

US wage hikes: real progress for workers or publicity stunt?

AFP, Washington

After turning a deaf ear to pressure for years, US businesses are digging into their pockets to improve the lot of the lowest-paid workers, but also their own images.

Faced with a mounting campaign to address a growing gap between the rich and the poor, and complaints that low wages leave workers dependent on state handouts, some of the largest US employers have announced sweeping wage increases in recent weeks.

After department store Walmart and clothing chain The Gap said they would raise worker pay, this week fast food giant announced a hike for 90,000 of its workers.

The wave of companies showing a greater appreciation for their workforce has even spread to the tech industry. Microsoft announced it would require its contractors to extend paid leave to thousands of people that regularly work for the company but are not Microsoft staff.

The companies have made sure the public takes note. McDonald's took a full-page advertisement out in the New York Times heralding its generosity.

"We're announcing a first step in rewarding the team members who work so hard for our brand every day," it said.

Wal-Mart Stores chief executive Doug McMillon told workers that the world's largest retailer would "continue to provide that ladder that

any of you can climb."

But the moves, which sought to raise hourly wages above the official minimums -- McDonald's promised it would pay an average \$10 an hour by the end of 2016 -- still fell short of a national campaign calling for a \$15 an hour standard.

That raised questions about whether the moves are simply a publicity effort for the firms.

The US labour union federation, the AFL-CIO, which has been fighting for higher wages for retail and food chain workers, dismissed the question.

"It's not essential to figure out whether or not they did it for good reasons. The key issue here is that it rewards months of mobilisation," deputy policy director Kelly Ross said.

The companies could also be responding to fundamental economics. The US economy has been growing steadily and companies have added some 3.4 million jobs in the past year alone, tightening the jobs market somewhat.

"It is a public relations move by the companies, but it comes in a macro-economic context that is pushing up low wages," said Ioana Marinescu, a labor rights expert at University of Chicago.

Michael Strain of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington agreed.

"As the labour market become more competitive, the firms have to increase wages to attract the workers

they want," he said.

At the same time, a debate has mounted over why only the wealthiest Americans have seen income gains while wages and salaries for the lowest 80 percent have stagnated or declined.

Worker groups want the government to address it by forcing up the official minimum wage.

But the political gridlock in Washington leaves the focus on companies. For several years President Barack Obama has pressed Congress without success to increase the federal minimum wage, stuck at \$7.25 an hour since 2009.

Nor has he been able to get enough Congressional support for other benefits common elsewhere, like a minimum paid maternity leave.

"Congress is clearly broken and won't change anything with respect to the labor market," said Jacob Kirkegaard, a researcher at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

He told AFP that companies announcing wage increases get more than a public relations boost.

"If you pay more than the average, you'll have a higher retention rate so you won't have to constantly spend money on training new hires."

Some analysts express worry of the risk that the large firms raising wages will make business harder for small companies with less financial power.

"There's an uneven playing field," Kirkegaard said.

Tesco wins £1.50 compensation over spilt milk

BBC NEWS

Supermarket giant Tesco has won £1.50 compensation from a customer who spilt a bottle of milk in one of its stores.

Shopper Cornelius Price, 40, threw the six-pint bottle in a temper, Llandrindod Wells Magistrates' Court heard.

It was claimed he was verbally abusive and escorted off the premises.

Admitting criminal damage, Price said he threw the milk towards the store manager saying "catch it" but it accidentally spilt.

"He was told to return the milk he was holding and leave the store and he threw it at the floor in temper," said Julie Sullivan, prosecuting.

"£1.50 compensation is requested for the milk."

Phil Sherrard, defending, said: "This is minor criminal damage. He knows he should have been more careful with the milk."

Price was told to pay £1.50 compensation to Tesco, fined £75, ordered to pay £20 victim surcharge and £85 costs. The money will be deducted from his benefits at £10 a fortnight.



BBC NEWS

Sri Lanka's new government has accused the national airline of a culture of corruption.

