Group Editor - Y MEDIA

**DR. SWAIMAN SINGH**  
PRESIDENT/FOUNDER 5 RIVERS HEART ASSOCIATION AND RESEARCH SCIENTIST

# Y MEDIA EXCLUSIVE: DR. SWAIMAN SINGH SAYS, 'FARMERS SHOULD NOT FORM ALLIANCE WITH AAP AS KEJRIWAL DID NOT SUPPORT US DURING THE PROTEST'

POOJA LUTHRA

In an exclusive interview with Yudhvir Jaswal, Y Media Group Editor and CEO, Dr. Swaiman Singh, President/Founder 5 Rivers Heart Association and Research Scientist, said he was fortunate to serve the farmers at Tikri border by providing medical services during the pandemic. During the exclusive interview with Y Media, Dr. Swaiman Singh claimed that in comparison to other parties, Arvind Kejriwal's government in Delhi provided much less support to the farmers' agitation. He said, "Our Punjabi NRIs had given huge amounts to AAP (during 2017 assembly elections). When I reached Delhi, I thought I would get support from the Delhi government. I demanded medicines, Covid vaccine, and other amenities like toilets, bathrooms as our stage of protest at the Tikri border was in Delhi. I even have emails that I wrote to them, but there was no response from the Kejriwal-led Delhi government. Ask the organizations who worked so hard there to manage things in the absence of little help or no from the Delhi government." Dr. Swaiman Singh said he had seen the reality of healthcare facilities in Delhi during the pandemic. "I have no hesitation in admitting that few other parties did better than AAP in helping farmers," he added.

Dr. Swaiman Singh claimed in the interview with Y Media, AAP offered him the position of Deputy CM and Health Minister if it comes to power in Punjab, which he declined. He said talks with AAP fractured the farmers' unity. "If any farm leader would join hands with AAP, I will

not support that decision. We cannot allow any political party to take advantage of the sacrifices made by the farmers, and this should be clear to everyone." Dr. Singh further urged farmers not to form an alliance with AAP or any other political front. He said, "Sanyukt Samaj Morcha represents all farmers and entire Punjab. Nobody can sell this to a party that was least helpful to the farmers. Farmers should contest the polls on their own." Dr. Swaiman Singh strongly believed farmers could win the election by introducing "good policies" to make Punjab drug and corruption-free. He said Balbir Singh Rajewal is the idol face for Punjab CM and believed himself to be better off without joining politics.

Dr. Swaiman Singh also told Y Media that he would back out if farmers form a pre-poll alliance with any political party as it would compromise the interests of Punjab. He said the election outcome would ultimately be people's decision that everyone has to respect and then form strategy accordingly. He stressed that voters should study the candidates and make decisions based on that instead of believing in fake promises.

Y Media Group Editor, Yudhvir Jaswal, suggested Punjab should start holding all-party leaders' debates as there are Presidential debates in the US and all-party leaders' debates held in Canada, Britain, Australia. Dr. Swaiman Singh welcomed the suggestion and said he loved the idea of having a healthy and fruitful discussion among all political parties in which all issues impacting Punjab can be discussed openly.

## INTERNAL RIFT WIDENS IN PUNJAB CONG AHEAD OF POLLS

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** Ahead of the Assembly polls, the internal rift in Punjab Congress has widened with state party chief Navjot Singh Sidhu attacking his own government and ministers, including Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi.

According to sources, party leaders in Delhi are unhappy with the state of affairs in Punjab and have asked the state leaders to put up a united front and refrain from speaking against each other.

Sidhu has been critical of state Home Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, who reportedly has offered to quit his portfolio, for not arresting SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia in a drug case.

The Congress leaders have been saying the government will take action against him but only an FIR has been lodged.

Former Akali minister and brother-in-law of Sukhbir Badal, Bikram Singh Majithia was booked on December 21, under sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. As per the FIR, Majithia was booked for allowing drug smuggling through use of his property or conveyance, financing the distribution or sale of drugs and hatching a criminal conspiracy for smuggling.

Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Channi had said last month that his government won't allow any drug trafficker to go scot-free and that the law will take its own course in Majithia's case.

Channi had reiterated his government's firm commitment to com-



pletely eradicate the menace of drugs.

But a restless is demanding an immediate action against Majithia and has accused the home minister of "complacency" adding to the troubles in the state unit.

Though the Congress leadership in Delhi is trying to fix internal problems of the states going to polls but there seems to be no end to the troubles as after Punjab, problems erupted in Uttarakhand. Now Punjab, Goa, Manipur units are witnessing exodus of MLAs.

## SKM TO MEET ON JAN 15, TIKAIT SAYS IT'S TIME GOVT ACTS ON MSP



**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** Bhartiya Kisan (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait, who was one of the main faces of the farmers movement, said that the issue of Minimum Support Price (MSP) is pending for a long time, and it is time that the government takes early decision on it.

In an exclusive chat with IANS, Tikait said that a meeting of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) will be held on January 15 in which further strategy on MSP will be decided.

He said all political parties are hungry for votes and they don't care about the welfare of farmers.

Questioning the overnment's intention, he said that it has not taken any steps to resolve the issue of MSP, nor has there been any discussion with farm leaders on the issue. Also, cases registered against

the farmers have not yet been withdrawn, while the farmers who died during the agitation have also not been compensated.

Stressing that farmers' agitation has been unprecedented and is being discussed everywhere, he said farmers will take out tractor rallies in their own villages and will hoist the flag on the tractor.

"No decision has been taken on taking out a tractor rally in Delhi yet. Everything will be discussed in the January 15 meeting. Farmers are ready to fight for their rights," Tikait told IANS.

He also ruled out contesting in the upcoming UP polls. Asked which party farmers will support, Tikait said this will also be discussed in the meeting on January 15. "Our aim is not to take on the government, but to convey our message to them in the interest of farmers.

## WHY BJP APPEALED TO EC TO HOLD POLLING IN UP'S PURVANCHAL FIRST?



**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** The BJP wants the UP Assembly elections to start from Purvanchal, the eastern part of the state. It raised this demand to the Election Commission during a meeting, telling the poll panel not to start the poll schedule from western UP, as per the usual practice. During the meeting of the EC team that went to Lucknow under the Chief Election Commissioner, the BJP delegation said that for the last several decades, both the Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha polls have been started from the western part of the state and the commission should change this tradition this time.

Several factors are said to be working behind the BJP's demand. In the 2017 state elections, the BJP secured gains in every part of the state, but this time, the party is little worried due to the farm agitation and the attitude of the Jat community of the western UP. The poll tie-up between Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and the Jayant Chaudhury-led Rashtriya Lok Dal has made things worse.

The party also feels that with the elections in western UP in the last phase, it will get more time to prepare. Due to the long election campaign in the state, the party will get the opportunity to woo the farmers and the Jat community and hopes to bring them back to the fold.

