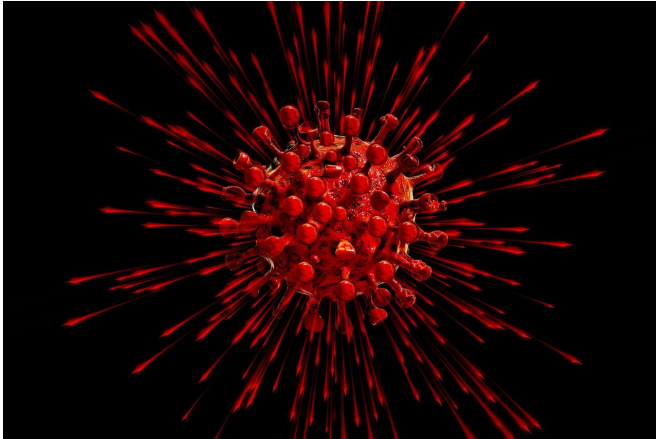


Vietnam COVID cluster caused by UK variant

2 February 2021



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A fresh wave of coronavirus infections in Vietnam was caused by a more contagious variant spotted in Britain, authorities said Tuesday, as they rushed to contain the country's most serious ever outbreak.

Schools have been shut early ahead of the Lunar New Year and hundreds of thousands of people are in lockdown after more than 300 cases were detected in less than a week.

The government said 12 cases have so far been identified as the British variant, which has swept the UK and been found in more than 60 nations.

Prior to the [new cluster](#), Vietnam—population 96 million—had recorded just over 1,500 cases, with the communist country widely praised for its successful handling of the pandemic.

It has reported just 35 deaths.

But the [latest outbreak](#)—which began in the north and has since spread to central and southern areas—is proving more complicated to contain,

authorities say.

"We have been very quick in quarantine and contact tracing... but whether we can eliminate the outbreaks, it depends on the whole political system, authorities and the people," warned Mai Tien Dung, chairman of the government's office.

Hundreds of thousands of people living in areas linked to cases have been ordered to stay at home for at least three weeks.

In Hanoi, where 20 [cases](#) have been recorded, authorities have shut down bars and karaoke parlours, but the [health ministry](#) has urged it to further step up containment measures.

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