

1492

1st Spanish settlement La Navidad in the New World is founded by Christopher Columbus (modern Môle-Saint-Nicolas in Haiti)



1792

Trial of French King Louis XVI, court hears the king's defense brought by Raymond Desèze

1825

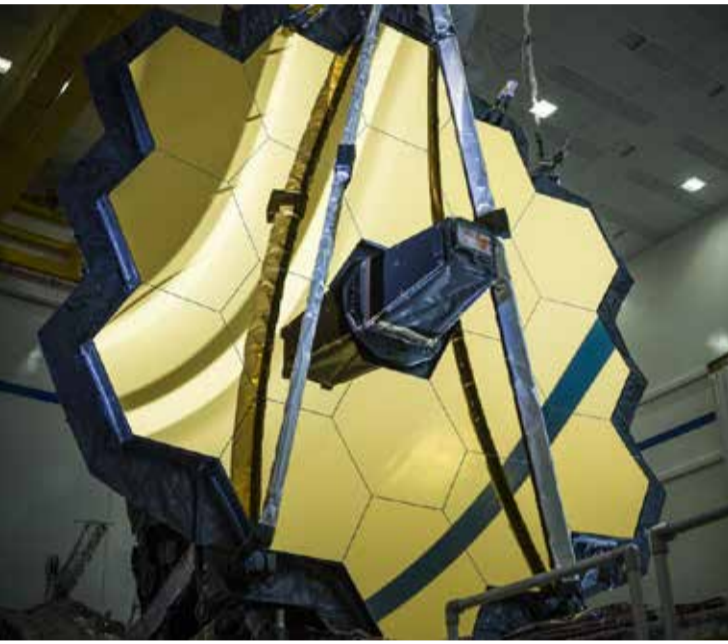
Decembrist uprising in Russia against Tsar Nicholas I begins

2004

9.3 magnitude earthquake creates a tsunami causing devastation in Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Maldives and edges of the Indian Ocean, killing 230,000 people

# Webb's revolutionary new space telescope blasts into orbit

Telescope lifts off on historic mission from French Guiana



The James Webb Space Telescope Mirror is seen during a media unveiling

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

Webb will attempt to look back in time 13.7 billion years, a mere 100 million years after the universe-forming Big Bang as the original stars were forming



Arianespace's Ariane 5 rocket with NASA's James Webb Space Telescope onboard, lifts off

cloudy skies. After a 27-minute, hypersonic ride into space, the 14,000-pound instrument was released from the upper stage of the French-built rocket about 865 miles above the Earth, and should gradually unfurl to nearly the size of a tennis court over the next 13 days as it sails onward on its own.

Live video captured by a camera mounted on the rocket's upper stage showed the Webb gliding gently away after it was jettisoned, drawing cheers and applause from jubilant flight engineers in the mission control center.

Flight controllers confirmed moments later, as the Webb's solar-energy array was deployed,

that its power supply was working.

Coasting through space for two more weeks, the Webb telescope will reach its destination in solar orbit 1 million miles from Earth - about four times farther away than the moon. And Webb's special orbital path will keep it in constant alignment with the Earth as the planet and telescope circle the sun in tandem.

By comparison, Webb's 30-year-old predecessor, the Hubble Space Telescope, orbits the Earth from 340 miles away, passing in and out of the planet's shadow every 90 minutes.

Named after the man who oversaw NASA through most of its formative decade of the 1960s,

Webb is about 100 times more sensitive than Hubble and is expected to transform scientists' understanding of the universe and our place in it.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson, striking a spiritual tone as he addressed the launch webcast by video link, quoted the Bible and hailed the new telescope as a "time machine" that will "capture the light from the very beginning of the creation."

Webb mainly will view the cosmos in the infrared spectrum, allowing it to peer through clouds of gas and dust where stars are being born, while Hubble has operated primarily at optical and ultraviolet wavelengths.

The new telescope's primary mirror - consisting of 18 hexagonal segments of gold-coated beryllium metal - also has a much bigger light-collecting area, enabling it to observe objects at greater distances, thus farther

back into time, than Hubble or any other telescope.

That, astronomers say, will bring into view a glimpse of the cosmos never previously seen - dating to just 100 million years after the Big Bang, the theoretical flashpoint that set in motion the expansion of the observable universe an estimated 13.8 billion years ago.

