

U.K. and South Africa set coronavirus records as Omicron spreads rapidly

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London, December 16 (RHC)-- The United Kingdom has set a daily record for coronavirus cases, with nearly 79,000 infections reported on Wednesday. England's chief medical officer Chris Whitty said the country is suffering two epidemics simultaneously: a wave of cases from the Delta coronavirus variant, plus an unprecedented surge from the fast-spreading Omicron variant.

Whitty said: "This is a really serious threat at the moment. How big a threat, there are several things we don't know. But all the things that we do know are bad, and the principal one being the speed at which this is moving. It is moving at an absolutely phenomenal pace."

South Africa has reported a record number of daily infections fueled by Omicron's spread. However, a relatively muted rise in hospitalizations and deaths is raising hopes that Omicron is producing more mild disease than other forms of the virus.

Canada has warned residents to avoid nonessential travel through the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Meanwhile, German police in Dresden said Wednesday they thwarted a plot by at least six anti-vaccination activists to assassinate the governor of Saxony state, who has backed new lockdowns to battle a surge of coronavirus cases.

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