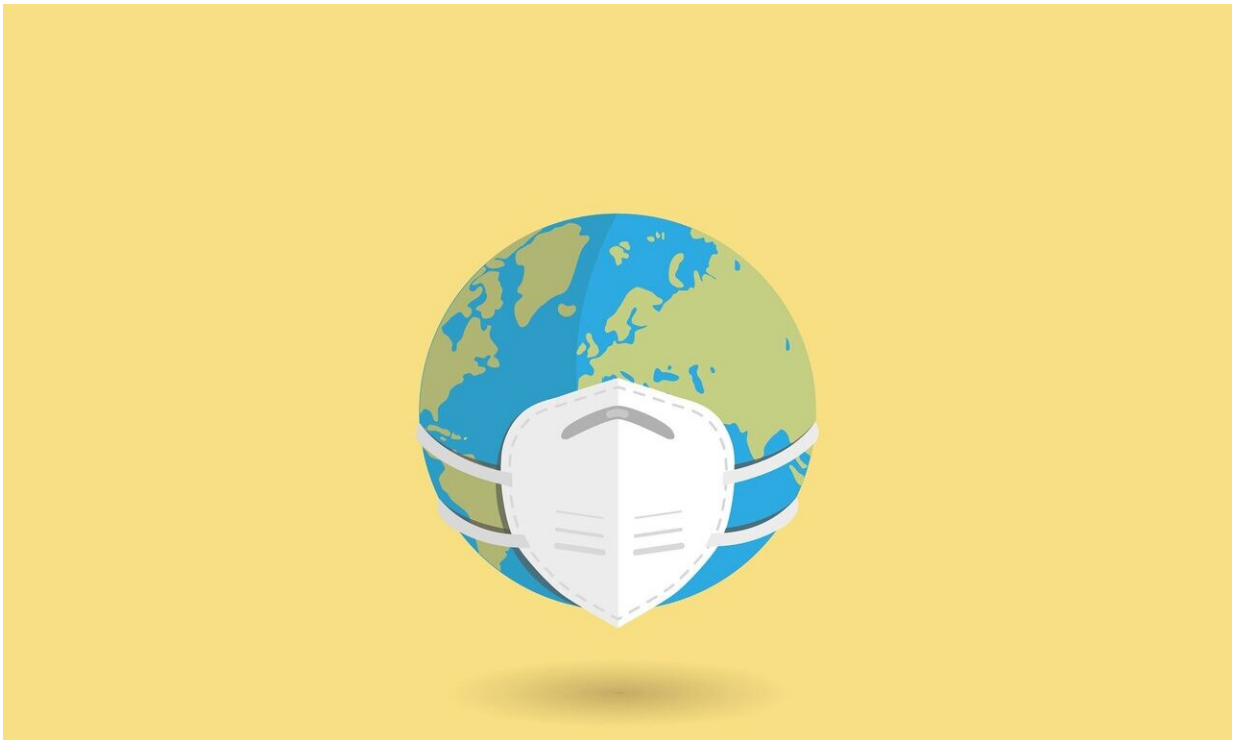


New coronavirus variant not out of control, says WHO

December 21 2020



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The new coronavirus variant discovered in Britain with a higher transmission rate is not yet out of control and can be contained using existing measures, the World Health Organization said on Monday.

"We have had a much higher (contamination rate) at different points in

this pandemic and we've got it under control," WHO's emergencies chief Michael Ryan told a press conference.

"So this situation is not in that sense out of control. But it cannot be left to its own devices."

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock had earlier claimed the new variant was "out of control", with British officials saying it was 70 percent more transmissible than the main strain.

"The measures we currently have in place are the correct measures," Ryan said.

"We need to do what we have been doing, we may just have to do it with a little more intensity and for a little longer to make sure we can bring this virus under control."

Roughly 30 countries shut their borders to people travelling from Britain or South Africa—where another variant has emerged—to stop any further spread.

"In some senses, it means we have to work harder," Ryan said. "Even if the virus has become a little bit more efficient in spreading, the virus can be stopped."

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