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OPINION | COMMENTARY

Coronavirus Lessons From the Asteroid That Didn't Hit Earth

Scary projections based on faulty data can put policy makers under pressure to adopt draconian measures.

By Benny Peiser and Andrew Montford

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Live data on the coronavirus pandemic is seen in the U.K., March 20.

PHOTO: PETER BYRNE/ZUMA PRESS

London

The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically demonstrated the limits of scientific modeling to predict the future. The most consequential coronavirus model, produced by a team at Imperial College London, tipped the British government, which had until then pursued a cautious strategy, into precipitate action, culminating in the lockdown under which we are all currently laboring. With the Imperial team talking in terms of 250,000 to 510,000 deaths in the U.K. and social media aflame with demands for something to be done, Prime Minister Boris Johnson had no other option.

But last week, a team from Oxford University put forward an alternative model of how the pandemic might play out, suggesting a much less frightening future and a speedy

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