Another reason could be heavy voting in favour of the party in Purvanchal is bound to have effect on the voters of western UP as well and the BJP feels that in that case the farmers and the Jat community of western UP will get back to the fold. The 2017, assembly elections were held in 7 phases. In the first phase, polling was held on February 11, 2017 in 73 seats in 15 districts of western Uttar Pradesh, while the last two phases were held in Purvanchal districts. If the BJP's appeal is accepted by the Election Commission, then this time the voters of Purvanchal will get the first chance to vote and western UP voters will have to wait till the last phase.

## SUSPENSE OVER NON-YADAV OBC VOTES IN UP, WHICH WAY THEY ARE MOVING?



**CONTD. FROM PAGE 1**

The votebank was primarily with SP and the BSP but shifted to BJP post 2014 and it has promoted leaders like Swatantra Dev Singh the state BJP Chief and a Kurmi, Keshav Maurya, deputy CM, Swami Prasad Maurya and have alliance with Apna Dal, a Kurmi based party and Nishad Party, but Samajwadi Party is also not going to leave any stone unturned to attract this segment in the state.

Rahul Varma, a Delhi based analyst says, "Non-Yadav OBCs will be crucial in determining the final tally. We have better sense about how other communities are likely to vote. The BJP since 2014 has managed to get a larger share of non-Yadav OBC vote, but the same can't be said about 2022, especially because the SP is attracting lots of important leaders from this community into its fold." But Varma concedes, "However, I think the BJP will find ways to retain a large chunk of non-Yadav OBC support base." The OBC mobilization has helped the SP and BSP who mostly rely on caste based equation and from 1989 to 2017 the OBCs have dominated the UP politics. The SP had Mulayam Singh Yadav and Beni Prasad Verma and leaders from Shakyas community and Phoolan Devi from the Nishad community while the BSP had Lalji Verma, Swami Prasad Maurya, Babu Singh Kushwaha, none of them are with BSP any more. In the OBC politics post Mandal era, Yadavs benefited greatly from the government formed under SP. But less significant backward caste groups such as Kurmis and other OBCs were excluded from their share. The ignorance led to the disenchantment among non-Yadav OBCs, whom the BJP tapped well and latter became solid vote bank with representation from lesser known community like Khatik, Paasi and Charwaha (shepherd) which has given the BJP strength and advantage.

## SIDHU PROMISES 33% OF JOB CARDS FOR WOMEN IF CONGRESS WINS

**CHANDIGARH, (IANS)** Taking cue from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to lure women voters ahead of the assembly polls in Punjab, state Congress President Navjot Sidhu on Monday announced a slew of incentives for them by promising that 33 per cent of all job cards under the Punjab Urban Employment Guarantee Mission would be reserved for the fair sex.

Also all women working as farm labourers in small farms would get wages under the MNREGA, besides special women commando battalions for women safety in every village and city of Punjab. Sidhu promised Rs 2,000 per month for women homemakers, if the Congress is voted to power. Also he promised eight free cooking gas cylinders to housewife in a year. For the girls taking admission in colleges, he promised to provide two-wheelers, besides Rs 20,000 to those passing Class XII, Rs 15,000 for passing Class X and Rs 5,000 to those passing fifth grade. Sidhu made these announcements at a rally in Barnala district, the stronghold of AAP.

After the rally, Sidhu said in a tweet, "Women have to lead from forefront in Punjab's Resurrection story. Just freebies don't mean holistic empowerment. "Punjab Model of Women empowerment follows rights based approach to honour merit, to provide resources to girls to excel, develop requisite skills & take Punjab forward." The cricketer-turned politician said special skilling centre for women in each district of Punjab would be set up. "Every woman who wants to start their own business from home to a large-scale industry, will get interest and collateral free loans up to Rs 2-16 lakh, with a separate ease-of-doing business government window for women startups."





# After farm laws repeal, what will happen to the proposed Committee on MSP?

BY NIVEDITA KHANDEKAR

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** More the things change, the more they remain the same, is an old adage applicable to anything and everything, including the government, irrespective of the party in power.

In 2011, it was Anna Andolan that had captured the popular imagination of the whole nation. In 2021, it was the farmers' protest that had dominated the discourse even in the pandemic induced lockdown year.

In April 2011, social activist Anna Hazare had embarked on a fast unto death demanding passing of the Jan Lokpal Bill. Sensing the popularity of Team Anna, the government agreed for a joint drafting committee; it was formed in April 2011 itself. Few meetings later, when the Ramdev Baba episode at the Ramlila Maidan took place in June, Team Anna members stopped going to the meetings.

The Bill was passed in Parliament in December 2013, the same month when Arvind Kejriwal, having parted his ways with Hazare, had formed a party, contested, and won the Delhi Assembly elections.

Much water had flown below the bridge, the government at the Centre had changed when Hazare in March 2018 declared to resume his battle for Jan Lokpal Bill. The NDA government brought in an amendment and passed the Bill in both the Houses soon. Since then, nobody has even heard of the Lokpal, in whichever avatar the Bill was passed.

Even when the farmers' agitation started in 2020, it was the year 2021 that saw the fruition of their agitation in all respects. The Modi government relented to their demands and in December first week, the three contentious farm Bills were repealed. The farmers were promised that a committee would be formed to discuss the Minimum Support Price (MSP). But more than a month after the Prime Minister's announcement, there is no word about it. And that is where the similarities between the Lokpal and three laws begin.

**So what happens to the MSP committee?**

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on December 9 declared to suspend their 15-month long agitation that had started to protest the three contentious farm laws passed in 2020. The agitation continued even after the three laws -- the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020 -- were repealed by Parliament as the farmers' stuck to their demands vis-a-vis legal backing for minimum support price (MSP) for all farmers being the



**“THE NDA GOVERNMENT BROUGHT IN AN AMENDMENT AND PASSED THE BILL IN BOTH THE HOUSES SOON. SINCE THEN, NOBODY HAS EVEN HEARD OF THE LOKPAL, IN WHICHEVER AVATAR THE BILL WAS PASSED. EVEN WHEN THE FARMERS' AGITATION STARTED IN 2020, IT WAS THE YEAR 2021 THAT SAW THE FRUITION OF THEIR AGITATION IN ALL RESPECTS. THE MODI GOVERNMENT RELENTED TO THEIR DEMANDS AND IN DECEMBER FIRST WEEK, THE THREE CONTENTIOUS FARM BILLS WERE REPEALED. THE FARMERS WERE PROMISED THAT A COMMITTEE WOULD BE FORMED TO DISCUSS THE MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP). BUT MORE THAN A MONTH AFTER THE PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT, THERE IS NO WORD ABOUT IT. AND THAT IS WHERE THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE LOKPAL AND THREE LAWS BEGIN. THE SAMYUKT KISAN MORCHA (SKM) ON DECEMBER 9 DECLARED TO SUSPEND THEIR 15-MONTH LONG AGITATION THAT HAD STARTED TO PROTEST THE THREE CONTENTIOUS FARM LAWS PASSED IN 2020.**

prime demand after repeal of the three laws.

