

STOCKS		COMMODITIES		ASIAN MARKETS				CURRENCIES			
DSEX	CSCX	Gold	Oil	MUMBAI	TOKYO	SINGAPORE	SHANGHAI	USD	EUR	GBP	CNY
▲ 10.29%	▼ 1.55%	\$1,471.00	\$25.82	▼ 2.01%	▼ 1.04%	▼ 4.73%	▼ 0.98%	BUY TK 83.95	90.37	95.43	11.64
3,974.96	6,641.32	(per ounce)	(per barrel)	28,288.23	16,552.83	2,311.00	2,702.13	SELL TK 84.95	94.17	99.23	12.24

**OPENING**  
of  
**TILAGOR SUB-BRANCH**  
March 22, 2020

Din Center  
07 Batatikor, Tilagor  
Sylhet

16491

SIBL  
Sylhet Office

# Star BUSINESS

DHAKA FRIDAY MARCH 20, 2020, CHAITRA 6, 1426 BS • starbusiness@thedailystar.net

## Informal sector in anguish as Dhaka city residents attempt to flatten the curve on coronavirus

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Coronavirus has upended much of the daily life in most parts of the world. And Dhaka, too, is not left behind.

But for daily income earners and street vendors in Dhaka city, who live from hand to mouth, this has been particularly cruel.

"I have never faced this type of situation," said Mohammad Khokon, who earned Tk 300 by pedalling rickshaw for five hours in Dhanmondi area on Wednesday.

His daily earnings began to take a big hit from March 17, when all educational institutions were declared closed for a fortnight, as part of the government's efforts to contain the lethal, pneumonia-like virus that has spread like wildfire across at least 166 countries and territories, striking 222,643 and killing 9,115 after originating in China at the end of last year.

In Bangladesh, the maiden cases were reported on March 7 and since then has increased to 18 and killed one.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

So, social distancing is advocated. Since schools and colleges shut, there has not been much demand for rickshaws.

"Things are progressively getting worse. People offer half the fare that they used to pay previously. I have no other option but to accept it as there are too many rickshaws on the roads," said the thirty-year old Khokon.

He is not alone though. There are: five

lakh rickshaw-pullers; 25,000 CNG-powered auto-rickshaw drivers; ride-hailing motorcycle drivers; street vendors; van-pullers; bus drivers; cobblers -- all on the same boat.

Mantu Sheikh, who runs a CNG-powered auto-rickshaw, began his day at 7:30am and ran the vehicle until 4pm, earning Tk 400 as there were not many people out on the streets as fear of coronavirus reigned supreme.

"This was my worst day," he told The Daily Star in the city's Farmgate area on Wednesday.

He has to pay Tk 900 as rent to the owner of the vehicle every day, but he will be unable to -- that day.

Mohammad Hossain, a 40-year old van-puller, only earns Tk 600 from morning to afternoon after making just a trip, much lower than his average income of Tk 1,500 and Tk 1,800 involving at least three trips.

But it is the street vendors who sell sliced fruits, peanuts, phuchkas, puffed rice and tea are the worst hit.

Fifteen-year old Maruf sells phuchka on the footpath in Dhanmondi. His full-day sales totalled Tk 900, one-third of his regular turnover of Tk 3,000.

Only 50 feet away, Mohammad Selim, a 58-year old tea-seller, has been able to earn Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,000 every day for the last couple of days, whereas it used to be Tk 8,000 to Tk 9,000.

"People are scared to take street food," he said, wondering how long he would be able to keep his only worker amid the slumping sales.

Mainuddin Dipu sells sliced papaya in front of Ananda Cinema Hall in Farmgate. His sales also halved. "Do fruits contain virus?" he asked.

When informed of the possibility of catching the deadly virus, the day labourers and small business owners said they cannot even think of staying in -- they cannot afford to.

"We depend on our everyday sales. Our families depend on our incomes. We can't afford to stop working for a single day," said Md Alam, a 55-year old rickshaw-



