

Bida OSS now providing 67 services to investors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida) is now providing 67 services to investors through its One Stop Service (OSS) portal, said its executive chairman, Lokman Hossain Miah, yesterday.

At present, 23 agencies are providing the services, he told a meeting with Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) Chairperson Nihad Kabir at the former's office in the capital.

The duo decided to work together to ensure a conducive environment to attract local and foreign investments.

Miah said foreign investors usually first meet local investors. "So, we need to provide proper facilities and business-friendly regulations to support businesses and make local investors happy," he said.

Kabir highlighted various collaborations of the two entities. She also briefed Miah about the BUILD's activities to develop the private sector and shared examples of regulatory bottlenecks that local and foreign investors were facing.

BUILD Chief Executive Officer Ferdous Ara Begum pointed out some activities of the think-tank aimed at easing the process of doing business.

German, S Korean ambassadors visit KEPZ

STAR BUSINESS DESK

German Ambassador to Bangladesh Achim Tröster and South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Lee Jang-keun visited Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) in Chattogram on Saturday.

The duo had a look at establishments inside, including design and development centre Strauss CI Factory Chattogram of German outdoor and sportswear company Strauss which was inaugurated on October 24 last year, said a press release.

Jang-keun invited foreign companies to open factories at the KEPZ, where ICT zones were being established and which was run by 22-megawatt rooftop solar electricity panels connected to the national grid.

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A weaver is working at a handloom in a Rakhine village in Barguna's Taltali upazila to make clothing bags. Weavers in the southern upazila town make various products, including winter shawls, head scarves and shirts, using traditional looms. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Barguna's Rakhine weavers busy making winter clothes

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Rakhine weavers in Barguna's Taltali upazila are passing busy days now as demand for warm winter clothes has surged amid a sharp drop in temperatures.

Weavers in the southern upazila town make various products, including winter shawls, head scarves and shirts as well as bags using handlooms, which are used to weave cloth without the use of any electricity.

Rakhine people traditionally use clothes made using handlooms. But due to the change in times and various other reasons, many have left the profession. Still, handlooms are the source of income for many families.

And the weavers received a boost when the Barguna Zila Parishad set up a market in Taltali upazila in the middle of 2020 to allow women in the community to carry on businesses. As a result, they can now sell their products easily.

There are 12 Rakhine villages in the upazila.

There are about 60 weavers in the villages, clocking sales of Tk 6 lakh to Tk 7 lakh collectively every year, especially during the winter season.

During a visit to Chhaton Para recently, it was found that weavers were busy making various types of clothing items.

Mathin, a 50-year-old Rakhine woman, was making winter clothes in her house in Taltali para. She has been in the trade for almost 40 years.

She mostly weaves shawls for



women as their demand picks up during the winter season. She also makes scarves and shirts.

Mathin takes two days to weave a regular shawl and three to four days to make a design shawl. She sells a regular shawl for Tk 400-450 and a design shawl for Tk 600-700.

Due to the increase in the price of cotton, the price of shawls has also increased. Last year, cotton was available at Tk 200 per kilogramme and now it costs Tk 400.

"Due to winter, the demand for woollen shawls has increased," Mathin said.

She sells shawls in the Rakhine market. Some customers also buy the product directly from her.

Chhaton Para is next to Taltali Para.

Forty-year-old woman Khewen in the village was making bags using design fabrics. Although people from various walks of life are the customers of her bags, the women from the Bede community are the main buyers.

Khewen takes a day to make

The 45-year-old received a one-month training on weaving from a private organisation, namely Resource Development Foundation.

Fifty-year-old weaver Makhen says the market offers them a good opportunity to sell the products they make.

The government has set up the market where all of the 10 shops have been allocated free of charge to Rakhine women entrepreneurs.

"We can sell our products in those shops."

Memechen, a shop-owner in the market, says: "The shop offers me the only source of income."

"We buy and display various products produced by the looms in the Rakhine villages."

Khen, another shop owner, says thanks to the Rakhine market, local weavers have got an opportunity to sell their products and found income-generating activities.

Tourists from different parts of the country visit Rakhine villages round the year, especially when the winter sets in.

"Tourists buy products from us. Besides, many people purchase items online," said Khen.

Hairaj Majhi, a local tourist who came to the market to buy shawls, said he buys winter items every year.

"The products are comfortable and relatively cheap. A shawl produced here costs one-third of those available in the market."

Another customer says people should buy the products made by Rakhine weavers to help them sustain their businesses.