Manisha Priyam, a political analyst based in Delhi, said, "When the protest is at its peak, the government is bound to listen to the people, albeit unwillingly. But after some time, once things go away from the public eye or glare, things change. In 2011, Pranab Mukherjee had called a special session, a 'Sense of House' resolution was passed. It was given that much importance. Today, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is in power itself, but we all know the fate of Lokpal.

It remains to be seen what this government does with the MSP committee. "But what I believe is that the agrarian distrust issue is very important and significant. If the government does not take it up seriously, then, the future will not be easy on this matter. Because it is now a matter of livelihood. The government will have to respond on this matter."

Nagender Sharma, former journalist and legal affairs analyst, who was also the Delhi Chief Minister's Advisor. Observing that the government now is a different one and the farmers have already won a critical battle, he said, "Chances of outcome of this Committee are very high because farmers are coming on the back of a victory."

Priyam added, "Anna Andolan was about political accountability, which is still vague. Here concrete issues of lives of people are involved. I think there will be some kind of binding on the government."

But then, what will stop the government from going back? Pat came her reply: "What stops the people from coming back on the streets?"

**Farmers' next step**

Indeed, that is a point of debate as to what will the government do next? Whether or not it will abide by its promises.

Earlier in December last week, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Narendra Tomar had said at Nagpur, "We had moved a step back and then moved forward (on farm laws). Farmers are the backbone of India."

When it was perceived that the government wants to bring back the three laws, Tomar clarified that there is no proposal or plan yet. That would be discussed when the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) will be meeting again to check what all the government has done since the farmers wrapped up their tents from around Delhi's borders.

When asked about the government bringing back the Bills again, Rakesh Tikait, prominent farm leaders, told IANS on phone, "We will see as and when it happens. Why ask about it now?" He, however, sounded a lot more cautious about the Committee on MSP. "No names have been sought as yet. Nothing heard from the government. Nothing heard from the government about (withdrawing) cases in Delhi too."

"January 15, we have the SKM meeting. We will see then," Tikait said.

*Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within this article are the personal ideas of the author. The facts and conclusions appearing in the article do not reflect the views of Y Media and Mid-week Newspaper, and Y Media does not assume any responsibility or liability for the same.*

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## EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, ONTARIO OFFERING FOURTH DOSES TO LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS

Based on the recommendations from the Ontario Immunization Advisory Committee, effective immediately the province will be making fourth doses of mRNA vaccines available to residents of long-term care homes, retirement homes, Elder Care Lodges and other congregate care settings if at least three months, or 84 days, have passed since their third dose.

In response to the uniquely high-risk nature of long-term care settings for Ontario's most vulnerable individuals, the province is also mandating third doses for all staff, students, volunteers, caregivers and support workers by January 28, 2022, for those currently eligible for a booster, and will be requiring visitors to provide proof of a booster

dose once the temporary pause on general visitors is lifted.

As of December 13, 2021, all staff had to be fully vaccinated to work in long-term care homes, unless they have a valid medical exemption. To date, nearly 47 per cent of eligible staff and nearly 86 per cent of eligible residents have received their third dose booster. The province will continue to monitor long-term care homes and adjust measures as necessary to keep residents safe.

The government and the Chief Medical Officer of Health will continue to monitor trends in key public health and health care indicators, including emerging data on the Omicron variant and will continue to take swift action to ensure the health and safety of Ontarians.

## CANADA LAUNCHES APPLICATIONS FOR THE EXPANDED CANADA WORKER LOCKDOWN BENEFIT

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting Canadian workers, businesses and service providers through the COVID-19 pandemic.

On December 22, 2021, the Government of Canada announced that it would be expanding eligibility for the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit (CWLB) to better support Canadian workers. Today, the Honourable Diane LeBouthillier, Minister of National Revenue, announced that the expanded access to CWLB is now in effect and Canadians in designated regions affected by lockdowns or qualifying capacity restrictions can apply for the benefit. Currently, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut are included in the list of designated lockdown regions. This list will be updated as provincial or territorial governments introduce changes to public health restrictions.

The government will continue to ensure Canadians have the support needed to deal with the impacts related to the evolving Omicron variant, while also supporting a strong economic recovery. Building on measures included in Bill C-2, the government has approved new regulations that:

" Expand the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit to include workers in regions where provincial or territorial governments have introduced or acknowledged capacity restrictions of 50% or more. This benefit will provide \$300 a week in income support to eligible workers who are directly affected by a COVID-19-related public health lockdown, and who have lost 50% or more of their income as

a result. Affected Canadian workers in newly designated lockdown regions can apply for the benefit today. Payments will be retroactive to December 19, 2021. To be eligible for the CWLB, you must meet the eligibility criteria which includes, but is not limited to:

- o You earned at least \$5,000 in 2020, 2021, or in the 12 months leading up to the day you apply for the benefit;
- o You filed a 2020 tax return;
- o A region where you work or provide a service is designated as a COVID-19 lockdown region during the application period;
- o A designated COVID-19 lockdown in your region resulted in one of the following during the application period:
  - " you lost your job and are unemployed
  - " you are self-employed but unable to continue your work
  - " you are employed or self-employed but had a reduction of at least 50% in your average weekly income as compared to the previous year.
  - " These updated regulations will apply from December 19, 2021, to February 12, 2022.

Individuals who tried to apply for the CWLB prior to noon of December 30th in regions not yet designated as eligible by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) have been asked to call the CRA at 1-800-959-8281 to speak to an agent to finalize their application.

## OTTAWA ANNOUNCES \$40 BILLION INDIGENOUS CHILD-WELFARE SETTLEMENT, LARGEST IN HISTORY



The Government of Canada is pleased to announce that Agreements-in-Principle have been reached on a global resolution related to compensation for those harmed by discriminatory underfunding of First Nations child and family services and to achieve long-term reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services program and Jordan's Principle, to ensure that no child faces discrimination again.

This is a result of discussions between Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, the Chiefs of Ontario, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and counsel for the Moushoom and Trout class actions. We begin by acknowledging the generations of First Nations who have advocated so strongly for their children including Residential School Survivors, Sixties Scoop Survivors and children, young people and families whose lives are touched by this case. Their strength and the advocacy of First Nations leaders and service providers have made this step toward change possible. No amount of money can reconnect First Nations children and youth with their cultures nor reverse the suffering experienced by First Nations children, youth, their families and communities. We recognize the harms experienced by the children, youth and families who continue to suffer because of Canada's discrimination related to the First Nations Child and Family Services program and Jordan's Principle found by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT). We would also like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to the Honourable Murray Sinclair and his team, who assisted all Parties in reaching this significant milestone by chairing the discussions. We thank him for his time, energy, and dedication over these past weeks. This has been a challenging time. The unmarked graves of children who attended Residential Schools, climate change emergencies and the pandemic have deepened the disadvantages that many First Nations families and communities face.

