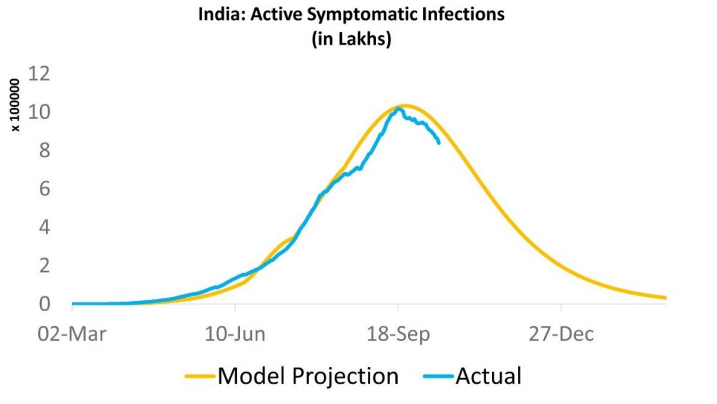
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DST reveals impact of nationwide lockdown to curb COVID-19 infection

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With no lockdown, the pandemic would have hit India very hard, with a peak load of 140+ lakh cases arriving in June



Government of India initiated activities to analyse and predict the spread of the pandemic, and to recommend policy interventions. As a part of this response, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) appointed a committee of experts to collate the collective expertise of the Indian scientific community, and to arrive at a 'COVID-19 India National Supermodel'.

The committee consisted of Prof M Vidyasagar (IIT Hyderabad), Prof Manindra Agrawal (IIT Kanpur), Lt Gen Madhuri Kanitkar (HQ IDS MoD), Prof Biman Bagchi (IISc), Prof Arup Bose (ISI Kolkata), Prof Gagandeep Kang (CMC Vellore) and Prof Sankar K Pal (ISI Kolkata)

The Committee assessed the impact of the lockdown measures that were put in place at the beginning of the pandemic, specifically, whether they reduced the peak load on our healthcare system, and thus gave time to build on our capacity and capability to effectively manage the pandemic.

Based on the mathematical model developed by the Committee, the following conclusions have emerged about the course of the pandemic:

- The number of active cases has peaked at around 10 lakh. However, this number will start rising again if proper practices of masking, disinfecting, tracing, and quarantine are not followed. The downward trend will continue only if we continue with above practices.

The Committee also simulated what would have happened in hypothetical alternative scenarios with regard to the timing of lockdown regime:

- With no lockdown, the pandemic would have hit India very hard, with a peak load of 140+ lakh cases arriving in June. Given our lack of preparedness back then, the healthcare system would have been overwhelmed, leading to many additional deaths.
- Had India waited until May to impose the lockdown, the peak load of active cases would have been around 50 lakhs by June.
- In actuality, the peak of active cases came in late September at around 10 lakhs. By this time, we were far better equipped to handle the pandemic in terms of diagnostics and vital equipment inventories.

The existing personal safety protocols need to continue in full measure. Otherwise we will see a sharp rise in infections.