Hubble's view reached back to roughly 400 million years following the Big Bang, a period just after the very first galaxies - sprawling clusters of stars, gases and other interstellar matter - are believed to have taken shape.

While Hubble caught glimpses of "toddler" galaxies, Webb will reveal those objects in greater detail while also capturing even fainter, earlier "infant" galaxies, astrophysicist Eric Smith, NASA's Webb program scientist, told Reuters hours before the launch.

## India to give COVID-19 booster shots to healthcare workers from Jan. 10



A staff member cleans medical equipment inside a hospital in Ahmedabad

Reuters | New Delhi

India will start administering COVID-19 booster shots as a precautionary measure to healthcare and frontline workers from Jan. 10, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday, as cases of the Omicron coronavirus variant rose across the country.

In a national address, Modi also said those aged 15-18 would start receiving COVID-19 vaccinations from Jan. 3 and those above 60 with comorbidities would be offered booster shots after recommendation from doctors.

"From the point of view of precaution, the government has decided that healthcare and frontline workers should start getting a precaution dose," Modi said in the speech.

India has reported a swift rise in Omicron cases, with the number reaching 415 overall across 17 Indian states.

Modi's government has been accelerating its vaccination campaign, administering at least one dose to 88% of the eligible 944 million population, while 61% have taken both doses.



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



I would like to express my deep gratitude to everyone around the world who has helped save lives and livelihoods this year amid #COVID19. Your service & courage are an example to us all.  
@antoniogeturres

02



The @WHO family and I wish all who celebrate a healthy & happy #Christmas Day! I know this is a challenging time for many. No matter where you are, may this holiday overflow with the gifts of kindness and health. Let it usher in an era of harmony and renewal.  
@DrTedros

03



This Christmas Eve, we're especially grateful for the dedicated first responders and frontline workers who are continuing to care for our communities. @VP and I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday!  
@SecondGentleman

04



Christmas is once again different this year. My thoughts are with all those who cannot reunite with their loved ones because of the pandemic. Let us stay strong. Let us stay safe. Let us have hope. I wish you all a Merry Christmas.  
@vonderleyen

## Protesters march demanding civilian rule in Sudan's capital Khartoum



Protesters march demanding civilian rule in Sudan's capital Khartoum

g for a transition to civilian rule.

Waving flags, beating drums, dancing and chanting, crowds marched on the streets of Khartoum despite a heavy deployment of security forces -- who later fired tear gas canisters to break them up.

Officers had earlier had blocked bridges connecting the capital to suburbs, cut phone lines and restricted internet access ahead of the planned protests. At least 48 people have died

in crackdowns during weeks of protests, according to the independent Doctors' Committee, and Khartoum's state governor has warned that security forces "will deal with those who break the law and create chaos".

Demonstrators converged on the presidential palace in Khartoum, the headquarters of the military government in control since General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan seized power on October 25.

## Queen Elizabeth speaks of missing her husband's 'familiar laugh' at Christmas

Reuters | London

Britain's Queen Elizabeth spoke of the loss of her husband Prince Philip on Saturday, remembering the "mischievous twinkle" in his eyes in an unusually personal Christmas message to the nation.

The 95-year-old monarch said that while Christmas was a time of happiness for many, it could be hard for those who had lost loved ones, and this year especially she understood why, having lost Philip, 99, in April after 73 years of marriage.

His sense of service, intellectual curiosity and capacity to squeeze fun out of any situation were all irrepressible. That mischievous enquiring twinkle was as bright at the end as when I first set eyes on him

QUEEN ELIZABETH



Britain's Queen Elizabeth records her annual Christmas broadcast in the White Drawing Room in Windsor Castle

"His sense of service, intellectual curiosity and capacity to squeeze fun out of any situation were all irrepressible," she said in her traditional pre-recorded festive broadcast, paying tribute to "my beloved Philip".

"That mischievous enquiring twinkle was as bright at the end as when I first set eyes on him," she said.

The queen said she knew Philip would want his family to enjoy Christmas, and there would be joy for them despite the absence of his "familiar laugh".

She delivered her address seated at a desk on which stood a photograph of herself and Philip, standing arm-in-arm and smiling at each other. The photo was taken in 2007, when the couple were marking their Diamond Wedding Anniversary.

For her broadcast, the queen wore a sapphire brooch that she wore on her honeymoon in 1947 and for the Diamond Wedding portrait. Photos of her and Philip at various stages of their lives appeared on the screen while she spoke.

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)