## TORONTO POLICE SEEKING 2.3% (\$23.4 MILLION) BUDGET INCREASE IN 2022

The Toronto Police Service (the Service) today released its operating budget request for 2022 that will help the Service continue to do more in the areas that matter most to Torontonians, without increasing the Service's share of the City of Toronto's overall budget. The request of a 2.3 per cent increase will allow the Service to invest in some key priorities, mainly through reallocation of existing resources.

"As one of the fastest growing cities in North America, Toronto is changing rapidly and we need to be where Torontonians want us the most," said Chief of Police James Ramer. "Throughout 2021, we heard firsthand from members of the public about where more support is needed. This feedback has been top of mind as I laid out my priorities for the Service in 2022."

The Service's modest budget increase can help address areas that matter most to the people of Toronto, which include:

- Growing the Neighbourhood Community Officer program – which currently has 178 officers in 38 of the city's 158 neighbourhoods – by redeploying resources to help increase the number of officers working in and with communities to make Toronto safer.
- Supporting Vision Zero – with a group of 18 officers fully dedicated to traffic law enforcement – to make our roads safer for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists. This team has issued more than 41,000 traffic tickets in 2021 alone.
- Expanding the number of police officers who receive enhanced mental health training so we can better respond to people in crisis. As we continue to find new ways to work with community partners on various alternative service delivery models, such as the Crisis Call Diversion Pilot Project with the Gerstein Centre and the Community Crisis Support Service Pilot with the City, we are committed to continued partnerships in this area, which began with our Mobile Crisis Intervention Teams 20 years ago.

## CANADA'S 100 HIGHEST-PAID CEOs WERE PAID AN AVERAGE OF \$10.9 MILLION IN 2020

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Variable compensation—encompassing different forms of bonuses, such as cash bonuses and stock options—now makes up 82% of total compensation for top CEOs. "Bonus pay has been increasing in importance compared to salaries. If there is a singular reason why CEO pay is in the stratosphere, it's because out of control bonuses are protected from going down, even in a pandemic," Macdonald says. Despite variable compensation being purportedly due to good performance, the report finds that among the richest 100 CEOs: 30 CEOs headed companies that received the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), 14 saw their bonuses changed to protect them from the impact of COVID-19, and five experienced both. The report recommends a range of policy solutions including: Capping the corporate deductibility at \$1 million in total compensation per employee;



Eliminating the capital gains inclusion rate loophole;  
Complete elimination of the stock option deduction for large companies;  
Implementing higher top marginal tax brackets;  
Introducing a wealth tax.

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## Ontario Cuts Isolation Period From 10 To 5 Days For Fully Vaccinated Residents; Introduces New Testing Guidelines

**TORONTO** — In response to the highly transmissible Omicron variant, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, is taking further action to provide additional protection to high-risk settings, and continue to safeguard hospitals and ICU capacity as the province continues to rapidly accelerate its booster dose rollout. Based on the latest evidence and Ontario's high rate of vaccination, the province is also updating testing and isolation guidelines to protect our most vulnerable and maintain the stability of critical workforces, including frontline health care workers, first responders and critical infrastructure like energy and food and supply chains.

"As cases continue to rise at a rapid rate and evidence on the Omicron variant evolves, our response needs to evolve alongside other jurisdictions to ensure those living and working in our highest-risk settings are protected," said Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health. "Ontario's cautious approach and high vaccination rates have helped keep hospital and intensive care unit capacity stable to date. Focusing our testing and case and contact management on high-risk settings will help limit transmission, maintain critical workforces, and ensure timely access to PCR testing where it is needed the most. Anyone who is sick should protect their community by staying home."

**Updated Testing and Isolation Guidelines in Response to Omicron**

In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario is updating its COVID-19 testing and isolation guidelines. These updates follow recent changes in other jurisdictions in Canada and the United Kingdom to ensure publicly funded testing and case and contact management resources are available for the highest-risk settings and to protect the most vulnerable and help keep critical services running.

Effective December 31, publicly-funded PCR testing will be available only for high-risk individuals who are symptomatic and/or are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including for the purposes of confirming a COVID-19 diagnosis to begin treatment, and workers and residents in the highest risk settings, as well as vulnerable populations. Members of the

general public with mild symptoms are asked not to seek testing. A full list of eligible individuals can be found here.

In addition, most individuals with a positive result from a rapid antigen test will no longer be required or encouraged to get a confirmatory PCR or rapid molecular test.

Ontario is also changing the required isolation period based on growing evidence that generally healthy people with COVID-19 are most infectious in the two days before and three days after symptoms develop. Individuals with COVID-19 who are vaccinated, as well as children under 12, will be required to isolate for five days following the onset of symptoms. Their household contacts are also required to isolate with them. These individuals can end isolation after five days if their symptoms are improved for at least 24 hours and all public health and safety measures, such as masking and physical distancing, are followed. Non-household contacts are required to self-monitor for ten days.

Individuals who are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated or immunocompromised will be required to isolate for 10 days. While individuals who work or live in high-risk health care settings are recommended to return to work after 10 days from their last exposure or symptom onset or from their date of diagnosis, to ensure sufficient staffing levels workers will have the opportunity to return to work after isolating for seven days with negative PCR or rapid antigen test results, which will be provided by the province through the health care setting.

As of December 20, a total of 49.6 million rapid antigen tests have been deployed since the beginning of the pandemic, with the vast majority (approximately 41 million) deployed to priority sectors, including hospitals, long-term care and retirement homes and schools. In addition to Ontario directly procuring additional rapid tests where possible, the province is continuing to urge the federal government to make more rapid tests available to provinces as quickly as possible. The province is also evaluating the potential role of antibody testing, including an analysis of how it is used in other jurisdictions, to provide another tool in the fight against COVID-19.

## ONTARIO INCREASES MINIMUM WAGE TO \$15 AN HOUR

As part of its plan to grow an economy that works for everyone, the Ontario government has raised the general minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour starting today. This new, higher general minimum wage is expanded to now include bartenders and alcohol servers. The special minimum wages for students under 18, homeworkers and hunting, fishing and wilderness guides have also increased.

"As the cost of living continues to rise, our government will never stop working for workers, including by putting more money into their pockets," said Premier Doug Ford. "Ontario's workers deserve a raise, and today we're delivering one. There's no better way to support hard-working Ontarians right now than raising the minimum wage."

"As we usher in a new year, our government is making unprecedented changes to rebalance the scales and put more workers in the driver's seat," said Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. "With the cost of living rising, this raise gives a hand up to the workers and families who need it most."

As of January 1, 2022, the following wages are in place in Ontario:

" General minimum wage workers are now earning \$15.00 per hour, a raise from \$14.35.

### 2 INDO-CANADIANS HONoured WITH ORDER OF CANADA

He is currently the CEO of the company. Another Indo-Canadian, Pradeep Merchant of Greely in Ontario, has been appointed Member of the Order of Canada "for his long-standing contributions to his community, including his philanthropy and his leadership in the promotion of bilateral ties between Canada and India". The Order of Canada is one of the highest civilian awards in Canada, recognising outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation.