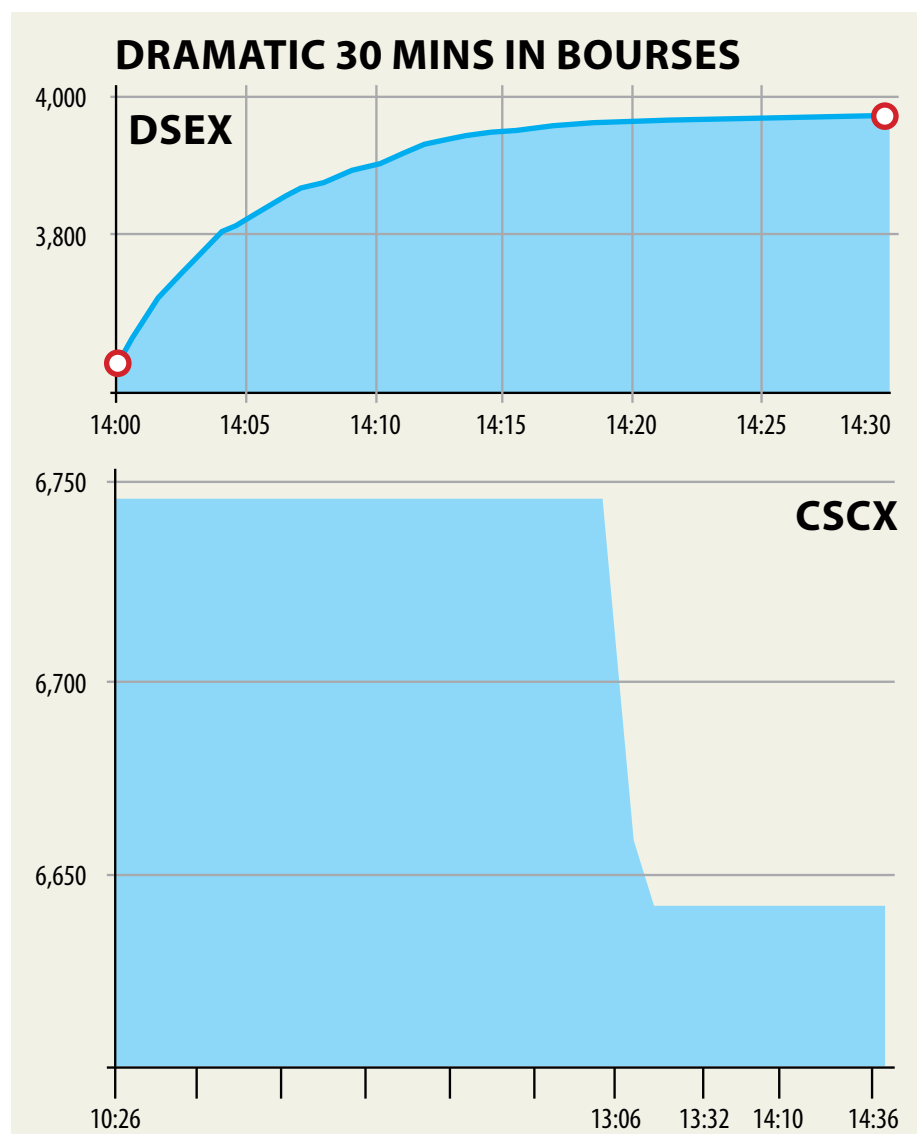
PRABIR DAS

Vendors spend idle time on Dhaka streets as city-dwellers are increasingly opting to stay home to keep safe distance from the coronavirus.

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dbi CERAMICS

## Stocks rose riding on regulator's unprecedented policy



STAR BUSINESS REPORT

It was an extraordinary day at the twin bourses yesterday. On the day that new curtailed trading hours were supposed to take effect, trading did not begin on the usual start time of 10:30am.

In the absence of any clear message from the stock market regulator, the delay left the already nervy investors on tenterhooks.

Trading eventually began at the Chittagong bourse at 1pm and shut 30 minutes later. The window was long enough for investors to make 800 trades and bring

CSCX, the key index of the Chattogram Stock Exchange, 105 points lower at 6,641.

Over in Dhaka, trade did not begin until 2pm and went on for 30 minutes. But, stock investors dived in, sending DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange, soaring 371 points, or 10.29 per cent -- which is the single-day highest jump.

Later, it was learnt that the delayed start was due to the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) recomputed the floor price of stocks, compelled by the recent slide of the bourses on fears of the coronavirus.

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## BB unveils policy measures to ward off coronavirus effects

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The central bank yesterday introduced a set of policy measures to keep financial activities stable as part of its efforts to tackle the crisis stemming from the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

The Bangladesh Bank asked banks not to consider businesspeople as defaulters if they fail to repay instalments until June 30 this year. Banks will have to maintain the credit status of a borrower as of January 30 until June 30.

The country's trade and business has been hit hard by the pandemic of the coronavirus like it caused to the global economy, creating an uncertainty over loan repayment on time.

There is concern that the outbreak, which was first confirmed in Bangladesh on March 8, will hamper the trade and finance and impede job creation, the central bank said in a notice to the

### Loan provision rule eased to help banks boost capital

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday brought ease to the provisioning requirements under the relaxed loan rescheduling policy as part of efforts to strengthen the capital base of banks.

Banks will now be allowed to show 50 percent of their provisions against loans as their capital, according to a central bank notice sent out to all lenders.

The rest of the provisions will have to be kept as "specific provision" and, if the loans are not recovered in the end, the provision amount cannot be shown as income.

Of 58 banks, 15 failed to raise their capital adequacy ratio (CAR) to 12.50 per cent against the risk-weighted assets within the deadline of 2019 set by the central bank.

The latest decision will help banks boost their capital, which will ultimately put a positive impact on the CAR.

As per a roadmap issued by Bangladesh Bank in 2014, banks were supposed to reach the 12.5 per cent mark by December 2019 from the then 10 per cent.

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banks.

The BB asked banks to prepare business continuity plan immediately so that they can run operations in a special situation.

The monthly transition limit using mobile financial services (MFS) has been increased to Tk 200,000 from Tk 75,000. Clients will not fork out any charge for cashing out Tk 1,000 per day.

Merchants will not be charged for settling transactions of Tk 15,000 daily while selling medicines and other essential goods if clients use debit or credit card for payment.

The charge-free transaction limit for merchants is Tk 100,000 per month. The transaction limit using contactless debit and credit cards rose to Tk 5,000 per day from Tk 3,000 previously.

Banks will also have to run automated teller machines (ATM), point of sale (POS), internet

and app-based banking uninterrupted, the BB said.

Lenders will have to supply adequate cash and e-money to cash counters of branches, agent banking outlets, ATMs and agent points of MFS. The points of cash transaction, including ATM booths and POS terminals should be disinfected and provide sanitizer to clients.

In a separate move, the central bank instructed banks to extend the tenure of realising export proceeds by two months to six months.

Many countries, which are the export destinations of Bangladesh, are struggling to survive from the onslaught of the novel coronavirus, a central banker said.

The importers in the affected countries may not be able to clear import payments on time, so the central bank has extended the deadline, he said.

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### Banks, NBFIs embrace work from home as coronavirus fans out

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Banks and other financial institutions are doing their part to flatten the curve on coronavirus in Bangladesh by instructing their employees to work from home.

Since the virus originated in China three months ago and later ravaged the world's second-biggest economy as well as other nations in Europe, Asia and America, most companies in those regions have asked their employees to work remotely to help control contagion.

The concept got traction in Bangladesh after March 8, when the country confirmed its maiden cases of coronavirus infection.

Only 20 per cent employees of IPDC Finance, a non-bank financial institution, are coming to office, while the rest are working from home, said its Managing Director Mominul Islam.

The lender took the decision on Wednesday, which will continue until this month, he said, adding that the NBFIs will extend the duration of the arrangement if required.

Mutual Trust Bank has ordered its divisions, departments and branch heads to plan work from home schedule from March 22.

