

1212

Frederick II (later also Holy Roman Emperor) crowned King of Germany in Mainz

1968

NLS (a system for which hypertext and the computer mouse were developed) is publicly demonstrated for the first time in San Francisco.

1990

Lech Walesa wins Poland's 1st direct presidential election in Poland



1992

Operation Restore Hope: US Marines land in Somalia

forces head among helicopter crash



Officers for the Beating the Retreat ceremony in New Delhi, India

It has been ascertained that Gen Bipin Rawat, (his wife) Mrs Madhulika Rawat and 11 other persons on board have died," the Air Force said in a statement.

Rawat, 63, was appointed as India's first Chief of Defence Staff by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in late

2019. The position was set up with the aim of integrating India's three military services - the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.

Several of the bodies were badly burnt, two government sources said. "Some bodies were so charred that they could not be

immediately identified," one of the sources said.

Modi said he was deeply saddened by Rawat's death. "A true patriot, he greatly contributed to modernising our armed forces and security apparatus," the prime minister said.

In a tweet, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called Rawat's death "an irreparable loss to our armed forces and the country."

The Indian Air Force ordered an inquiry into the cause of the accident.

India has dozens of Mi-17s in service. They are widely deployed to transport senior army personnel and government ministers.

"This is a safe, proven helicopter, I have travelled on it in difficult situations," former army chief J.J.Singh said.

An infantryman with over four decades of military service, Rawat served along India's border with China, the disputed Kashmir region and on a United Nations mission in Africa, before taking charge of the Indian army in late 2016.

In New Delhi, Defence Minister Singh visited Rawat's official residence and the state broadcaster said Modi had summoned a meeting of the cabinet committee on security yesterday evening.

ch vaccine neutralises mutant with three shots



Researcher examining a sample of the SARS-CoV-2 variant Omicron in a lab.

are the second pillar of an immune response, alongside antibodies, and are believed to prevent severe disease by attacking infected human cells.

Omicron reported in 57 countries, hospitalisations set to rise: WHO

Reuters | Geneva

The Omicron variant has been reported in 57 nations and the number of patients needing hospitalisation is likely to rise as it spreads, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

The WHO, in its weekly epidemiological report, said more data was needed to assess the severity of disease caused by the Omicron variant and whether its mutations might reduce protection from vaccine-derived immunity.

"Even if the severity is equal or potentially even lower than for Delta variant, it is expected that hospitalisations will increase if more people become infected and that there will be a time lag between an increase in the incidence of cases and an increase in the incidence of deaths," it said.

On Nov. 26, the WHO declared the Omicron variant, which was first detected in southern Africa, a variant of concern. It is the fifth SARS-CoV-2 strain to carry such a designation.

The number of reported COVID-19 cases in South Africa doubled in the week to Dec. 5 to more than 62,000 and "very large" increases in incidence have been seen in Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia and Lesotho, it said.

The spread of Omicron, coupled with enhanced testing and low vaccination rates may have played a role, it added.

published by researchers at the Africa Health Research Institute in South Africa on Tuesday, saying that Omicron can partially evade protection from two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, suggesting also that a third shot might help fend off infection.

A lab analysis at the university hospital of Frankfurt, Germany,

however found a reduced antibody response to Omicron even after three shots.

The US-German vaccine partners also struck an optimistic tone on the prospect of their shot protecting against any severe disease from Omicron, even though the lab data did not yield new insights on that.

The vast majority of surface structures on the Omicron spike protein targeted by the T-cells, which typically emerge after vaccination, are not affected by Omicron's mutations, they said.

"The companies believe that vaccinated individuals may still be protected against severe forms of the disease," they added.

UK PM apologises for staff joking about Christmas lockdown party



Allegra Stratton



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson

For more than a week, Johnson and his team have repeated that no rules were broken

At the time of the Downing Street gathering, tens of millions of people across Britain were banned from meeting close family and friends for a traditional Christmas

Reuters | London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologised yesterday after a video surfaced showing his staff laughing and joking about a party in Downing Street during a Christmas COVID-19 lockdown last year when such festivities were banned.

For more than a week, Johnson and his team have repeated that no rules were broken in late 2020 after the Mirror newspaper reported there had been several parties including a wine-fuelled gathering of 40 to 50 people to mark Christmas.

Yesterday, he said he was furious over the video, which was shown by ITV late on Tuesday, but that he had been repeatedly assured there had not been a party.

Opposition Labour Party

leader Keir Starmer accused Johnson of "taking the public for fools", while Ian Blackford of the Scottish National Party called for Johnson to resign.

"I apologise unreservedly for the offence that it has caused up and down the country and I apologise for the impression that it gives," he told parliament.

Disciplinary action would be taken if it was found that rules were broken, he said.

"But I repeat ... that I have been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged, that there was no party and that no COVID rules were broken."

He also pledged to "get on with the job", accusing the opposition for trying to "muddy the waters about events or non-events of a year ago".

After days of denials, the video aired by ITV, Allegra Stratton, who was then Johnson's press secretary, was shown at a 2020 Downing Street rehearsal for a daily briefing laughing and joking about a reported gathering.

In the video, a Johnson adviser asks Stratton: "I've just seen reports on Twitter that there was a Downing Street Christmas party on Friday night - do you recognise those reports?"

Stratton, standing before British flags at an official Downing Street lectern, says: "I went home." She then laughs and smiles. "Hold on. Hold on. Um. Er. Arh." She appears lost for words and looks up.

Ukraine welcomes Biden-Putin call as path to deterrence and de-escalation

Reuters | Kyiv

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told Reuters yesterday that talks between US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin had enabled "deterrence and de-escalation".

In the first reaction by a senior Ukrainian official about Tuesday's video call between Biden and Putin, Kuleba welcomed US efforts to bring Russia to the negotiating table.

But he added that the priority was drawing up a deterrence package to ward Moscow off any further military escalation.

Ukraine and its NATO allies have sounded the alarm about Russian troop movements near Ukraine's borders this year, sparking worries that a simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine could erupt into open war between the two neighbours.

"The contact itself serves (as) deterrence and de-escalation," Kuleba said in written remarks about Tuesday's call.



Ukrainian servicemen attend a rehearsal of an official ceremony

"We appreciate the crucial diplomatic engagement of the US in efforts to bring Russia back to the table of negotiations."

Biden warned Putin on Tuesday that the West would impose "strong economic and other measures" on Russia if Russia launched a new offensive against Ukraine, while Putin demanded guarantees that NATO would not expand farther eastward.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Gen Bipin Rawat was an outstanding soldier. A true patriot, he greatly contributed to modernising our armed forces and security apparatus. His insights and perspectives on strategic matters were exceptional. His passing away has saddened me deeply. Om Shanti.

@narendramodi

02



In the past years we have strengthened @UNPeacekeeping - deploying new military & police capabilities more quickly & including more women in our work. As we now face the highest number of conflicts since 1945, peacekeeping has never been more relevant & its success more urgent.

@antoniouterres

03



Our prisons have a central role to play in keeping our streets safe by clamping down on the causes of reoffending. That's why we're bringing in tougher security and a focus on rehabilitation - to break the cycle of crime and prevent future victims.

@BorisJohnson

04



The new data from Pfizer on vaccine effectiveness against Omicron is encouraging. This reinforces what my medical advisors have been emphasizing: that boosters give you the highest protection yet.

@JoeBiden

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