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Omicron variant casts doubt on Canadians' hopes for a Christmas comeback

Megan Scheffers waited until July to celebrate Christmas with her kids after the COVID-19 pandemic kept them apart last winter, but she says decorating candy log cabins just wasn't the same in the dead of summer.

She was hoping to make up for missed traditions this year as two of her three children booked mid-December tickets to fly to Nova Scotia from the Netherlands, where they live with their father.

But as the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus threatens to upend the holiday season, Scheffers said she's worried her 12-year-old and nine-year-old may not make it to Halifax to open their presents.

"All of the decorations, they're still packed away, because I wanted to pull them out when they arrive so we can do it together," Scheffers said.

"Last year, I didn't even put a tree up. This is going to be year number two without a tree 86, and without my children?"

Scheffers is among many Canadians whose holiday plans hang in the balance as mounting anxiety about the Omicron variant dampens excitement for a vaccine-predicted comeback of Christmas merriment.

Nazeem Muhajirine, a professor of community health and epidemiology at University of Saskatchewan, said winter festivities may have to be scaled back as Omicron stokes concerns about the safety of holiday travel and gatherings.

But with so much still unknown about the virus mutation, Muhajirine said there's still hope of salvaging the holiday spirit, encouraging revelers to see how the situation unfolds before scrambling their celebrations.

"I think it's prudent to take a more cautious, measured approach," he said. "But wait and see closer to Christmas Day or New Year's Day before you finalize the plans."

Some scientists have suggested Omicron could be more contagious than other strains of the virus, but Muhajirine said it could take weeks to determine the implications of the new variant, including whether it causes severe illness and whether it can overcome immunity provided by vaccination or infection.

He added that while Omicron has been linked to a dramatic surge in COVID-19 cases in South Africa, it's too early to predict how the variant will spread in Canada, which has a much higher rate of vaccination.

What is clear is that the uncertainty could pose complications for those planning to spend the holidays abroad now that Canada and a host of other countries have tightened border measures in response to the variant's spread, said Muhajirine, warning that international travellers risk getting tangled in testing and quarantine requirements to reach their destination.

Visiting family and friends within Canada is a safer bet, he said, but he suggested that visitors take rapid antigen tests before they arrive and after they leave as an added precaution.

Muhajirine said hosts should also be prepared to rearrange their Christmas dinner tables as provinces roll out their COVID-19 policies for the holiday season.

New Brunswick entered the first phase of its so-called winter action plan on Sunday, which allows for indoor household gatherings of up to 20 people, but the province has advised against inviting individuals who have chosen not to get vaccinated.

Meanwhile, Ontario officials have indicated that they intend to stick with their 25-person limit on indoor get-togethers. Quebec is expected to issue its holiday recommendations this week, but Premier Francois Legault has signalled that he hopes to increase indoor gathering limits to 20 or 25 people, up from the current cap of 10.

For his part, Muhajirine endorsed even more intimate celebrations with single-digit guest lists, and making full vaccination a condition of attendance, to reduce the risk of making this Christmas a loved one's last.

"That is how we can have a safe and smart Christmas this year, and hopefully, next year it will be different."

If that sentiment sounds familiar, it may be because it echoes a common refrain among public health officials who for nearly two years have been entreating Canadians to make short-term sacrifices in the service of a brighter future.

Federal government says Canada border testing contracts worth up to \$631 million

OTTAWA — When Halifax-based blogger and social media influencer Kayla Shortt pulled up to a Canada-U.S. land border last month, she was prepared.

She had all her receipts from her one-week trip to Boston along with her travel documents, proof of vaccination and a negative COVID-19 test from the day before ready to show Canadian officials at the Calais, Maine, crossing.

What Shortt wasn't prepared for was to be selected for a mandatory COVID-19 arrival test — less than 24 hours after completing her last test.

The federal government has awarded three companies with contracts worth up to \$631 million for COVID-19 border testing and other screening services as concerns about the Omicron variant deepen ahead of the busy holiday travel period.

Public Services and Procurement Canada said Switch Health, LifeLabs and Dynacare are carrying out testing of international travellers entering Canada at airports and land border crossings.

The random arrival testing program is part of broader COVID-19 screening and testing being rolled out by the three companies.

While air travellers selected for additional screening are usually directed to an on-site clinic for a test, travellers crossing land borders are usually handed a test to self-administer.

Short said while the intentions of the program are "good on paper," she said trying to complete a test during a pit stop at a New Brunswick hotel room with unreliable internet was "cumbersome and overwhelming."