All the government and corporate bodies have taken necessary steps to address the issue, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of the private commercial bank, in a letter to the heads and branches.

"At MTB too, we need to take important precautionary measures to keep our customers, employees, support staff and our valued stakeholders on MTB premises safe and secure," he added.

To plan the work from home schedule, the availability of 50 per cent of the staff should be ensured at office preferably, the letter said, adding that the employees who are pregnant should stay home until further notice.

Bank Asia has already given leave to one-third of its employees for the next 15 days, said its Managing Director Md Arfan Ali, adding that all training programmes have been suspended too.

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Mohammed Selim, managing director at RDS Properties, and Mahbub Alam, head of sales at Transcom HVAC, a concern of Transcom Electronics, attend a deal signing ceremony in Chattogram recently. RDS Properties will avail Samsung DVM S, a smart system air conditioner, for its project 'RDS Tower Shopping Mall' in the port city from Transcom Electronics, an official distributor of Samsung Bangladesh.

## Saudi Arabia trims 2020 spending amid oil crash

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia will trim this year's budget by around five percent, the finance minister said, in its first austerity measure as the economy reels from the fast-spreading coronavirus and crashing oil prices.

Saudi Arabia is bracing for an economic slump after it shut down cinemas, malls and restaurants, suspended the year-round umrah pilgrimage and locked down eastern Qatif region -- home to around 500,000 people -- in a bid to contain the deadly coronavirus.

The world's top crude exporter also faces plunging oil prices, the mainstay of government revenue, which slipped below \$25 a barrel this week to touch 18-year lows on the back of sagging demand and a price war with Russia.

"The size of the partial reduction ... has reached approximately 50 billion riyals (\$13.32 billion), which represents less than 5 per cent of the total expenditures approved in the budget for 2020," said Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan.

In a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency late Wednesday, the minister added the cuts would have "the

least social and economic impact".

But the economic consultancy Nasser Saidi and Associates has reported the cuts will be deeper, saying the finance ministry has instructed various government bodies to submit proposals to slash this year's spending by 20 to 30 per cent.

The Energy Intelligence Group says the kingdom has asked government bodies to prepare budget scenarios in which crude prices could drop as low as \$12-\$20 per barrel.

The deep-pocketed kingdom, with fiscal reserves of around \$500 billion, has reiterated it is an ultra low-cost producer of crude and can withstand low prices for years.

But Riyadh has posted a budget deficit every year since the last oil price rout in 2014. It has borrowed over \$100 billion and drawn from its reserves to plug the deficit.

Late last year, the kingdom projected a budget deficit of \$50 billion in 2020 as spending was projected at \$272 billion.

The budget shortfall is expected to jump substantially as crude prices decline.

Saudi Arabia needs a crude price of about \$80 a barrel to balance its budget.

# World leaders rush in to shore up panic-hit global financial system

REUTERS, Hong Kong

World finance leaders tried to lift confidence with emergency measures to pour cash into panic-stricken markets on Thursday, as investors everywhere dumped assets, switching to dollars amid the escalating coronavirus pandemic.

Policymakers in the United States, Europe and Asia have slashed interest rates and opened liquidity taps to stabilize economies left almost comatose, with quarantined consumers, broken supply chains, paralyzed transportation and depleted shops.

While finance ministers and central bankers adopted similar strategies, markets and nations where borders were being closed and cities placed in virtual lockdown were further alarmed by bickering between global powers - the United States and China.

There were almost 219,000 cases of coronavirus reported globally, including over 8,900 deaths linked to the virus. Over 20,000 of those cases were reported in the past 24 hours, a new daily record.

China, where the epidemic first started in December, provided a glimmer of hope, as it reported zero new local transmissions of virus, though imported cases surged, accounting for all 34 new cases on Wednesday.

While the economic crisis spawned by the pandemic caused carnage in stock markets, almost every currency, except the euro and safe-haven yen, collapsed against the dollar.

The European Central Bank

launched new bond purchases worth 750 billion euros (\$817 billion) at an emergency meeting late on Wednesday, in a bid to prevent a deep recession that threatened to undo the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

"Extraordinary times require extraordinary action," ECB President Christine Lagarde said, amid concerns that the strains from burgeoning crisis could eventually tear apart the euro zone as a single currency bloc.

In the United States, the Federal Reserve rolled out its third emergency credit program in two days, aimed at keeping the \$3.8 trillion money market mutual fund industry functioning if investors made rapid withdrawals.

On Sunday, the Fed slashed interest rates to near zero and pledged hundreds of billions of dollars in asset purchases, while President Donald Trump's administration drew up a \$1 trillion stimulus and rescue proposal.

US infections were closing in on 8,000, with the death toll climbing to at least 151. Millions of Americans were staying at home.

The desperate state of industry was writ large in Detroit, where the big three automakers - Ford Motor Co, General Motors Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV - confirmed they would be shutting US plants, as well as factories in Canada and Mexico.

The United Kingdom was bracing for the virtual shut down of London as underground train stations across the capital closed and Prime Minister Boris Johnson mulled tougher measures to slow the contagion, with



An empty Times Square is seen on the street following the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in New York City on March 18.

schools set to shut on Friday.

The British pound GBP=D3 plunged to its lowest level against the dollar since 1985, as Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey said he would not rule anything out when asked about printing money to give to individuals.

Australia made a historic foray into quantitative easing after an out-of-schedule meeting on Thursday and cut interest rates for the second time in a month.

"Really nothing is off the table," Australia central bank Governor Philip Lowe said. "We are in extraordinary times and we're prepared to do whatever is necessary."

South Korea warned of a global credit crunch and said it was setting

up crisis funds to stabilize markets.

"We're in this phase where investors are just looking to liquidate," said Prashant Newnaha, senior interest rate strategist at TD Securities in Singapore.

Central banks in emerging countries from Brazil to India have stepped in this week to buy government bonds to prevent a jump in borrowing costs that would put more pressure on their economies.

