



Long beans growing on trellises at Rohobol of Bogura’s Shibganj upazila, where mainly vegetables are cultivated. From a nearby market in Mahasthangarh, the biggest in the north of Bangladesh, 50 to 60 trucks filled with vegetables leave for markets around the country every day. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUI

Russia prepares to seize Western firms looking to leave

REUTERS

Russia is advancing a new law allowing it to take control of the local businesses of Western companies that decide to leave in the wake of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, raising the stakes for multinationals trying to exit.

The law, which could be in place within weeks, will give Russia sweeping powers to intervene where there is a threat to local jobs or industry, making it more difficult for western companies to disentangle themselves quickly unless they are prepared to take a big financial hit.

The law to seize the property of foreign investors follows an exodus of western companies, such as Starbucks, McDonald's and brewer AB InBev, and increases pressure on those still there.

It comes as the Russian economy, increasingly cut-off due to western sanctions, plunges into recession amid double-digit inflation.

Italian lender UniCredit, Austrian bank Raiffeisen, the world's biggest furniture brand, IKEA, fast food chain Burger King, and hundreds of smaller

firms still have businesses in Russia. Any that try to leave face this tougher line.

IKEA, which has paused all operations in Russia, said it was closely following the development. Raiffeisen, said it was assessing all options, including a carefully managed exit. UniCredit declined to comment while Burger King did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The bill paves the way for Russia to appoint administrators over companies owned by foreigners in "unfriendly" countries, who want to quit Russia as the conflict with Ukraine drags down its economy.

Moscow typically refers to countries as "unfriendly" if they have imposed economic sanctions on Russia, meaning any firms in the European Union or United States are at risk.

The European Commission proposed toughening its own stance on Wednesday to make breaking EU sanctions against Russia a crime, allowing EU governments to confiscate assets of companies and individuals that evade restrictions against Moscow.

Meanwhile, in a move that could push Moscow closer to the brink of default, the Biden administration announced it would not extend a waiver that enabled Russia to pay US bondholders.

The departures of western firms have angered Russian politicians. Former president Dmitry Medvedev, who is now deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, has been a particularly vocal critic of western companies who left, attacking "enemies who are now trying to limit our development and ruin our lives".

"The government is interested in preserving jobs and tax revenues," said Sergei Suchanov, a lawyer with risk management and compliance consultancy RSP International.

"First and foremost, the government will apply the rules to big companies. To avoid an administrator, companies must show they are not leaving their Russian businesses in the lurch."

Ulf Schneider, a consultant working with German companies in Russia and an expert in the region with Germany's mid-sized or 'Mittelstand' industry group BVMW, said he and others are

working on proposals to allow foreign companies to voluntarily hand over control to a trustee of their choice.

That could convince Russia they are being responsible while at the same time distancing themselves. "Sale is an option but the conditions for a sale are not good," Schneider said.

The draft law outlines how Russia could appoint an administrator to firms where at least 25 per cent of the shares are in "unfriendly" foreign hands.

It lays down a wide range of criteria for intervention, such as when a company plays a critical role as a local employer or provides important services. It makes clear that the state can justify taking control on many grounds.

The bill cites the example of companies making medical devices but also lists a host of other sectors, such as transport and energy, as well as any firm whose closure could push up shop prices. The state-appointed administrator would also be allowed to sell the confiscated business, while its former owners would be barred from doing business in Russia.

US deficit to drop to \$1t in 2022

AFP, Washington

The US government deficit will fall dramatically this year to \$1 trillion, down from levels not seen since World War II hit during the pandemic, the Congressional Budget Office said Thursday.

The budget shortfall in the current fiscal year will shrink significantly from the prior year, when it reached nearly \$2.8 trillion due to the massive spending pumped out to keep the US economy afloat amid the Covid-19 downturn, which caused massive layoffs and business closures.

BB, Brac Bank sign deal on refinance facility

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Brac Bank has signed an agreement with Bangladesh Bank (BB) to become a participating financial institution of a "Supporting Post Covid-19 Small Scale Employment Creation Project" funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Nurun Nahar, executive director at the BB and the project director, and Selim RF Hussain, managing director of Brac Bank, signed the agreement at the central bank's head office in Dhaka on Wednesday.

"We believe this refinancing facility will help the small-scale entrepreneurs recover from the pandemic," said Hussain in a press release.

Under the agreement, Brac Bank and other financial institutions will avail refinancing facilities amounting to Tk 1,290 crore from the central bank and provide credit at subsidised interest rates to rural entrepreneurs and businesses owned by women along with returnee migrant workers and unemployed youth.

An entrepreneur can avail up to Tk 50 lakh in loans for five years.

Abu Farah Md Nasser, deputy governor of BB, Md Jaker Hossain, general manager for SME and special programmes department, and Dongdong Zhang, principal financial sector specialist of the ADB, and Syed Abdul Momen, deputy managing director of Brac Bank, were present.

Seven Rings Cement's dealer conference held

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Cement manufacturer Seven Rings Cement recently organised the Dealer Conference 2022 at the Palace Luxury Resort in Habiganj with the slogan 'We are the Future'.

Tahmina Ahmed, additional managing director of the cement company, inaugurated the three-day event, where distributors from the northern and southern parts of the country participated, a press release said.

Tamim Iqbal, captain of the Bangladesh one-day cricket team and brand ambassador of Seven Rings Cement, virtually joined the event.

S Raihan Ahmed, a director of the company, Kausar Alam, group chief financial officer, Nantu Kumar Dey, chief technical officer, and Md Harun Ur Rashid, head of marketing, sales and distribution, were present.