Sri Lanka alleges 'billions' lost in corruption at national carrier

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's new government has ordered a criminal investigation into alleged corruption at the state-run national airline that it says involved "billions of dollars".

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said an inquiry, led by an anti-corruption lawyer, had found "shocking details of corruption running into billions of dollars" at Sri Lankan Airlines, as well as "irregularities" in its \$2.3 billion 2013 deal to buy 10 Airbus aircraft.

The statement, issued on Saturday, contained no allegations of wrongdoing by Airbus.

Airbus said it had no comment on the Sri Lanka government statement. According to the statement, the inquiry recommended investigations into the national carrier's "entire re-fleeting process".

The statement also said that former airline chairman Nishantha Wickremesinghe, who it identified as a brother-in-law of

former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, "should be prosecuted".

Efforts to contact Wickremesinghe for comment were unsuccessful.

Wickremesinghe resigned as the airline's chairman shortly after Rajapaksa, who had been Sri Lankan president for 10 years, was defeated in a January election by Maithripala Sirisena.

The statement also said staff at the airline had knowingly ignored conflicts of interest with companies and individuals it hired, and that the inquiry found cases of the manipulation of contracts.

It also alleged that Rajapaksa changed the management of the loss-making airline, which is 51 percent government-owned, to ensure the purchase of the Airbus planes despite the availability of cheaper alternatives.

Rohan Weliwita, Rajapaksa's media coordinator, said on Sunday the former president had no comment yet on the government statement.

Office of the Bera Pourashava Important 19 (Nineteen) Pourashava Infrastructure Development Project (INPIDP) District: Pabna

Memo No. BPS/Eng/2015/90 Date: 02-04-2015

Invitation for Tender (Works)

Tender Notice Number: 07/2014-15

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the eligible tenderers as defined in the tender documents for the under-mentioned works as per terms and conditions stated below:

Package No.	Name of works	Tender security (Tk)	Time for completion (days)	Price of tender documents (Tk)
INPIDP/BER/S.T.L/2014-15/98	Installation of street light with G.I. Pole & energy saving bulb shed various roads under Bera Pourashava	3,90,000.00	270	2500.00
INPIDP/BER/K.I.L.M/2014-15/99	Construction of Bera Paura Kitchen Market at Brishhalikha Growth Center	2,90,000.00	270	2000.00

- Procurement method : Open tendering method.
- Source of funds : Important 19 (Nineteen) Pourashava Infrastructure Development Project (INPIDP).
- Date, time and place of pre-tender meeting : Date: 29-04-2015, Time: 11:00am and Place: Office of the undersigned.
- Last date, time and places of selling tender documents : Date: 10-05-2015, Time: 5:00pm and Places: (a) Office of the Project Director, INPIDP, Level-9, RDEC Bhaban, LGED, Dhaka-1207. (b) Office of the Executive Engineer, LGED, Pabna. (c) Office of the UNO, Bera, Pabna. (d) Office of the Upazila Engineer, Bera, Pabna and (e) Office of the undersigned.
- Last date, time and places of receiving tender : Date: 11-05-2015, Time: 12:00 noon and Places: (a) Office of the Executive Engineer, LGED, Pabna. (b) Office of the UNO, Bera, Pabna. (c) Office of the Upazila Engineer, Bera, Pabna and (d) Office of the undersigned.
- Date, time and place of opening of tender : Date: 11-05-2015, Time: 3:00pm and Place: Office of the undersigned.
- Tender shall be valid for a period of 90 days after tender opening and must be accompanied by the tender security specified above in the form of Bank Draft/Pay-Order/Bank Guarantee drawn in favour of Mayor, Bera Pourashava, Pabna. Interested tenderers may obtain further information from the office of the undersigned and purchase the tender documents in Cash/Treasury Chalan/Bank Draft from the places mentioned above. The tenderer or their authorised representatives are allowed to attend the opening of tenders. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever. This invitation for tender is available on the website www.lged.gov.bd/www.lged.cptu.gov.bd