## HOW INDIA IS VACCINATING TEENAGERS AMID OMICRON SPREAD



**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** Amid rising Omicron cases, the Centre on Monday rolled out Covid vaccination for children aged 15-18. Over 4.5 lakh teenagers have, received their first jab against the infectious disease so far.

Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that Covid-19 vaccination for children between 15-18 years of age will be rolled out from January 3. According to official estimates, there are approximately 10 crore children in this age group.

On January 1, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had requested people to register eligible children in their families. Taking to Twitter, he said: "On the occasion of New Year, registration is being started on the CoWIN portal for immunisation of children against Covid-19 in the age group of 15 to 18 years from today. I request the family members to register the eligible children for vaccination." Over 8,00,000 children have already registered for their dose in the past few days.

According to the guidelines, children can self-register online through an existing account on CoWIN or can also register by creating a new account through a unique mobile number or using their parent's accounts. Children can also get registered onsite by verifier or vaccinator; and they can walk in to take their shots.

Out of the 10 crore children eligible for the Covid vaccination, over 4.5 lakh teenagers have already received their first shots.

The vaccine used for inoculating children is Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, according to a set of new guidelines issued by the Union health ministry. On December 24, the Drugs Controller General of India (DGCI), granted emergency use authorisation to the indigenously-developed Covaxin for children above 12 years of age.

Most of the schools and other educational institutions are being used as inoculation centres as well. To avoid mixing-up of Covid vaccines for children and adults during administration, Mandaviya has also advised states and Union territories to make separate Covid vaccination centres (CVCs), separate session sites, separate queue (if adult vaccination is going on at the same centre) and separate immunisation team (if at same session site) for adults and children.

## OSLER INITIATES CODE ORANGE TO ADDRESS CAPACITY PRESSURES AND STAFFING CHALLENGES

**BRAMPTON/ETOBICOKE** – On Tuesday, January 3, William Osler Health System (Osler) declared a Code Orange (Stage 2). This is due to an increase in COVID-19 patient volumes across Osler and staffing challenges that have affected the hospital's capacity.

"Osler has enacted all contingency planning and has reached Stage 2 of a Code Orange, which is typically used when capacity outpaces demand to ensure internal and external resources are deployed efficiently," said Dr. Naveed Mohammad, President and CEO, William Osler Health System. "This move will enable us to continue to provide high-quality care to our patients, and we are grateful to our staff, physicians and volunteers who have moved swiftly to enact our Code Orange policy and procedures. Osler continues to be a safe place to work and to receive care."

To help address our COVID-19 pressures and to create more capacity, Osler has also temporarily suspended all non-urgent programs and services in line with provincial Directive #2 announced today to further support hospital operations and pandemic response. All affected patients are being contacted by Osler to reschedule their appointments. All urgent procedures will continue.

One of the hardest-hit hospitals during the pandemic, Osler is also once again receiving support for the transfer of Osler patients to neighbouring hospitals in order to free up capacity. Code Orange is a temporary measure to address capacity pressures and staffing challenges. Osler will continue to provide updates regarding Osler's operations as the situation evolves.

**ABOUT WILLIAM OSLER HEALTH SYSTEM and FOUNDATION:** William Osler Health System is a hospital system, which includes Brampton Civic Hospital, Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness and Etobicoke General Hospital, and serves 1.3 million residents of Brampton, Etobicoke and surrounding communities within the Central West region. Osler's emergency departments are among the busiest in Canada and its Mental Health Program is one of the largest in the province. William Osler Health System Foundation seeks to create a healthier community through giving by inspiring its communities to invest in exceptional health care close to home.

## OSLER IMPLEMENTS CHANGES TO VISITOR AND ESSENTIAL CARE PARTNER POLICY IN RESPONSE TO OMICRON SPREAD

With the Omicron COVID-19 variant continuing to spread rapidly in our communities, William Osler Health System (Osler) has made the difficult decision to further restrict essential care partners (ECPs) and visitors into its hospitals, effective Tuesday, January 4, 2022. An ECP is a family member who provides care at the bedside for a patient. Like many other hospitals, Osler has seen an increase in COVID-19 positive patients and in response, has temporarily introduced further limitations to protect patients and all those who work within its facilities.

What Visitors and ECPs need to know: Patients can only have visitors or an ECP under limited circumstances. Some exceptions apply. The community is encouraged to visit our website at [www.williamoslerhs.ca](http://www.williamoslerhs.ca) for more information on Osler's updated Visitor and Essential Care Partner Policy. Any in-person visits scheduled prior to these changes will be honoured. All visitors and ECPs must present Proof of Mandatory Vaccination along with a government-issued photo ID. Clinical exemptions include ECP for labour support/postpartum, Paediatrics/NICU, the imminent end of life, and life-threatening conditions in the Emergency Department. All clinical exemptions will require a negative Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) at screening with the exception of the imminent end of life and life-threatening condition visits.

**If you were exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19:**

**Fully vaccinated with no symptoms**

- Self-monitor for 10 days
- Do not visit any high-risk individuals or high-risk settings for 10 days

**Not fully vaccinated or immunocompromised**

- Isolate for 10 days

**A member of your household**

- Isolate for the length of their isolation period

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF YOU WERE EXPOSED TO COVID-19? SELF-MONITOR FOR 10 DAYS IF YOU ARE FULLY VACCINATED, ASYMPTOMATIC & CASE IS OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSEHOLD (ONTARIO MINISTRY OF HEALTH/ TWITTER)





## CONG ALLEGES CORRUPTION IN NEW EXCISE POLICY OF DELHI, SEEKS PROBE

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** The Delhi Congress on Tuesday alleged that there is large scale corruption in the new excise policy implemented by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi. Addressing a press conference, Congress leader Anil Bhardwaj said, "A probe should be conducted to find the truth about the allegation of Kumar Vishwas, one of the founders of AAP, that Rs 500 crore corrupt deal took place in the implementation of the new excise policy."

Referring to Vishwas' allegation, Bhardwaj said that the liquor mafia and an MLA involved in illegal liquor trade had approached Vishwas in 2016 regarding lowering of liquor consumption age from 25 to 21 years, and opening of 1,000 new liquor vends, adding that Rs 500 crore corruption took place for implementing the new liquor policy. The Congress alleged that it is shocking that none of the major issues concerning Delhiites were discussed in the two-day special session of the Delhi Assembly, with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal himself remaining absent on the first day, though he tested positive for Covid only on Tuesday, making a mockery of the session. He said that the special session was held to promote Kejriwal's political ambitions, and not to address the problems of Delhi, as the latter has left the people of Delhi to their own fate. He said the two-day session should have had elaborate discussions on the alarming surge in Covid cases, reaching almost the Red Alert stage now, the preparedness of the health sector to tackle

## Shah reviews security situation, threats from terror groups

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday reviewed the prevailing security threats from global terror groups, narco-terrorism, organised crime-terror nexus and movement of foreign terrorists at a high-level meeting held in North Block.