Despite those moves, which together with other liquidity injections and stimulus announced in recent weeks reached levels unseen since World War Two, nearly every stock market in Asia was in the red, with Seoul, Jakarta and Manila hitting daily loss limits that trigger

the suspension of trade.

The Philippines bourse was down 24 per cent at one point. The Philippine central bank cut its policy rate by 50 basis points and said it was ready to deploy other policy tools as needed. Indonesia and Taiwan also cut rates.

J.P. Morgan economists forecast the US economy to shrink 14 per cent in the next quarter, and the Chinese economy to drop more than 40 per cent in the current one, one of the most dire calls yet on the potential scale of the fallout.

But, it was not just the dire state of the economy that panicked investors. Tensions between the world's two biggest superpowers reached some of their most elevated levels and other powers were locking heads over their reactions to the outbreak.

Trump ratcheted up his rhetoric against China over the coronavirus on Wednesday, saying Beijing should have acted faster to warn the world and dismissing criticism that his labeling it the "Chinese virus" was racist.

Trump's language added to strains between the world's top two economies as their war of words widened to include the global pandemic and media freedoms.

A European Union document seen by Reuters said Russian media have deployed a "significant disinformation campaign" against the West to worsen the coronavirus impact, generate panic and sow distrust.

Russia reported its first coronavirus death on Thursday.

## German business confidence hits 11-year low in March

AFP, Frankfurt

German business confidence fell in March to its lowest level since August 2009, a closely-watched survey showed Thursday, as firms reckon with the likely economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

Falling 8.3 points month-on-month to 87.7 points in a preliminary reading, the Ifo economic institute's monthly barometer based on a survey of 9,000 firms suffered its worst tumble since 1991.

"The German economy is pitching into a recession," Ifo chief Clemens Fuest said in a statement.

Berlin has announced massive measures to support the economy through the virus outbreak, including expanding top-up pay for workers placed on shorter hours, 550 billion euros in guarantees for business loans and a suspension of legal obligations to file for bankruptcy.

"No healthy company, no (worker) should find themselves in trouble," economy minister Peter Altmaier said last week.

But with measures to fight the coronavirus outbreak bringing massive restrictions to everyday life and economic activity, confidence among companies in manufacturing, services and retail all fell sharply, Ifo found, although construction ebbed only slightly.

In a first-of-its-kind television address to the German public late Wednesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel reiterated that Berlin "will do everything it can to cushion the economic impact and preserve jobs."



Mohammed Mahtabur Rahman, chairman of NRB Bank, cuts a cake to launch the bank's mobile banking application, NRB Click, at its corporate head office in Dhaka recently. Md Mehmood Husain, CEO, was present.

## Asia stocks dive, dollar soars as ECB bazooka fails to ease fears

AFP, Hong Kong

Asian equities sank again Thursday while the dollar surged as a European Central Bank plan to spend more than \$800 billion to buy bonds failed to instil optimism in traders who fear that the world is heading for a virus-fuelled economic catastrophe.

In what one analyst said could be a "game changer" for the coronavirus-wracked eurozone, the ECB's so-called Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme aims to give financial markets some much-needed liquidity as investors pull the plug on markets.

It said the 750-billion-euro (\$820-billion) programme was temporary and will be halted when the coronavirus crisis is judged to be over "but in any case not before the end of the year".

After announcing the move, ECB boss Christine Lagarde tweeted that "extraordinary times require extraordinary action. There are no limits to our commitment to the euro." Those comments echoed the words of her predecessor Mario Draghi, whose pledge to do "whatever it takes" to preserve the eurozone was seen as a turning point in the region's sovereign debt crisis.

Asian markets initially climbed on the news but soon tumbled as investors contemplate months of economic hardship with countries around the world in lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which has now infected more than 200,000 people and killed almost 9,000.

Seoul tanked more than eight percent, Singapore dived 4.5 percent and Hong Kong, Sydney, Wellington and Bangkok lost more than three

percent. Tokyo ended down one percent, while Taipei and Jakarta crumbled more than five percent.

Mumbai and Shanghai were more than one percent lower.

Manila plunged almost 25 percent after reopening following a two-day suspension prompted by the outbreak but it later bounced back to sit more than 13 percent down. The sharp losses were in tandem with a surge in the dollar as investors scrambled for cash to pay debts or just stash away.

The pound is now wallowing around its lowest levels since the mid-1980s, while the greenback was up more than six percent against the Australian dollar and more than three percent on the South Korean won.

The US dollar hit a record high above 75 Indian rupees, while the

New Zealand dollar and Russian ruble lost more than five percent.

And AxiCorp's Stephen Innes warned of further turmoil despite the historic moves by banks and governments. "Wartime economics is not going to help with everyone in lockdown sitting at home watching Netflix," he said.

The ECB's bazooka was the latest in a string of measures by central banks and governments aimed at supporting the global economy, which have amounted to almost \$2 trillion.

Still, the measures have not been enough to soothe panic-stricken investors and analysts say more must be done. Soon after the ECB announcement, French President Emmanuel Macron called for more fiscal action from leaders.

## Swiss central bank ups forex intervention, sees negative growth

AFP, Zurich

The Swiss National Bank said Thursday would intervene more strongly on the foreign exchange market to stabilise the Swiss franc as it forecast negative growth for 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The SNB said it was keeping its key interest rate of minus 0.75 per cent unchanged, following its quarterly monetary policy meeting.

The central bank said the coronavirus outbreak posed "exceptionally large" social and economic challenges for Switzerland and that the outlook for the wealthy Alpine country and the global economy had "worsened markedly".

It said its expansionary monetary policy was "more necessary than ever" for ensuring appropriate monetary

conditions in Switzerland.

The bank is "keeping the SNB policy rate and interest on sight deposits at the SNB at minus 0.75 per cent", it said.

"The SNB is intervening more strongly in the foreign exchange market to contribute to the stabilisation of the situation.

"Negative interest and interventions are necessary to reduce the attractiveness of Swiss franc investments and thus counteract the upward pressure on the currency," it added.

In December, the SNB had still expected growth of between 1.5 per cent and two percent for 2020.