"The whole thing took me probably two hours from creating an account online and then waiting 45 minutes to speak to someone over a video call with spotty Wi-Fi so they could walk me through the test," she said.

"Then the next day we had to do a detour in Moncton to find a Purulotator drop-off."

Health Canada said it was working on responding to questions about the COVID-19 arrival testing program sent to the department last week. However, a response was not received before deadline on Monday.

Public Services and Procurement Canada spokesman Gabriel Lebourg said Switch Health, LifeLabs and Dynacare provide comprehensive border testing services, including appointment booking, test administration and results management.

They also provide further testing support for temporary foreign workers, refugees, asylum seekers and international students, he said.

Switch Health is responsible for testing in Ontario, Alberta and Atlantic Canada, with a contract value worth up to \$440 million.

LifeLabs is providing testing services in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Yukon with a contract worth up to \$111 million, and Dynacare is operating in Quebec and Manitoba with a contract worth up to \$80 million.

"As of November 30, 2021, the total approved value of the border testing contracts is approximately \$631 million," Lebourg said in an email. "However, since companies are paid for services delivered, this amount may not be fully spent."

Jordan Paquet, vice-president of public affairs with Switch Health, said most of the company's randomized arrival testing at airports is done on-site.

He said the Canada Border Services Agency will put a sticker on a traveller's passport or travel document indicating whether they can proceed directly to baggage claim or stop at the testing site first.

At land border crossings, however, Paquet said travellers who are selected for random screening are provided with a test kit to take with them.

"It would get massively backed up if we stopped people to do the tests in person, especially at the bigger land border crossings like the Detroit-Windsor bridge," he said.

Travellers complete the at-home tests with the help of a Switch Health employee through a video call. They are then directed to get the test in an envelope provided and then in the mail.

"The validity of a test is going to be more guaranteed if someone is

Canada updates travel rules for Canadians flying in from South Africa Eligible Canadians will be able to take a COVID-19 test in South Africa, provided their flight leaves before December 13.

Canada has temporarily tweaked its travel rules to allow Canadians to return home from South Africa without having to do a COVID-19 test in a third country.

Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be able to get a pre-departure test in South Africa, provided they meet all of the following eligibility requirements on the government website:

- Get a pre-departure negative COVID-19 molecular test from an accredited laboratory in South Africa no more than 48 hours before the scheduled departure, or a positive test result from between 14 and 180 days before departure.
- Fly from Johannesburg or Cape Town to Frankfurt, Germany on a Lufthansa flight that departs on or before December 13, 2021.
- Transit through Frankfurt airport to travel on a direct Lufthansa or Air Canada flight to Canada.

The Canadian government made the amendment on Saturday evening, after Canadians spoke out against the new travel rules. Many said the requirement to get tested in a third country prevented them from returning home.

proctoring it online," he said. "It ensures accuracy."

Paquet said the average wait time to be connected with a Switch Health official online is 15 minutes, making Shortt's wait time of 45 minutes longer than usual.

Still, while he acknowledged the inconvenience of being selected for additional testing, he pointed out that self-administering a test from a hotel room is likely preferable for many to standing in line at a testing centre.

Meanwhile, Paquet said the pandemic has shone a light on some of the gaps in the health-care system and has shown that companies like Toronto-based Switch Health can work with governments to improve patient experiences.

"We're not there to replace anything in the health-care system," he said. "Our whole goal as a company is to deliver better health care in general for Canadians and more decentralized diagnostics."

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Canada should join diplomatic boycott of Beijing Winter Olympics: O'Toole

Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole is urging the federal government to join allies in a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics, citing ongoing Chinese human rights violations.

It comes as White House spokesperson Jen Psaki confirmed on Monday that the American government "will not send any diplomatic or official representation" to the Olympic Games next February, citing the regime's "ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses."

O'Toole had questioned earlier in the day that athletes would be a boycott-challenging given the hard work and training put in by Canadian athletes hoping to wear the maple leaf in competition.

"They should also wear our values abroad as well," O'Toole said, noting he has been speaking over the course of months with athletes planning to compete to understand the effects on

them.

"This is an important question and it's something I've struggled with," he added, describing a diplomatic boycott as the best option right now.

"I think that's the best thing we can do alongside our allies to show pressure but not make the athletes pay the price."

NDFP's foreign affairs critic supporting Beijing Olympics NIP Foreign Affairs critic Heather McPherson also voiced her support for diplomatic boycott.