At the meeting, the Home Minister stressed upon the need for better coordination and synergy among the Central and state security agencies in countering the ever-changing counter-terrorism and security challenges. This was the first such high-level meeting chaired by Shah in the New Year, which was attended by the top officials of the country's security and intelligence apparatus.

The Ministry of Home Affairs said in a statement, "Union Home Minister Amit Shah conducted a high-level security meeting today to review the prevailing threat scenario in the country and the emerging security challenges."

During the high-level meeting, a detailed deliberation was made on the continued threats of terrorism, global terror groups, terror financing, narco-terrorism, organised crime-terror nexus, illicit use of cyber space, movement of foreign terrorists etc.



The sources in the ministry said that the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir was also discussed with special focus on infiltration and pushing of contrabands from the hostile neighbouring country on the western border.

## THE 12 THEMES FOR 2022 TO DECIDE THE POLITICAL DESTINY OF INDIA

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

IANS brought to you 12 numbers that defined 2021. We now present to you 12 themes which will define the contours of 2022.

Uttar Pradesh and the future of Hindutva in India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath have made a slew of announcements to stop the slide in electoral fortunes in the crucial electoral state of UP which goes to the polls soon. The BJP's projected tally in the ensuing elections is now holding steady at 210 seats and both the campaigners are trying to turn it around.

The rise of Arvind Kejriwal

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has a spring in his step as he steps out of his comfort zone in Delhi to grab power in Punjab and Goa. The BJP is worried about his dominant presence as he uses copycat themes to enlarge the scope of his politics, the latest being the appropriation of B.R. Ambedkar after Lord Ram.

China's aggression on territorial claims gets shriller

India's challenge in 2022 is to not only to ensure Chinese troops return to status quo as on April 2020 when the aggression at the LAC began, it is to keep the balance in the neighbourhood, where China is making deeper inroads.

At the same time, Moscow appears keen to arrange a trilateral summit with PM Modi and President Xi Jinping of China, two leaders who haven't spoken directly once since the standoff began, and if it happens, it will be the big surprise of the year.

Sporting Battles

While the calendar is packed with marquee events, the big question is will Covid allow the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Soccer World Cup in Qatar, ICC T20 World Cup in Australia to take place?

The President and VP Elections

Will PM Modi pull the rabbit out of the bag and appoint Sharad Pawar to neutralise NCP politically and retain Maharashtra or alternatively make a political statement by making a minority Prez or Veep?

Index of Opposition Unity

It will be truly tested in the President's election in July. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala polls have shown in 2021 that the Opposition chieftains can keep the BJP at bay, if the entire Opposition spectrum joins hands in the electoral college then BJP can be vanquished. The Maharashtra model can be used effectively. As of 2021, the electoral college comprises 776 MPs and 4,120 MLAs.

Conquering The Final Frontier

India will launch two unmanned missions in 2022 before the human spaceflight programme 'Gaganyaan' by the end of the year. The Venus mission is planned for 2022 as well.

5G Rollout

DoT has announced that 5G internet services will be rolled out in India in 2022. A total of 13 cities across the country will get the technology in the beginning.

Shrinking Saffron

It is the true test for PM Modi in 2022 as the prospect of a shrunk lotus emerges - from UP to Goa, from Uttarakhand to Manipur and from Gujarat to Himachal - the fight to save these forts gets tougher. Knowing the PM's political sagacity and smarts, he will surely leave everyone surprised.

Fortress UP and Gujarat

The two contests are likely to be very different. Gujarat has had a BJP government since 1998, which makes it the longest running government for a political party in the country at the moment. Yogi will become the first BJP CM in UP to survive a full term. Both these contests are a litmus test for Modi and his Hindu consolidation model.

## COVID ANTIVIRAL DRUG MOLNUPIRAVIR LAUNCHED IN INDIA“

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** Covid antiviral drug Molnupiravir was on Monday launched in India at Rs 1,399 for a five-day course for mild to moderate infection. "Amid rising cases of new Covid variant Omicron in the country, an expert panel of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation had recently approved antiviral drug Molnupiravir for restricted use in emergency situation. "Along with Molnupiravir, the CDSCO has also granted emergency use authorisation to the Serum Institute of India's Covid vaccine COVOVAX, Hyderabad based Biological E RBD Protein CORBEVAX. "Molnupiravir is an antiviral medication that inhibits the replication of certain RNA viruses. It is used to treat COVID-19 in those infected by SARS-CoV-2. The recommended dose of Molnupiravir 800 mg is twice a day for five days. A patient needs to take 40 capsules containing 200 mg of medication. Over a dozen pharma companies including Torrent, Cipla, Sun Pharma, Dr Reddy's, Natco, Mylan, and Hetero are in the process to manufacture the oral pill. "Cipla, Sun Pharma, and Dr Reddy's Laboratories are also expected to release Molnupiravir capsules in the coming weeks.

## PUNJAB ANNOUNCES RS 124 CR BONANZA FOR ASHA, MID-DAY MEAL WORKERS



**CHANDIGARH, (IANS)** Giving a bonanza of Rs 124.25 crore for Asha and mid-day meal workers as a New Year gift, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Channi on Thursday announced a fixed monthly allowance of Rs 2,500 for Asha workers against the earlier amount got by them on the basis of incentives.

Costing the state exchequer Rs 60 crore, the move will benefit nearly 22,000 Asha workers. They would also be now entitled for the facility of cashless health insurance scheme up to Rs 5 lakh, which would be done by the state free of cost so as to cover them against the probable risk of contacting infectious disease while performing their duty.

Similarly, in a major relief to nearly 42,500 mid-day meal workers working in 19,700 government and aided schools, Channi announced to enhance their fixed allowance from Rs 2,200 to Rs 3,000 per month. This hike would entail an expenditure of Rs 64.25 crore on the state exchequer, an official statement said.

Besides, Channi also announced all the Asha workers and mid-day meal workers working across the state would be now entitled for full maternity leave on the pattern of other women government employees on a regular basis. He declared that all Asha workers and mid-day meal workers would now get the hiked fixed allowance from January 1, 2022, and in future they would be getting these allowances for 12 months instead of 10 months earlier. Addressing a public rally predominantly comprising Asha and mid-day meal workers, especially assembled in Chamkaur Sahib in Ropar district, the Chief Minister said the founder of Sikhism raised a voice against the maltreatment and discrimination meted out to the women in society and emphasised the need for giving equality to them.

## SIT FILES 5,000-PAGE CHARGE SHEET IN LAKHIMPUR KHERI CASE

**LAKHIMPUR KHERI (UP), (IANS)** The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the October 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, on Monday filed a nearly 5,000-page charge sheet. Ashish Mishra, the son of Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Kumar Mishra Teni, has been named as an accused in the case. Ashish Mishra, who has already been arrested, was named as the prime accused in the case, according to sources. Further, the number of accused in the case increased to 14 as another name has been added. "The name of one more person, Virendra Shukla, has been added in the charge sheet. He has been charged under Section 201 of IPC," the prosecution lawyer said.