Shah Kh. Ferojul Alam
Executive Engineer (C.C.)
Bera Pourashava, Pabna
Ph: 07323-75229

Gas Transmission Company Limited (A Company of Petrobangla) Red Crescent Borak Tower (Level 2-6 & 8) 71-72, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

গ্যাস জাতীয় সম্পদ এর অপচয় রোধ করে জাতীয় দায়িত্ব পালন করুন।

IFT No. 28.14.0000.163.34.001.15.711 Date: 31 March 2015

Invitation for Tenders

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources/Energy and Mineral Resources Division.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Oil, Gas & Mineral Corporation (Petrobangla).
3	Procuring entity name	Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL).
4	Invitation for	Works.
5	Invitation Ref. No.	28.14.0000.163.34.001.15.711.
6	Date	31 March 2015.
7	Procurement method	NCT; Open Tendering Method (OTM).
8	Budget and source of funds	The source of public funds is: GOB and GTCL (own source).
9	Project name	Maheshkhali-Anowara Gas Transmission Pipeline Project.
10	Tender package No.	Not applicable.
11	Tender package name	Maheshkhali-Anowara Gas Transmission Pipeline Project.
12	Tender start selling date	Date: 05 April 2015 during office hour.
13	Tender last selling date	Date: 10 May 2015 during office hour.
14	Tender closing date and time	Date: 11 May 2015, Time: 12:00 hrs (BST) for all sections.
15	Tender opening date and time	Date: 11 May 2015 Section-A: 12:15 hrs (BST) Section-B: 12:45 hrs (BST) Section-C: 13:15 hrs (BST) Section-D: 13:45 hrs (BST) Section-E: 14:15 hrs (BST)
16	Name & address of the office(s) Selling tender document	Funds Department, Gas Transmission Company Limited, Red Crescent Borak Tower (Level-4), 71-72, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
17	Place of receiving tender document	Board Room, Gas Transmission Company Limited, Red Crescent Borak Tower (Level-6), 71-72, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
18	Place of opening tender document	Board Room, Gas Transmission Company Limited, Red Crescent Borak Tower (Level-6), 71-72, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
19	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting	Board Room, Gas Transmission Company Limited, Red Crescent Borak Tower (Level-6), 71-72, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh, 20 April 2015 at 11:30 hrs (BST).
20	Experience criteria and eligibility of tenderer(s)	- The minimum period of general experience of the tenderer in the construction of Gas Transmission Pipeline Works shall be 10 (ten) years. - Tenderer(s) can participate either individually or in Joint Venture/Consortium/Association (JVCA) and fulfill the following criteria:

Sl. No.	Requirement	Tenderer			Documentation required
		Individual/Single Entity	Joint Venture/Consortium/Association (JVCA)	Partner-in-Charge	
i	Have current and valid enlistment under category 1.4 with Petrobangla or any company of Petrobangla	Must meet	Must meet	Must meet	Enlistment certificate under category 1.4 with Petrobangla or any company of Petrobangla applicable for contractors of Bangladesh origin only. Not applicable for JVCA of foreign origin
ii	Have experience of construction of at least 10km long 24 inch or above outer diameter high pressure (above 350 psig) cross country gas transmission pipeline as prime bidder/partner-in-charge in a single project within the last 10 (ten) years	Must meet	Must meet	Must meet	The tenderer(s) shall submit at least one completion certificate fulfilling this criterion from the client listing in 2.2.1: List of completed works of Form W-2, Section-5: Tender and contract forms failing which the tender shall be treated as non-responsive