Akkas Uddin Mollah, chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd, presides over the bank's 829th executive committee meeting at the lender's corporate head office in Dhaka. Anwer Hossain Khan, Md Sanaullah Shahid, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Khandaker Sakib Ahmed and Md Towhidur Rahman, directors of the bank, Mohammed Yunus, chairman of the board of directors, Abdul Aziz, managing director (current charge), and Md Abul Bashar, company secretary, were present.

PHOTO: SHAHJALAL ISLAMI BANK

Boss is not always right!

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relationship should be "agree to disagree". If you fail to convince your boss about your point of view, then go by the philosophy of 'Agree to Disagree'. It is very important to ensure that you have a space with your boss to share your thought openly.

Globally, research has been carried out to prove that there is a direct relationship between company performance and supervisor effectiveness.

Hence, it is critical for each company to ensure that there is a system of 360-degree assessment of all supervisors or bosses covering both qualitative and quantitative. It will ensure that your boss

always has this axe hanging over his or her head, which will, in turn, determine his growth within the company. So, do not fret if you have been wrongly denied an opportunity or have not been given a voice as part of the team. Wait for the 360-degree appraisal.

This article is more directed toward the company owners or boards as well as the bosses to ensure that they understand the current leadership need and are putting the right systems and processes in place so that bosses create an environment that drives creativity and innovation for the sustainable growth of the business.

It is imperative that a

boss works on building trust and respect on one hand and at the same time, recognise and promote the good work of the team members on the other.

While driving the growth of the business and improving employee engagement based on the above guidelines, please don't make the mistake of applying it at home, where we know who is always the boss!

At home, the rule always remains the same as the saying goes: "The rule no. 1: The boss at home is always right. The rule no. 2: If the boss is wrong, see the rule no. 1."

The author is a telecom and management expert

Customs to auction

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However, 369 luxury vehicles were brought to the Chattogram port between 2008 and 2012 under the facility. By 2013, 249 were released from the port.

Now a majority of the remaining ones are being sold off as neither taxes have been paid against those nor have those been taken back abroad.

Earlier, customs authorities tried holding auctions for these five times but failed to get expected prices due to complexities over the issuance of a clearance permit (CP) by the Ministry of Commerce, a prerequisite for cars over five years old.

Now the CPs for the cars are available and the customs authorities hope to get a good response.

According to the auction tender notice, bidders will

be able to submit related documents at an e-auction link on Bangladesh Customs website or physically in Chattogram, Dhaka and Mongla custom stations between June 12 and 13 this year.

Individual bidders can easily attend the auction submitting their national identity card and TIN certificate while for organisations trade license, VAT registration number and TIN number are required.

"We took several initiatives to ensure transparency in the auction activities and increase general people's participation," Md Al Amin, deputy commissioner of Custom House, Chattogram, told The Daily Star.

"We will organise a learning session and enable physical visits for bidders from June 1," he added.

Stock index rises

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Turnover of the DSE also rose to Tk 539 crore from the previous day's Tk 513 crore.

Imam Button Industries topped the gainers' list, rising 9.93 per cent. Emerald Oil Industries, Apex Tannery, Lub-rref (Bangladesh) and Libra Infusions are on the list.

Pioneer Insurance shed the most, dropping 10 per cent. National Life Insurance Company, Phoenix Insurance Company, Fareast Finance and Investment and Silco Pharmaceuticals are among the other

companies that suffered losses.

Beximco became the stock to be traded the most, with shares worth Tk 60 crore changing hands, followed by IPDC Finance, Fortune Shoes, Bangladesh Shipping Corporation and Bangladesh Finance.

Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) also underwent a falling trend. The CASPI, the share price index of the port city bourse, plummeted 118 points, or 0.65 per cent, to 18,280.

Among the 255 stocks to undergo trade, 132 advanced, 88 fell and 35 remained the same.



Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia Ltd, and Sheikh Rakibul Karim, chief executive officer (current charge) of Guardian Life Insurance Ltd, exchange signed documents of an agreement at Bank Asia's head office in Dhaka over group insurance for the bank's employees.

PHOTO: GUARDIAN LIFE INSURANCE

Bank Asia, Guardian Life sign group life insurance deal

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Guardian Life Insurance and Bank Asia, a role model of agent banking in the country, recently signed a group insurance agreement.

Sheikh Rakibul Karim, chief executive officer (current charge) of Guardian Life Insurance Ltd, and Md Arfan Ali, president and managing director of Bank Asia Ltd, signed the agreement at Bank Asia's head office in

Dhaka, a press release said.

Under this agreement, all the employees of Bank Asia will enjoy health insurance along with life coverage. Mahmud Afsar Ibne Hossain, head of group insurance department at the insurer, Iftekher Ahmed, head of group service, Md Sazzad Hossain, deputy managing director and chief operating officer of the bank, and Esamul Arephin, head of human resources division, were present.



Jashim Uddin, vice-chairman of Dhaka Bank, inaugurated a "Business Review Meeting-2022" for Chattogram region branches at Radisson Blu Chattogram Bay View in the port city recently. Emranul Huq, managing director, Mohammad Abu Jafar, additional managing director, Akhlaqur Rahman, head of corporate banking division, and Sahabub Alam Khan, chief financial officer, attended the event.

PHOTO: DHAKA BANK

Cattle farmers in north

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the government of the situation in a divisional meeting. "We also held discussions with the deputy commissioner to bring the situation under control," he added.

Contacted, Md Ziaul Haque, the deputy commissioner of Bogura, said they are constantly monitoring market prices by conducting mobile court drives in order to decrease fodder prices.

Waliur Rahman Akand, director of the livestock department in Rangpur, said they have instructed local cattle farmers to feed their animals natural fodder in a bid to cut feeding costs.