A total of eight people were killed in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence incident which took place on October 3, 2021 during a farmers' protest against the now-repealed three controversial farm laws. Among the dead were four farmers, a journalist, two BJP workers and a driver. A total of 13 persons are accused in the case, including Ashish Mishra and former Union Minister Akhilesh Das's nephew Ankit Das. All the 13 accused, including drivers of the three SUVs and associates of Mishra and Das, are under arrest and are currently lodged in the Lakhimpur Kheri jail. While the Allahabad High Court is yet to take a call on the bail application of Ashish Mishra, the bail pleas of the other accused are pending before a local court in Lakhimpur Kheri. The SIT had recently requested a local court to add two charges in the case, attempt to murder and voluntarily causing grievous hurt, against Ashish Mishra and the 12 other accused.



## VINI MAHAJAN TAKES OVER AS SECY, DRINKING WATER, ASOK KUMAR NEW NMCG HEAD

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** IAS officer Vini Mahajan on Monday assumed the charge as Secretary, Drinking Water and Sanitation in the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, while Additional Secretary, G. Asok Kumar took over as the new Director General for the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).

Mahajan, a 1987-batch Punjab cadre officer, was earlier state's Chief Secretary from June 26, 2020, and has served as Additional Chief Secretary, Housing and Urban Development, as well as Industries & Commerce, IT & Investment Promotion.

She has also served as Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, and Principal Secretary, Medical Education and Research, and Finance.

Mahajan served as Joint Secretary to the Prime Minister from 2007-2012, and was earlier Director in the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, a release from the Jal Shakti Ministry said.

She has over eight years' experience in cutting edge positions at the field level, including as Deputy Commissioner (the first woman to be posted as such in Punjab in 25 years).

Asok Kumar, an 1991-batch IAS officer of Telangana cadrem, has held several important positions such as Joint Secretary, Civil Aviation, and Director in the Power Ministry. He has also served as the Executive Director, Projects in the NMCG.

Before joining NMCG, he served as the Mission Director for National Water Mission where his work in "Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain" campaign led to the sanction of over 9.5 lakh water conservation and rainwater harvesting structures all over India.

This resulted in him receiving the popular moniker - "the Rain Man of India". He has also spearheaded several innovative initiatives such as the monthly "Water Talks" and "Water Tech Talks", preparation of water budgets for states, water audit of various industrial units, and irrigation projects to improve efficiency of water use efficiency, etc.

As the District Collector in 2002, he supported the construction of over 0.14 million household toilets in 1,000 schools in Nizamabad district and was responsible for providing drinking water supply to over 3 million people in Hyderabad in 2008.





## Nuclear power to be part of India's green power journey

**CHENNAI, (IANS)** India should increase its share of nuclear power in its quest towards having green power as renewable power is intermittent and costly, experts said on Tuesday. They also said strategies based on carbon cost will push up the power costs and India should also get rid of the mindset that policy will be driven by the vendors. The views were expressed at the video conference where the interim report on 'India's Energy Transition in a Carbon-Constrained World: The Role of Nuclear Power' of the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) was released. If India wants green power, then it needs larger power generation as currently various sectors are powered by different kinds of fuels. So the share of electricity in the total energy basket has to go up, said Dr Anil Kakodkar, former Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission and Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy. He said the country must recognise that one should not lose perspective that for a large amount of green power, there is no alternative to nuclear power. According to Kakodkar, it is not possible for the country to completely get out of fossil energy as there are severe technological issues with hydrogen, battery and solar power. According to former Indian Ambassador to Iran D.P. Srivastava, the cost of decarbonisation of the economy will be very high. He said if nuclear power is factored in the green power effort, then the costs will be optimised. Pointing out that renewable power is intermittent and has to be backed up by a stable power source, Srivastava added that nuclear power should be given the must run status on par with the renewables. He also said if carbon cost/pricing is applied, then the power costs will go up steeply.

Srivastava said if carbon cost is introduced in India through backdoor by way of bi-laterals and exclusive reliance of renewable power, then the costs will go up. Releasing the report, VIF Chairman S. Gurumurthy said the west should look at its food habits and change to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. He said energy from being a traded item has taken various forms like geopolitical tools, national security and others. On nuclear power, Gurumurthy said there should be an intense public education campaign.

**CBSE CAUTIONS STUDENTS AGAINST MISINFORMATION, ISSUES ADVISORY**


**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** Cautioning board class students of misinformation being spread online, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) issued a public advisory on Tuesday, stating that the CBSE Term 2 Board Exam 2022 pattern has not been changed and will be the same as announced earlier by the board. "It has been noticed that a few online media platforms are circulating incorrect information and confusing audiences, using expressions such as 'Breaking News' about major exam pattern changes in Class X and XII Term 2 Board exams," the official notice read. CBSE Term 2 Board Exam 2022 pattern has not been changed and will be the same as announced earlier by the Board, it said. The notice further read, "It is clarified in the interest of students that the Board had announced changes in the exam pattern (mentioned in Circular No. 51, dated July 5, 2021). Term 1 exams have already been completed and the format of exams for Term 2 is also mentioned in the same circular." The board has advised students and other stakeholders to only believe information that is available on its official website, cbse.gov.in.

## AHEAD OF POLLS, BJP PRESENTING GOA GOVT'S REPORT CARD TO PEOPLE

**NEW DELHI, (IANS)** For winning the third election in a row in the state, the Goa BJP has started presenting a report card of state government to people. The party workers are visiting every household with the works of the BJP government in the last ten years. A well placed source said that a campaign has been launched to reach every house in the state with the works of the BJP government in 10 years. "We have started presenting our report cards to people. Report card contains works of the BJP government in the state since 2012. The campaign started on January 1 and will continue till January 10. In these 10 days, BJP workers will reach out to each and every household in the state and tell the voters what our government has done in the last 10 years," he said. Goa Assembly polls will be held in February- March next year along with Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Manipur. The BJP has been in power in the coastal state since 2012. Apart from knocking each door in the state, the BJP workers and leaders are also meeting eminent personalities with the report card and taking their suggestions. "We are meeting eminent personalities and influencers giving details of our government in the last two terms," a party leader said. The saffron party, meanwhile, is organising meetings at different levels to activate its cadres. "Assembly level convention of the party has started and workers' meetings are also being organised across the state," he said. It has set a target to win over 25 seats in the 40-member Goa Assembly. BJP national general secretary and state in-charge, CT Ravi said that BJP will form the government for third term by winning more than 25 seats. "People have seen development in the last ten years under the BJP government and will once again elect a BJP government to further accelerate the pace of development of the state. We are going to win over 25 seats," Ravi said.