21.	Brief description of works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed eligibility criteria are stated in tender document. Tenderer(s) will be evaluated separately for each lot and Notification of Award (NoA) would be accordingly made for four separate lots. A tenderer may participate in one or more lots as described in Sl. No. 23. Tenderer(s) may participate in one or more lots must submitting along with the tender separate set of documents evidencing their capabilities separately for each lot tendered as per the requirement of the tender document in terms of equipment, manpower, liquid assets or working capital or credit facilities and average annual turnover. <p>Section-A: Preparing, clearing and grading of Right-of-Way (RoW), hauling and stringing of pipes, bending and welding of pipes, installation of anchor block, digging the trench, lowering the pipes, crossing of canal, crossing of mangrove forest in tidal area (about 3.00km out of total 6.865km) by making channel, steel sheet piling etc., backfilling of trench/channel, hydrostatic testing, commissioning by nitrogen/natural gas and reinstate of RoW. Section-B/Section-C/Section-D/Section-E: Preparing, clearing and grading of Right-of-Way (RoW), hauling and stringing of pipes, bending and welding of pipes, installation of Anchor Blocks, digging the trench, lowering the pipes, installing valves/pig launcher/receiver stations and special fittings, crossing of canal, ditch, pond etc., backfilling of trench, testing, commissioning by nitrogen and reinstate of RoW. Detailed description of works are stated in tender documents.</p>			
22	Price of tender document (Tk)	Lot-1/Section-A: Tk 10,000.00 (ten thousand) only Lot-2/Section-B: Tk 10,000.00 (ten thousand) only Lot-3/Section-C: Tk 10,000.00 (ten thousand) only Lot-4/Section-D: Tk 10,000.00 (ten thousand) only Lot-5/Section-E: Tk 10,000.00 (ten thousand) only			
23	Lot	Identification of the lot	Location	Tender security amount	Completion time in days
1.	Lot-1/Section-A:	Construction of 30" ODx1100 psig Gas Transmission Pipeline from Zero Point, Maheshkhali to CTMS adjacent to Dhalghatpara Primary School (approximately 6.865km)	Maheshkhali of Cox's Bazar district	Tk 52.00 (fifty-two) lakh only	210 days from the date of site handover
2.	Lot-2/Section-B:	Construction of 30" ODx1100 psig Gas Transmission Pipeline from CTMS adjacent to Dhalghatpara Primary School to West Bank of Koheli River (approximately 17.2 km)	Maheshkhali of Cox's Bazar district	Tk 46.00 (forty-six) lakh only	210 days from the date of site handover
3.	Lot-3/Section-C:	Construction of 30" ODx1100 psig Gas Transmission Pipeline from East Bank of Koheli River to Napura (approximately 23.5 km)	Pekua of Cox's Bazar & Bashkhali of Chittagong district	Tk 62.00 (sixty-two) lakh only	210 days from the date of site handover
4.	Lot-4/Section-D:	Construction of 30" ODx1100 psig Gas Transmission Pipeline from Napura to Banigram (approximately 22.5km)	Bashkhali of Chittagong district	Tk 59.00 (fifty-nine) lakh only	210 days from the date of site handover
5.	Lot-5/Section-E:	Construction of 30" ODx1100 psig Gas Transmission Pipeline from Banigram to Shah Mirpur Valve & Manifold Station (approximately 19.3 km)	Bashkhali & Anowara of Chittagong district	Tk 51.00 (fifty-one) lakh only	210 days from the date of site handover
24	Name of official inviting tender	Engr. Abu Syed Mahmud.			
25	Designation of official inviting tender	Project Director.			
26	Address of official inviting tender	Maheshkhali-Anowara Gas Transmission Pipeline Project, Gas Transmission Company Limited, Red Crescent Borak Tower (Level-8), 71-72, Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.			
27	Contact details of official inviting tender	Telephone No. 8322236	Fax No. 9358100	E-mail: ma_gtcl@yahoo.com	
28	If tenders cannot be received and opened due to any unavoidable circumstances or holiday on scheduled date and time, the same shall be received and opened at the same venue and time on the subsequent working day.				
29	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.				
30	All activities in connection with the said procurement of works will be guided by "The Public Procurement Rules-2008" and "Power & Energy Quick Supply Augmentation (Special Provision) Act, 2010".				

GTPR-51/14-15
GD-1236
Abu Syed Mahmud
Project Director
Maheshkhali-Anowara Gas Transmission Pipeline Project