Carbon tax and the journey towards net zero

ARJIT CHAKRABORTI

According to the definition published by the United Nations (UN), the 'net zero' means cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions being reabsorbed from the atmosphere.

The science shows that the global temperature rise must be limited to 1.5°C above the pre-industrial levels to sustain the Earth as a liveable planet. That's why the net zero programme has global significance.

However, changing the behaviour of businesses and consumers in order to meet this objective is going to be a difficult task. Most businesses prioritise the provision of direct financial benefits to their investors, such as revenue and profit. Unless business leaders understand and recognise the benefits of becoming carbon efficient through financial parameters, such priorities are unlikely to change.

One way to address this is by introducing carbon tax. Taxation increases the cost of production of goods and services, thereby influencing businesses to think harder about how they can reduce the cost of taxation.

For instance, a carbon tax could discourage the use of fossil fuels, or the input materials produced by burning fossil fuels, thereby, limiting emissions of CO₂, which is by far the most prevalent greenhouse gas.

Many countries that pledged to reduce their carbon emissions in the 2015 Paris Agreement have started undertaking ambitious targets to achieve net zero goals faster. Due to their ambitious goals, many of them have also started imposing carbon tax on various products and services, such as automotive vehicles that run on gasoline.

As with any emerging nation, the practice of carbon taxation has multilateral impacts on the Bangladesh economy and society. That's why, it is important to understand the various types of impact of carbon taxation and to perform a thorough analysis of the areas where the business organisations of Bangladesh may see the same.

For example, Bangladesh is the world's second-largest exporter of ready-made garments. This sector uses electricity to a great extent, and the supplied electricity is largely produced by burning fossil fuel.

Similarly, the input materials such as fabrics may be manufactured using electricity that is produced through fossil fuel. Collectively, all these factors increase the overall carbon footprint of the garments produced in Bangladesh and exported all over the world.

Many countries, including the countries of the European Union, are contemplating imposing carbon tax for imported items at the time of entry. This will in turn influence the apparel manufacturing companies in Bangladesh to take measures towards carbon reduction, such as using electricity from renewable sources.

While the present electrical power transmission system in Bangladesh does not offer such alternatives, adoption of modern technologies will enable all participants in this system to switch to renewable electricity.

In other words, the imposition of carbon tax might trigger cross-sector modernisation to keep the country's export economy thriving. It's, therefore, important to start planning in order to mitigate the impact of the net zero agenda on Bangladesh's businesses.

The writer is a Partner with PwC. The views expressed here are his own.



5,683 firms receive registration from RJSC in Jul-Dec

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Some 5,683 companies, societies and partnership firms received registration from the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) in the first half of the ongoing financial year.

Of them, 4,298 were companies, 76 one-person companies (OPCs), 122 societies, 1,172 partnership firms and 11 trade organisations, according to the website of the government agency.

The office of the RJSC is mandated to provide name clearances and registration to all public companies, private companies, liaison offices or branches of foreign companies, trade organisations, societies and partnership firms.

In the July-November period, the RJSC earned Tk 138 crore in revenues. Of the sum, Tk 71.23 crore was generated in the form of non-tax revenue, Tk 56.28 crore was in the form of stamp duties, and Tk 10.68 crore was as value-added tax.

As of December, there were 278,277 companies, societies and partnership firms registered with the RJSC. Of them, 3,650 are public limited companies and 201,816 are private limited companies.

Besides, there are 1,041 liaison offices of foreign companies, 54,772 partnership firms, 1,169 trade organisations, 15,629 societies, and 200 OPCs.

OPC means a company formed with only one person as a member, unlike traditional private companies with

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Pump jacks operate at dusk near Loco Hills in Eddy County, New Mexico. Global energy prices dropped last month, led by crude oil, a World Bank report showed.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Global energy prices fall in December

Says World Bank

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Global energy prices dropped 6.2 per cent in December, led by crude oil, according to a World Bank report.

Crude oil prices declined 10.7 per cent in the month.

Non-energy prices gained slightly as declines in food were offset by increases in metals, showed the Pink Sheet, a monthly report of the WB that monitors commodity price movements.

Agricultural prices eased 0.7 per cent in December. Food prices fell 1.5 per cent, led by grains, which were down 4.3 per cent.

Beverage prices changed little while raw materials gained 2.9 per cent. Fertiliser prices declined 6.1 per cent, led by urea, which saw a decrease of 11.8 per cent.

Metal prices gained 6.6

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