

# *British prime minister says COVID-19 lockdown may not end until summer*

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Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson talks to members of the media in Manchester. (Photo: AFP)

London, January 23 (RHC)-- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has become more cautious about ending the national coronavirus lockdown, saying that tough measures may continue into the spring and even beyond, as a top scientific adviser compared some hospitals in the country to “a war zone.”

Johnson said that it is too early to say when the tough restrictions will end. “We’re seeing the contagiousness of the new variant that we saw arrive just before Christmas. There’s no doubt it does spread very fast indeed,” he said. Johnson made the remarks as some lawmakers said the prime minister must start easing the restrictions if the mid-February vaccination target was met.

A record 1,610 people have died of COVID-19 across the UK in the past 24 hours as the pandemic continues to surge. Some 24 million people — representing 43% of the population — are currently living under lockdown.

Under the restrictions, non-essential shops, hairdressers and gyms remain closed. The order also includes a warning to stay at home, placing a limit on household mixing to two people outdoors.

Boris Johnson, who previously appeared keen to talk up early exits from the national lockdown, is now committed to review the current countrywide lockdown by mid-February. His government delivered 363,508 vaccines on Wednesday, in a record that took the number of people to have received a first dose to 4.97 million.

The country, however, reported a fresh record in daily deaths for the second day running, hitting 1,820, figures that Johnson has called “appalling.” The daily death toll dropped on Thursday to 1290, but fears still remain that the continued spread of the new variant of the virus keeps spreading across the nation.

The pandemic has so far infected a total number of 3,553,773 people and killed over 94,765 others across the UK, according to Johns Hopkins University.

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