But the central bank said the downturn in the international economy and measures to contain the spread of the virus would lead to a

"marked decline" in economic activity in Switzerland in the first half of the year.

It said that once national and international containment measures could be lifted, economic activity was likely to return to normal, albeit gradually.

"Even under this assumption, however, GDP growth is likely to be negative for the year as a whole," the bank said, adding that forecasts were very uncertain in these circumstances.

"The return to normality from the second half of the year onwards could thereafter be reflected in strong positive growth in 2021." The central bank said the Swiss financial system had sufficient liquidity, but the SNB would take "additional steps" to ensure liquidity as necessary.



Pedestrians walk in front of a quotation board displaying the share price numbers of the Tokyo Stock Exchange yesterday.

# No need to panic-buy, says Ctg chamber president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

People should not go for panic buying amid the fear of coronavirus, said Mahbubul Alam, president of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He also urged businessmen and traders not to create any artificial shortage of essential medicines and consumer goods, including sanitisers, masks and handwash, which are witnessing a surge in demand of late. "The situation is still good in Bangladesh," Alam said in a statement.

People should follow all precautions, including avoiding large gatherings, going into self-quarantine in case of cough and cold, cleaning hands with soap or hand sanitiser and using facemasks, to avoid being infected, he said. The country has enough stock of consumer goods to meet the demand during the upcoming Ramadan also, he said. Moreover, many products are also scheduled to arrive from abroad soon, as import is going on in full swing, he said. "So in near future, there will be no shortage of commodities."

# Informal sector in anguish as Dhaka city residents attempt to flatten the curve on coronavirus

FROM PAGE B1

Their plight as Dhaka, a city of two crore, organically goes on lockdown raises the question: should the government provide them with financial support like cash transfer and income supplement. Faced with an unprecedented economic crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak, the Trump administration is considering sending most American adults a check for \$1,000 as part of efforts to stimulate the economy and help workers whose jobs have been disrupted by business closures because of the pandemic. "Americans need cash now, and the president wants to get cash now -- and I mean in the next two weeks," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said at a White House briefing Tuesday. Over in neighbouring India, the state government of Uttar Pradesh, the most

populous state with a population of 200 million and one of the poorest in India, announced on Tuesday that it would make online payments to poor and daily wage workers if they lost work because of the global pandemic that has caused chaos worldwide and badly affected economic activities. Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, suggests something similar for the urban poor. The government can work with some non-governmental organisations like Brac that have experience of working with urban poor in identifying them and better targeting the cash transfer. "There is no proper safety net for urban informal sector in Bangladesh. These people don't know how to cope up with situation if measures like lockdown is taken," he said.

# Airline industry crisis deepens as coronavirus pain spreads

REUTERS, Berlin/Sydney

The crisis for airlines deepened on Thursday as Lufthansa warned the industry might not survive without state aid if the coronavirus pandemic lasts a long time, and Qantas Airways told most of its 30,000 staff to take leave. The United Nations' International Civil Aviation Organization called on governments to ensure cargo operations are not disrupted to maintain the availability of critical medicine and equipment such as ventilators and masks that will help fight the virus. "The spread of the coronavirus has placed the entire global economy and our company as well in an unprecedented state of emergency," Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr said in a statement. "At present, no one can foresee the consequences."

His comments echo other industry executives who have called for state support now that passenger operations are collapsing at an unprecedented rate as governments curb travel drastically and demand slumps. Germany's Lufthansa, which has parked 700 of its 763 aircraft, said it did not need state support yet as it slashes costs, but painted a bleak picture for the industry and its suppliers. Spohr said his company was in talks with planemakers Airbus and Boeing about whether to take delivery of aircraft it had ordered, and on payments. "We had planned this year to receive a new plane every 10 days - now we don't need any," he told reporters. He predicted the industry would emerge into "a different world" after the crisis, saying the need for airline partnerships would only become more pressing. Global airlines group IATA has forecast the industry will need up to \$200 billion of state support, piling pressure on governments facing demands from all quarters and a rapid worsening in public finances as economies slump. Shares in US airlines fell sharply on Wednesday after Washington proposed a rescue package of \$50 billion in loans, but no grants as the industry had requested, to help address the financial impact from crisis.

The Trump administration's lending proposal would require airlines to maintain a certain amount of service and limit increases in executive pay until the loans are repaid. Delta Air Lines said on Wednesday it would park more than 600 jets, cut corporate pay by as much as a half, and scale back flying by more than 70% until demand begins to recover. American Airlines Group Inc in a memo to staff rebuffed criticism it had rewarded its shareholders with too many dividends and stock buybacks in better times, leaving it with less cash to manage the crisis. "Unfortunately, this is no ordinary rainy day," said Nate Gatten, American's senior vice president global government affairs. "These are extraordinary circumstances, and additional support is necessary to protect jobs and ensure that the flying public can continue to rely on our industry after the crisis ends." In Australia, Qantas said it would cut all international flights and two-thirds of its 30,000

workers would need to take paid or unpaid leave. The Australian government is banning the arrival of non-citizens and non-residents starting Friday. Several governments have started to act. Government sources in India told Reuters that the government was planning a rescue package of up to \$1.6 billion to aid carriers battered by coronavirus. India's SpiceJet said on Thursday it was suspending the majority of its international operations from March 21 to April 30, while rival IndiGo asked staff to take a pay cut of up to 20 per cent. Taiwan's Transport ministry said it was inviting its airlines to submit capital requirements and financial plans with the view to giving them assistance, such as rolling over loans and providing operating funds. New Zealand outlined the first tranche of a NZ\$600 million (\$344 million) aviation relief package, as it announced plans to shut its borders to non-citizens and non-residents.