She pointed to the decision by Beijing in March 2021 to impose bans on several Canadian MPs who had worked on a subcommittee report issued in October 2020 which concluded China's persecution of the Uyghur ethnic minority group constitutes a genocide.

"That means that if we did send a diplomatic mission, China in fact is choosing who gets to go on that mission... that, in and of itself, to

me is problematic," said McPherson, who is among those banned.

She also pointed to the vote in the House of Commons in February 2021 in which MPs affirmed the recognition of a genocide taking place by the Chinese government against the Uyghurs.

That motion passed unchallenged, with 266 voting in favour and the Liberal cabinet abstaining.

There were no votes against it.

"I think we need to send a message to Beijing that the world is watching, the world is paying attention, and we are not going to allow this to go unchallenged," McPherson concluded.

What is a diplomatic boycott? A concept of a diplomatic boycott is different from that of a broader boycott.

Whereas a normal boycott typically would see everyone involved in an event pledge not to take part, the concerns around an outright boycott of the Beijing Olympics is that it would unfairly penalize athletes who

Coronavirus: What's happening in Canada and around the world on Monday

All private employees in New York City will have to require their workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19, the mayor announced Monday, imposing one of the most aggressive vaccine rules in the United States.

The move by Mayor Bill de Blasio comes as cases are climbing again in the U.S., and the worrisome but little-understood omicron variant is gaining a foothold in New York and elsewhere across the country.

Normally, participating countries typically do not send official representatives to their governments.

For example, former Canadian governor general David Johnston attended the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for six days as the country's official representative.

But China is facing growing global pressure over its persecution of the Uyghurs, its crushing of internal dissent - including in Hong Kong - and the arbitrary detentions of two Canadians, who have since been released, in what was widely viewed as a hostage-taking.

As well, the regime's disregard and aggression towards the rules-based international order have sharpened concerns among a growing number of countries about the need to come together to challenge Beijing's conduct publicly.



proof of having received two shots of the vaccine, up from the current requirement of one dose. In addition, children ages two to 11 will have to show proof of at least one shot, de Blasio said.

The mayor said he will release more details next week about how the mandate will be enforced.

According to city officials, about 5.9 million adults in New York City have received at least a first dose out of seven million people aged 18 and over. That translates to 84 percent.

Vaccinations are already required in New York City for hospital and nursing home workers and for city employees, including teachers, police officers and firefighters. A vaccination mandate for employees of private and religious schools was announced last week.

De Blasio, who leaves office at the end of the month and has indicated he may seek the nomination for governor of New York next year, has sought to portray himself as a national leader in the fight against COVID-19. His other vaccine mandates have largely survived legal challenges, and he has credited the policy with raising vaccination rates among the reluctant.

The new mandate takes effect days before de Blasio leaves office, and Democrat Eric Adams is due to be sworn in. Evan Thies, a spokesperson for Adams, said in a statement that the mayor-elect "will evaluate this mandate and other COVID strategies when he is in office and make determinations based on science, efficacy and the advice of health professionals."

The Greater New York Chamber of Commerce, which includes some 30,000 businesses big and small, said it supports the tightened measures.

The group's executive director, Helana Nait, said businesses have been hurting since the pandemic closed restaurants, bars and other places and turned busy spots like Times Square into ghost towns.

"Now things are turning around,

and we want to make sure that we don't go backward," Nait said.

What's happening across Canada

"2 Alberta schools notified after 8 new cases of omicron variant confirmed.

"Manitoba youth must now be immunized or tested to play indoor sports.

"ICU admissions in Ontario climb to highest level in 2 months.

"Quebec families with kids in daycare now have access to rapid tests.

"Booster bookings now open for N.B. residents 50 and older.

"N.S. announces 45 new cases, issues several school exposure notices.

"N.L. adds seven new cases over the weekend, but active cases drop to 13.

What's happening around the world

As of Monday, more than 265.9 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, according to a case-tracking database maintained by U.S.-based Johns Hopkins University. The reported global death toll stood at more than 5.2 million.

In Europe, Italy is making life more uncomfortable for unvaccinated people this holiday season, excluding them from indoor restaurants, theaters and museums starting Monday to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and encourage those who are vaccine hesitant to get their shots.

In Asia, high school seniors are returning to their classrooms in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, for the first time in more than six months as the city eases coronavirus restrictions.

In the Americas, Argentina detected its first case of omicron, in a person who had travelled from South Africa, the health ministry said.

