

Business Update

F: The time six o'clock and here is Business Update with Jillian Scott.

Unemployment has risen to over three million for the first time in six years and analysts expect the jobless total to rise by a further 40,000 this month. Manufacturing output has meanwhile steadied, after a nought point five percent decrease last month. It is thought that today's rise in the unemployment figures could put pressure on the Prime Minister to cut interest rates, though the Bank of England have denied that this is likely.

Guinness, Britain's largest drinks group, has announced plans to make 700 staff redundant at its United Distillers subsidiary in Scotland. Union officials have said the job losses are unnecessary. John Clemens reports.

M: The redundancies are part of a move by Guinness to improve productivity. But the news of the redundancies has been badly received here in Scotland. I spoke to some of the workers at a United Distillers factory. They say, "It's unnecessary, isn't it? Guinness are always saying we're the world's most profitable spirits company. We're making a profit. We're not making a loss." Some even say, "It's devastating. It will destroy entire communities."

But Guinness strongly deny that communities will collapse as a result of the job losses. They say they will improve investment and business. The group's cost-cutting measures also extend to Spain, where they will make job cuts at Cruzcampo, Spain's largest brewer, employing 30,000 people. Guinness bought Cruzcampo two years ago to expand into the fast-growing Spanish economy. The Spanish beer market shrank by about five percent last year.

F: The tobacco industry had today hit back at the Department of Health about cigarette advertising. They've issued a report arguing that cigarette advertisements do not encourage people to smoke more, and that they only encourage people to switch brands. The report is based on data collected from more than 90 countries around the world. It conflicts with figures issued by the Department of Health last month, which suggested that banning advertisements would result in a drop in consumption. A spokesperson for the tobacco industry said "If a product is legally available, then it should be legal to advertise it."

M: The Conservative MP. David Brown, has called for the government to rise the state retirement age to 67 for both men and women. In a report published today by the Social Market Foundation, Mr Brown argues that raising the pension age would cut at least 7 million pounds from the Social Security budget. He also suggests that some of the savings should be ploughed back into higher state pension for the over-eighties.

F: And that's all for today. The next news is at seven o'clock and we'll be back again at six o'clock tomorrow with Business Update.

Questions:

1. What's the present unemployment figure as reported in six o'clock Business Update?
2. What is the Prime Minister under pressure to do according to the business report?
3. What has Guinness, Britain's largest drinks group, announced plans to do?
4. Which of the following statements is TRUE about Guinness's plans?
5. What can we learn about Guinness's business operations in Spain?
6. The tobacco industry have issued a report about cigarette advertisements containing several arguments. Which of the following is NOT one of these arguments?
7. What should be the state retirement age as recommended by the Conservative MP Mr. Brown to the government?

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