A Lufthansa Airlines jet prepares to land at Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Virginia. AFP/FILE

# West unleashes billions to shield economy in virus 'war'

AFP, Rome

Western powers said they were on a war footing against the coronavirus as they unleashed nearly one trillion dollars to rescue the global economy, with Italy reporting the highest single-day death toll of the pandemic. The spiralling crises in Europe, the United States and other countries contrast sharply with the improving situation in China. China on Thursday reported zero new domestic cases for the first time since the outbreak first erupted in the central city of Wuhan in December. But for most other places around the world, the pandemic was worsening quickly with the number of infections climbing above 200,000 and confirmed deaths nearing 9,000. "I view (myself) as a, in a sense, a wartime president. I mean, that's what we're fighting," Donald Trump said Wednesday as he announced the deployment of military hospital ships to treat a fast-growing number of American patients. German Chancellor Angela Merkel took a similar tone, echoing French President Emmanuel Macron who earlier this week compared the battle to war as he ordered his citizens to stay home. "Not since the Second World War has our country faced a challenge that depends so much on our collective solidarity," Merkel said in a television address. Dire news came out of Italy which reported 475 new deaths, the highest single-day toll of any country. Italy has now recorded more than one-third of global deaths and has shut down all businesses and public gatherings -- steps that have been copied across the world. "The main thing is, do not give up," Italian National Institute of Health chief Silvio Brusaferro told reporters. With countries paralysed by the pandemic and stock markets imploding, policymakers

have this week unleashed a wave of measures to shore up the global economy. The European Central Bank on Wednesday announced a 750-billion-euro bond-buying scheme, days after it unveiled a big-bank stimulus package that failed to calm anxious markets. Trump signed a \$100 billion emergency aid package that sailed through Congress to provide free coronavirus testing for those who need it, sick pay and paid family leave. Trump also invoked a Korean War-era law that allows the government to compel businesses to sign contracts -- which can be used to expand production of necessities such as protective masks. Australia's central bank cut rates to a new record low. However the moves, like other emergency stimulus measures in recent weeks, failed to ease the sense of impending economic doom.

Asian markets took another beating on Thursday, diving by eight percent in Seoul, 4.5 percent in Hong Kong and one percent in Tokyo. With travel bans worldwide, Australia's Qantas airlines said it would halt all international flights while the head of Germany's Lufthansa warned that industry might not survive without state aid. Countries are taking increasingly drastic steps to stem the flow of infections, with Australia and New Zealand on Thursday banning non-residents from arriving. Canada and the US said Wednesday they were closing their border -- the world's longest -- to all but essential travellers for 30 days. Britain, where Prime Minister Boris Johnson had initially chosen a different path, followed the lead of his European counterparts and said schools would shut nationwide from Friday as the death toll topped 100. The European Union this week imposed a 30-day ban on travellers from outside the bloc.



A coronavirus sign is seen in the window of a pharmacy in Liverpool, north west England, on March 18. AFP/FILE

# BB unveils policy measures to ward off coronavirus effects

FROM PAGE B1

Similarly, Bangladeshi importers have been given more time to make import payments. The tenure was extended to six months from existing four months. The central bank has relaxed rules as many exporters manufacture products by importing capital machinery. They will become defaulter if they do not realise export earnings on time. The BB also increased the repayment tenure of loans, which were given out from

the central bank's Export Development Fund, to six months from three months now. The period of back to back letters of credit opened under suppliers and buyers' credit has been extended up to a year from six months currently. A back-to-back letter of credit is usually used in a transaction involving an intermediary between the buyer and seller, such as a broker, or when a seller must purchase the goods it will sell from a supplier as part of the sale to his buyer. Yesterday, four new people were diagnosed with the virus, taking the tally of confirmed cases in Bangladesh to 18, according to the Directorate General of Health Services. One person died of the lethal, pneumonia-like virus on Wednesday. If the coronavirus outbreak worsens, the government will lock down most vulnerable areas of the country, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday.

# Banks, NBFIs embrace work from home as coronavirus fans out

FROM PAGE B1

The decision will come into effect on Sunday. At City Bank, 50 per cent employees will start to work from home from Sunday while the rest will come to offices on a rotational basis, said Managing Director Mashrur Arefin. Its 800-plus direct sales officials have been given leave until March 31, with fixed salary and commissions. Some 80 per cent employees of IDLC Finance, another NBFIs, will work from home from Sunday, said Group Chief Marketing Officer Jane Alam Romel. The decision will be effective for the next 15 days. During the period, customers will be discouraged from visiting branches and will rather be asked to carry out transactions online. Employees of Eastern Bank will run its operation in shifts. Half of the employees of the bank will work from home from Sunday, an official said. Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, said the bank has a well-established Business Continuity Plan covering pandemic outbreaks. "Currently, 30 per cent of our colleagues are either working from home or split operation, to ensure minimal disruption to our services. We are monitoring the

situation everyday and plan to increase percentage of colleagues to work from home, in the coming weeks." Yesterday, four new people were diagnosed with the virus, taking the tally of confirmed cases in Bangladesh to 18, according to the Directorate General of Health Services. One person died of the lethal, pneumonia-like virus on Wednesday. If the coronavirus outbreak worsens, the government will lock down most vulnerable areas of the country, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday. Loan provision rule eased to help banks boost capital FROM PAGE B1 The central bank declared the relaxed facility on May 16 last year, which allowed defaulters to reschedule their classified loans with a down payment of just 2 per cent of the outstanding amount instead of the existing 10-50 per cent. Banks had offered a one-year grace period for defaulters before they had to start paying the installments. Only Tk 536 crore was recovered as down payment, a tiny figure given the total rescheduled amount of Tk 19,119 crore under the relaxed facility.