In Africa, a Nigerian official on Monday criticized a travel ban imposed on the West African nation by the British government amid fears about the new variant as "punitive, indefensible and discriminatory."

Ontario appoints nine people to task force that will deal with making homes more affordable

Premier Doug Ford says he has appointed nine people to a task force assigned to address housing affordability in the province so that it's "easier for more Ontarians to realize the dream of home ownership."

The Housing Affordability Force will be chaired by Jake Lawrence, CEO and Group Head of Global Banking and Markets at Scotiabank, and will publish a report into its findings in early 2022, the government said.

The task force will look into a number of ways Ontario can increase the supply of rental units, as well as loans for ownership.

The government said the task force will look into ways they can reduce red tape and accelerate building timelines, while also protecting the need to care for the environment.

"Young families, seniors and all hardworking Ontarians are desperate for housing that meets their needs and budget," Ford said in a statement Monday.

According to the government, the task force represents a "diverse range of experts" in not-for-profit housing, Indigenous housing, real estate, home builders, financial markets and economics.

The Housing Affordability Task Force was first announced as part of the "2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Build Ontario," the government said.

Housing prices in Ontario, especially the Greater Toronto Area, continue to skyrocket.

The average price of a semi-detached home in Toronto in November 2021 was more than \$1.4 million, while a detached home was more than \$1.8 million.

Canadian employers, facing labour shortage, accommodate the unvaccinated

OTTAWA, Dec 5 (Reuters) - Canada's tight labor market is forcing many companies to offer regular COVID-19 testing over vaccine mandates, while others are reversing previously announced inoculation requirements even as Omicron variant cases rise.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government adopted one of the strictest inoculation policies in the world for civil servants and has already put more than 1,000 workers on unpaid leave, with thousands more at risk.

Airlines, police forces, school boards and even Canada's Big Five banks have also pledged strict mandatory vaccine policies. But following through has proven less straightforward, especially as employers grapple with staffing shortages and workers demand exemptions.

Job vacancies in Canada have doubled so far this year, official data

shows, and vaccine mandates can make filling those jobs harder, potentially putting upward pressure on wages. That could fuel inflation, already running at a near two-decade high.

"It's already difficult to find staff, let alone putting in a vaccine mandate. You'd cut out potentially another 20% of potential workers, said Dan Kelly, chief executive of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

There are pitfalls to employing the unvaccinated. Companies run a higher risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and many vaccinated employees are uncomfortable working with those who have not had the jab, said industry groups and marketing experts.

At Lada Foods, a Montreal-based soup and sauce maker, president Robert Eisler said he has 14 open jobs, no vaccine mandate and no plans to restrict new hires to the vaccinated.

"I don't know that I want to reduce the (labor) pool, which is already quite low," said Eisler. "We need to attract people to meet the demand. If we don't, our competitors will."

Data released on Friday underpinned Canada's tight labor market, with a hefty 153,700 jobs added in November. It also showed a growing mismatch between available workers and unfilled jobs. And job postings are far above pre-pandemic levels.

The province of Quebec backtracked on a vaccine mandate for healthcare workers last month, saying they could not afford to lose thousands of unvaccinated staff. Ontario, which was also eyeing a mandate, said it would not go ahead.

Toronto-Dominion Bank and Bank of Montreal have both softened their vaccine policy to allow regular testing for workers who missed their Oct. 31 inoculation deadline.

In Canada, 86% of adults are fully

inoculated, though that drops under 80% among 18-40 year olds. At least 15 cases of the new Omicron variant in Canada have been reported in the past week.

John Cappelli, vice president of onsite managed services in Canada for global recruitment firm Adecco, said half of his clients are mandating vaccination with the other half allowing regular testing for the unvaccinated.

But he expects the Omicron variant will prompt more workplaces to get strict on vaccination, even as they grapple with the tightest job market he's seen in his 25-year career.

"We are now starting to see our first workplace (COVID-19) cases in five months," he said.

The number of a Canadian job postings on search website Indeed mentioning vaccine requirements has quadrupled since August.

In the hard-hit manufacturing sector, where 7% of firms say their top concern is attracting and retaining workers, vaccine mandates are more common.

Dennis Darby, CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, said most of Canada's factories have operated safely throughout the pandemic. What CMIE encourages vaccination, "some companies are still using rapid testing if somebody doesn't want to get vaccinated," he added.