## AMID PANDEMIC, MANIPUR AIMS TO BOOST ECONOMY, CURB DRUGS MENACE IN 2022

**IMPHAL, (IANS)** Manipur, where vital Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in February-March, aims to rejuvenate economic activity and further boost sports and welfare sectors besides curbing the drug menace in 2022 amid the Covid pandemic, according to political commentators. Despite a series of violent activities by outlawed militants during the past two months and growing influx of illegal drugs from Myanmar, hectic political activities have begun in Manipur ahead of the crucial Assembly elections in the BJP-ruled state. Notwithstanding the rampant smuggling of drugs, arms and ammunition from Myanmar, the Manipur government's crusade against the drug menace and cultivation of various narcotic ingredients is expected to yield some positive results in 2022, as the people of the state, especially the women, have joined the war against drugs. Manipur Police had arrested 467 drug peddlers, including 95 women, and registered 313 cases in 2021. On December 6, in the biggest ever drug haul in northeast India, the Assam Rifles and the police in Manipur seized over 154 kg methamphetamine tablets and more than 54 kg heroin worth over Rs 508 crore and arrested one Myanmar national. Various types of drugs -- such as methamphetamine tablets, heroin, opium, ganja (marijuana) and foreign origin cigarettes -- are often smuggled into Manipur and Mizoram from Myanmar and then ferried to other parts of India and abroad.



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**White or Stainless Steel**

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# COVID SURGE TO ALTER DAILY LIFE FOR MILLIONS IN US: REPORT



**WASHINGTON, (IANS)** The Covid-19 situation is exploding at an unprecedented speed and could alter daily life for millions of Americans during the first month of the New Year, the media reported on Sunday. According to the latest data from Johns Hopkins University, the US reported an all-time high of more than 386,000 new daily infections on Friday.

"New York continues to break its own record, adding 85,476 reported Covid-19 cases, according to Saturday's briefing from New York Governor, Kathy Hochul," reports CNN.

The number of one day case additions has increased 219 per cent since December 27, when New York reported an addition of 26,737 cases. "Omicron is truly everywhere. What I am so worried about over the next month or so is that our economy is going to shut down, not because of policies from the federal government or from the state governments, but rather because so many of us are ill," Dr Megan Ranney, a professor of emergency medicine at Brown University's School of Public Health, was quoted as saying in the report. The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 54,859,966 and 825,816, according to the Johns Hopkins' Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE). New Jersey recorded more than 28,000 new Covid-19 cases through PCR testing, Governor Phil Murphy posted on Twitter. In a news conference, the Governor said the number was roughly "quadruple from just two weeks ago, and four times as many cases than during the height of last winter's surge". In Ohio, Governor Mike DeWine has announced the deployment of about 1,250 National Guard members as hospitals struggle with staffing shortages.

Over 2,000 flights were cancelled on New Year's Day as the Omicron variant of the coronavirus continued to upend airline operations during the holiday travel season in the US.

According to FlightAware, a flight-tracking website, 2,311 flights entering, leaving or within the US were cancelled as of 7.30 a.m. on Saturday, and another 424 flights were delayed. Covid hospitalisations for children jumped 58 per cent across the US in the last week, according to the latest data by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The US is averaging 260 paediatric Covid-19 hospitalisations a day, up nearly 30 per cent within a week, showed that data from December 21-December 27. According to CBS News, unvaccinated people of all ages are at increased risk, including children.

## 'THE WORLD IN CONFLICT': 7 HOTSPOTS TO WATCH IN 2022

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With Biden floundering amid the Covid catastrophe, and his key legislative agenda torpedoed by his own party's holdouts, and the rightward drift of the Supreme Court, the coming midterm elections - which impinge on how the rest of his Presidency - will pan out, makes sure US remains top in the news.

**Russia-Ukraine:** Relations between Russia and Ukraine have not been the best ever since the Soviet Union's collapse, but nose-dived since 2014 since Ukraine's Euromaidan protests, the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovich, and the Russian takeover of Crimea as well as support to two border regions flouting Kyiv's authority. While tensions have simmered since then, trouble broke out in early 2021 in wake of a massive NATO exercise on virtually the Russian border. Since then, there have been reports of Russian troop concentrations on the border, with Western powers alleging Moscow's plans to invade Ukraine.

**The Middle East:** There has hardly been any time since the end of the Second World War that the Middle East has not figured in the headlines, and rarely for the right reason. Even now, in the wake of leadership changes in Israel and Iran, a subdued IS presence, a drawdown in the Syrian conflict, and the general stagnation, the region is far from stable with the promise of the Arab Spring having long dissipated.

The crisis in Lebanon where people are straitened circumstances and credibility of political leadership is at the lowest, the political turmoil in Tunisia - the epicentre of the Arab Spring and regarded as one of the brightest prospects for the region, the Israel-Palestine issue - where violent clashes are never far-off, and above all, the Iranian nuclear deal and the ongoing negotiations of reviving it, will ensure world attention is not far from the region.

**Brazil:** The biggest country in South America, Brazil borders nine of the continent's 11 other sovereign nations, plays a key role in regional and global affairs, and with its (severely threatened) Amazon rainforest ("lungs of the world"), contributes to the world's environmental health. Given all this, its politics can impinge on the continent, the hemisphere and the world.

**Myanmar:** Among the handful of nations to see military upstage civilian governments in 2021, but the only one in Asia, Myanmar's military coup and the consequent bloody crackdown on protests will ensure that the Southeast Asian nation keeps figuring in the news, situated as it is in the Indo-Pacific area which is the focus for influence between neighbours India, China as well as on a wider level, between Beijing and the US and its allies/aligned powers, including India.

**Afghanistan:** Afghanistan was among the biggest geopolitical developments of 2021 as its foreign (chiefly US)-backed government steadily lost ground and ultimately crumbled without a fight to the Taliban militia despite two decades of Western financial and military support.



## SCIENTISTS IDENTIFY ANTIBODIES THAT CAN NEUTRALIZE OMICRON & OTHER VARIANT

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

By identifying the targets of these "broadly neutralising" antibodies on the spike protein, it might be possible to design vaccines and antibody treatments that will be effective against not only the omicron variant but other variants that may emerge in the future, said David Veessler, an investigator with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. In the study, the team tested a larger panel of antibodies that had been generated against earlier versions of the virus, and identified four classes of antibodies that retained their ability to neutralise Omicron. Members of each of these classes target one of four specific areas of the spike protein present in not only SARS-CoV-2 variants but also a group of related coronaviruses, called sarbecoviruses. These sites on the protein may persist because they play an essential function that the protein would lose if they mutated. Such areas are called "conserved". The finding that antibodies are able to neutralise via recognition of conserved areas in so many different variants of the virus suggests that designing vaccines and antibody treatments that target these regions could be effective against a broad spectrum of variants that emerge through mutation, Veessler said. "This finding tells us that by focusing on antibodies that target these highly conserved sites on the spike protein, there is a way to overcome the virus' continual evolution," said Veessler, Associate Professor of biochemistry at the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle. The findings were published in the journal Nature. Further, the team also engineered a disabled, non-replicating virus, called a pseudovirus, to produce spike proteins on its surface, as coronaviruses do. They then created pseudoviruses that had spike proteins with the Omicron mutations and those found on the earliest variants identified in the pandemic.

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