# Stocks rose riding on regulator's unprecedented policy

FROM PAGE B1

From now onward, the starting point of the two bourses yesterday would be the floor prices of all stocks. The existing circuit breaker, which is a rise or decline of 10 per cent, would stay on. Circuit breakers are regulatory measures to temporarily halt in trading on an exchange when prices hit predefined levels to curb panic-selling or buying. The BSEC move comes following directions from the government in the interest of investors and for the development of securities market, said the stock market regulator. It will remain in force until further notice. This is unprecedented, not just for Bangladesh but for anywhere in the world, said a merchant banker requesting anonymity. "Could shutting down the exchanges stop the market's rot?" No country in the world has seen any improvement because of price setting and

shutting down stock exchanges, he said, while citing the case in the Philippines. The Philippine Stock Exchange plunged as much as 24 per cent in Manila yesterday, bringing this month's loss to about 40 per cent, the worst performer in Asia. The havoc came after an unusual two-day shutdown of the bourse. "We did not know why the bourses' trading was delayed, so we were panicked," said Rashid Hasan, a retail investor. To make matters worse, DSE did not begin trading even after CSE had. "So, it was total chaos," he added. A DSE high official said they were ordered to include a new circuit breaker for every stock, which took time and delayed the start of trading. Meanwhile, from March 22 trading will take place between 10:30am and 1:30pm instead of the regular trading hours from 10:30am to 2:30pm, and will continue until further notice.

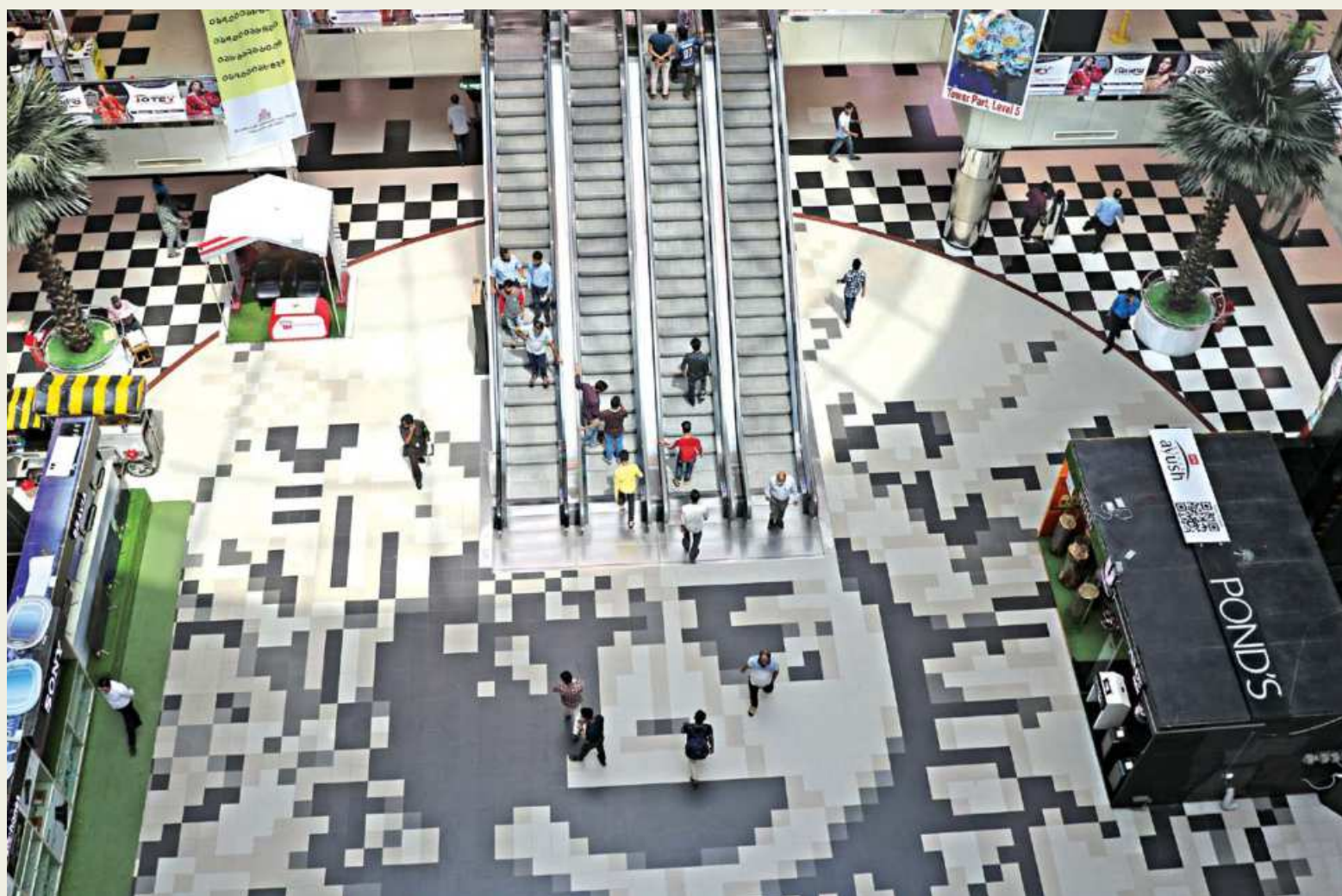
# 25m jobs could be lost globally due to coronavirus: ILO

FROM PAGE B4

The survey also proposes fiscal and monetary policy measures and lending and financial support for specific economic sectors. The rate of unemployment brought on by the COVID-19 will eclipse that of the 2008-09 global financial crisis, which cost 22 million jobs worldwide. Underemployment is also expected to increase on a large scale as the economic consequences of the outbreak translate into reductions in working hours and wages. Self-employment in developing countries, which often serve as a cushion against the adverse impacts on the economy, may not do so this time around due to the recent restrictions on movement. This will affect service providers and the transport of goods. Falls in employment also mean large income losses for workers. The study estimates these as being between \$860 billion and \$3.4 trillion by the end of 2020. This will translate into falls in consumption of goods and services, in turn affecting the prospects for businesses and economies.