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Love Is In The Air! Malaika Arora Gives A Glimpse of BF Arjun Kapoor's 'DND' Mode As She Captures Him, Enjoying His Breakfast In Maldives

Arjun Kapoor made his relationship with girlfriend Malaika Arora official on Instagram with a loved-up picture back in 2019. Both the actors, since then, have been getting stronger and are inseparable. The lovebirds are often seen spending time together on multiple occasions. Arjun and Malaika are currently vacationing in the Maldives and are enjoying every bit of their romantic getaway. They have also been dropping beautiful glimpses of their ways on social media. Malaika, on Sunday, shared a video of Arjun enjoying breakfast. Taking to her Instagram story, the Chaiya Chaiya girl dropped a cute boomerang video that shows the Gunday actor relishing his breakfast. Alongside it, the actress wrote, "DND (do not disturb)... Man on work." Arjun looks dapper in a t-shirt and stylish sunglasses. Malaika also shared a candid photo of herself, while posing for the camera. She also posted a few videos, showing the beautiful hotel that she is staying in and the breathtaking views in the videos.

Earlier, Arjun had shared funny videos of Malaika Arora cycling in Maldives while teasing his ladylove about her cycling skills. One of the videos showed the actress missing her balance as she tries to get down from the cycle. Pulling her leg, Arjun wrote, "As always full of poise & grace. I rest my case. (Malaikaaroraofficial/ig)." Notably, Arjun Kapoor and Malaika Arora have been quite vocal about their love for each other. In an earlier interview, the 34-year-old actor gushed over his relationship with Malaika and asserted that she knows him 'inside out'. While speaking to RJ Siddharth Kannan, Arjun said, "My girlfriend knows me inside out in that way. Even if I hide, she can spot if I've had a rough day or there is something amiss or if I'm in a good mood, she can spot it easily."

Here's what Kapil Dev's family thought of Deepika Padukone's look in '83



The trailer for '83 was released earlier this week and along with it, fans got a glimpse of Ranveer Singh as Kapil Dev and Deepika Padukone as Romi Bhatia. The movie is based on India's first cricket World Cup win in 1983 and is directed by Kabir Khan. The cast of '83 also includes notable names like Panjag Tripathi, Boman Irani, Hardy Sandhu, Anjum Viryk and Saqib Saleem. After the trailer's release, Kapil Dev spoke about his family's reaction to seeing Deepika essay the role of Romi. "I think mixed because I don't know how much the role of my wife is in '83, so one does not realise what they are trying to do there," he told a leading entertainment portal. Kapil also added that Ranveer is a "great actor" and that he was impressed by his work in the movie.

Akshay Kumar wraps Diu schedule of 'Ram Setu', says 'Diu tujhe dil diya'

New Delhi: As Akshay Kumar wrapped the Diu schedule of 'Ram Setu', the actor took a moment to cherish the memories of the "legendary" place. Taking to his Instagram handle on Sunday, Akshay posted a picture of himself in his character, posing in front of a scenic landscape. He added the caption, "Taking back amazing memories of Diu as we end a schedule of #RamSetu. Natural beauty, lovely people, don't miss the famous Pali Kotha fortress-jail at the back. The place is an incredible gem wrapped in history. Diu tujhe dil diya." Fans flooded the post with likes and comments. "Handsome hunk," a social media user wrote. "Can't wait for this film," another added. Apart from Akshay, 'Ram Setu' also stars Jacqueline Fernandez, Sayedev and Nushrat Bharucha in key roles. Helmed by Abhishek Sharma and produced by Aruna Bhatia and Vikram Malhotra, the film is slated to hit the silver screen on Diwali next year. It will be an action-adventure drama that will bring to light a story that is deeply rooted in Indian culture and historical background. Following the film's theatrical release, 'Ram Setu' will soon be available for Amazon Prime members.

Pak vs Ban: Play called off due to rain in Dhaka Test

Play on the second day in the second Test between Bangladesh and Pakistan was called off due to rain at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka on Sunday. Only 6.2 overs of play were possible with a short resumption after lunch before the rain returned, with Pakistan reaching 188-2 after adding 27 from their overnight total. Skipper Babar Azeem was unbeaten on 71 alongside Ashraf Ali on 52. Only 57 overs of play were possible on the first day when Pakistan reached 161-2, with skipper Babar Azeem unbeaten on 60 alongside Aghaz Ali, 36 not out. After the delayed resumption of the game, Ali managed to score his half-century with skipper reaching 71 off 111 balls. Earlier after inspecting the ground several times through the morning, the umpires took the decision to take an early lunch with hopes of play resuming in the afternoon session. Left-arm spinner Tajul Islam (2-49) had bowled brilliantly in the first session on Saturday to put Bangladesh on top after the visitors' somewhat headed toward a big score. Openers Abid Ali and Abdulrahman Shafigue brought up 50-run partnership in the first hour after Babar won the toss and chose to bat first. But Tajul broke the 59-run partnership, taking both wickets with straight deliveries. After his 133 and 91 in the first Test, Abid had appeared set for another big score but fell for 39 when Tajul again struck with a straight delivery that didn't turn as much as he expected. Babar and Azhar survived several tricky moments at the outset of their innings, particularly against Tajul. The hosts could have swung the momentum had Khalid Ahmed not put down a tough chance, offered by Babar on 39 off left-arm spinner Shakhbilal Hassan's bowling. Pakistan led the two-Test series 1-0 after winning the first Test in Chattogram by eight wickets. The visitors fielded an unchanged squad from the first Test while Bangladesh handed Mahmudul Hasan a Test debut and brought in Shakib and Khalid Ahmed in three changes to the team Saif Hassan, Yasir Ali and Abu Jayed were dropped from the opening Test.



Anil Kumble welcomes Ajaz Patel to Perfect 10 club

leg-spinner Anil Kumble gazed back into what was then a one-man club, joining England off-spinner Jim Laker as the only man in Test history to have taken all 10 wickets in a Test innings. He had taken 43 years for Laker to stop feeling lonely at the top. On Saturday, in less than half that time, the Perfect Ten club welcomed its third member at the Wankhede Stadium. When New Zealand's left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel, born in Mumbai 33 summers back, had Muhammad Sinj called by Rachin Ravindra, he ensured that spinners of all ilk populated the restricted atmosphere. Kumble sir, as Ajax endearingly referred to him within minutes of signing up with remarkable figures of 10 in 119, was among the first to congratulate (on social media) the new star, adding, "A special effort to achieve on Day 2 and of a Test match." "This is not something you can plan for as a bowler," Kumble checked and he reflected on what it takes for a bowler to dismiss all 10 opposition batsmen in an innings. "Of course, you plan for every batsman, you think of ways to get them out, but you never go on to the field thinking you are going to take all 10. It's destiny, one of those things that happen. It takes a lot of hard work, bowling long spells, yes, but so many other things need to fall in place. As well as one might bowl, the catches need to go to hand, the fielders need to take those catches. That's what happened with Ajaz, as it happened with me and Laker's bowler." Memories of that wily afternoon at the Ferozshah Kotla came flooding back as Kumble reflected on his emotions after taking 10 for 74 on Day Four against Pakistan, bowling India to a comprehensive 212-run victory. "The first emotion I felt was delight that we had defeated Pakistan," Kumble said. "That was the most important thing, that we won the match against Pakistan and squared the series, especially after how the first Test [in Chennai, which India lost agonisingly by 12 runs] had gone. It was the fourth innings of the match and we were able to celebrate both the moment and the victory on the field, that made it quite special for me."

Ticket prices for Pakistan-West Indies series announced

LAHORE: The National Stadium will be available to fans at 100 per cent seating capacity to watch Pakistan's white-ball home series against the West Indies comprising three T20s and as many ODIs from Dec 13-22. The Pakistan Cricket Board has set the ticket prices for the T20 matches from Rs2,50 to Rs2,000. Seats in the General Enclosures (Intikhab Alam, Iqbal Qasim, Muhammad Brothers, Nasimul Ghani and Waqar Azeem) are priced at Rs250, in First-class Enclosures (Asif Iqbal, Majid Khan, Qaid, Waqar Hassan and Zahoor Abbasi) are for Rs500, in Premium Enclosures (Imran Khan and Waqar Azeem) are for Rs1,000, and in VIP Enclosures (Fazal Mahmood, Hanif Mohammad and Javed Miandad) are for Rs2,000. These tickets can be purchased online (www.bookme.pk), over telephone (0992 313 778 6888) or through box office and M&P outlets. According to the guidelines issued by the National Command and Operations Centre, individuals above 12 are required to be fully vaccinated, while no vaccination is required for the children below the age of 12. The access to the stadium will be granted only on the display of original ticket, CNIC and Nadra-issued immunisation certificate for Covid-19. The two sides will play three ODIs as part of ICC World Cup Super League on Dec 18, 20 and 22, for which the tickets start from Ra100 and go up to Ra1,000. The seats in the General Enclosures are available for Ra100, in First-class for Ra250, in Premium for Rs500 and VIP for Ra1,000.



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