Working poor is also expected to witness a significant rise as the strain on incomes stemming from the decline of economic activity will devastate workers who are either close to or below the poverty line, it added. The ILO estimates that an additional 8.8 million to 35 million individuals will be working poor across the globe due to the coronavirus pandemic. The original projection for the working poor class of citizens for 2020 was 14 million worldwide. "This is no longer just a global health crisis; it is also a major labour market and economic crisis that is having a huge impact on the people," said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder in a statement. In 2008, the world put up a united front to address the consequences of the global financial crisis. By doing so, the worst was averted and so, the world now once again needs that kind of leadership and resolve, he added. The ILO report also warned that certain groups could be disproportionately affected by the labour crisis, which could further augment

inequality. These groups include people involved in less protected and lower-paid occupations, women and migrants. Female and migrant workers are particularly vulnerable due to the lack of social protection and labour rights of the country. Besides, women tend to be over-represented in low-paid jobs. "In times of crisis like the one we are in, we have two key tools that can help mitigate and repair the damage on public confidence," Ryder said. "First, social dialogues while engaging with workers, employers and their representatives are vital for rebuilding public trust and support for the measures that we need to overcome this crisis." "Second, international labour standards provide a tried-and-trusted foundation for policy responses that focus on a recovery that is sustainable and equitable. Everything needs to be done in a coordinated manner to minimise the damage done to the people in this difficult time."



## COVID-19 AWARENESS TAKING SHAPE



The government's request to avoid public gatherings to help stem the spread of coronavirus seems to have rung a bell in people's minds. Shopping centres in Dhaka and Chattogram that never seem to go to sleep are now nearly devoid of customers. Although the precaution is a positive turn of events, questions remain over whether the government will provide any type of support for these traders. The photos were taken at, clockwise from top left, Gulistan in Dhaka, Bashundhara City Shopping Mall in Dhaka and Sanmar Ocean City in Chattogram.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS AND RAJIB RAIHAN

## Govt approves revised ADP

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government yesterday approved a planning ministry proposal to slash this fiscal year's development budget by 4.8 per cent from the original outlay mainly due to slow implementation of projects funded by foreign assistance.

Use of foreign assistance in projects under the annual development programme (ADP) has been trimmed down to Tk 62,000 crore from Tk 71,800 crore.

Implementing agencies show more interest in spending government allocations rather than foreign assistance for the accountability and transparency conditions attached

with the latter, say planning ministry officials.

The government portion for the projects is staying the same at Tk 130,921 crore.

The revised allocation for fiscal 2019-20's ADP is now Tk 192,921 crore, which was Tk 202,721 crore in the original budget.

Already Tk 79,785.86 crore or 37.09 per cent of the original allocation has been spent during the July-February period of the fiscal year.

The revision was endorsed at a meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the NEC office at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital.

The approval mandates autonomous bodies and corporations of the state, such as the Chattogram port, to spend Tk 8,277.56 crore out of their own pockets for self-development.

This is basically government money and so if the amount is taken into account, the revised development budget amounts to Tk 201,198.56 crore.

There are now 1,743 projects under the revised development budget. Of those, 1,597 are over investments, 145 technical assistance and one Japan Debt Cancellation Fund, which comprises money that Japan provided earlier and now wants to be diverted into other projects.

## 25m jobs could be lost globally due to coronavirus: ILO

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The economic crisis brought on by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic could cause the loss of about 25 million jobs worldwide, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The initial assessment of a survey carried out by the ILO showed that the COVID-19 will have an adverse impact on businesses across the globe, pushing millions into unemployment, underemployment and working poor.

The report -- the preliminary assessment note, COVID-19 and the world of work: Impacts and responses -- was released yesterday.

Regardless of size, all firms are facing serious complications from the coronavirus fallout such as immense declines in revenue, insolvencies and job cuts, said Tuomo Poutiainen, country director of the ILO Bangladesh.

"Sustaining their day-to-day

operations will be particularly difficult for small and medium enterprises," he said, in a statement to The Daily Star.

Due to the recent travel bans, closing of borders and quarantine measures, many workers are unable to carry out their duties. This has a knock-on effect on income, especially for informal and casual employees.

"Now is the time for solidarity between employers and workers. Only through working together can we find the solutions required for all industries and the economy to be rebuilt as a whole," Poutiainen said.

To better understand how to move forward, it is paramount for firms to engage in dialogues, open communications and reach a common understanding.

While health concerns are the top priority, forward thinking on how to keep the country's economy running smoothly is also needed.

Large-scale and coordinated policy changes should be made to ensure

employment and provide income support. "This would stimulate the economy and labour demand," Poutiainen said.

"If we see an internationally coordinated policy response, as was the case during the global financial crisis of 2008-09, the impact on unemployment caused by the virus worldwide could be significantly lower," said the ILO report.

The report called for urgent, large-scale and coordinated measures across three pillars: protecting workers in the workplace, stimulating the economy and employment and supporting jobs and incomes.

These initiatives require measures such as extending social protection, supporting employment retention and paid leaves.

There are also financial measures that need to be taken. This includes tax relief for all firms, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

READ MORE ON B3

### NEXT STEP

## Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

## Making the most of Microsoft Excel

You can divide your academic life into two phases. One in which you don't know how to use Microsoft Excel and the other where eventually you start discovering it. You start wondering how it could have made your life much easier. I am using the word 'discovering' here simply because to learn every feature of it will probably take an entire lifetime. But the point is that it can do wonders beyond imagination irrespective of you belonging to any discipline. Let us look at some aspects in which you can use this software.

### DATA AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In this age of Big data, excel can serve as a useful tool if not the most. Apart from data entry and creating lists, it offers you a wide variety of flexibility. Now you can even solve optimization problems, do your regression analysis and make financial models. Using two add-ins called solver and regression



analysis, you can make your data analysis much easier.

### CODING

This might come off as a surprise but VBA (Visual Basic Application) lets you write codes in excel. This essentially helps you create small scripts (macros), user-defined functions, add-ins, and games too. Programmers often face this problem of repeating codes that can be mitigated by clicking on the record macro button and the code writes itself in the background. You can also code games like Sudoku, monopoly and even RPG games.

### PRESENTATIONS

Many of us go back to PowerPoints only when we think of presentations. But if your presentation slides require more data clarity, you can always come back to excel to create pie charts, Gantt charts, trends, Diagrams, Mockups, line graphs and many more. One of the most interesting features is Pivot tables which help you create dynamic summary reports from raw data.

SAJID HASNAT

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