



Mikael Hemniti Winther, Danish ambassador to Bangladesh, poses with the 19-member business delegation of Denmark, which is now visiting Bangladesh. The Danish team consists of officials from renewable energy, energy efficiency and efficient water management companies.

DANISH EMBASSY

Investors push for more info on lobbying at US companies

AFP, New York

Dozens of major US companies are facing shareholder votes this spring that seek to require more disclosure about political lobbying, as activists demand greater corporate transparency.

Votes are set to take place at more than 40 annual meetings, including those for Boeing, Wells Fargo, Ford, General Electric and Facebook.

The proposals have in many cases been offered before and predate the searing national political debates that have dominated America with the rise and election of President Donald Trump.

But whether or not they have anything to do with broader political dynamics, early tallies in the 2017 season show more investors want to know about corporate spending on lobbying.

About 37 percent of Disney's shareholders voted in favor of a measure on this issue, up five percent from last year's outcome, while Monsanto's vote came in at about 28 percent, up 7.5 percent from a year ago.

There were also modest increases at Emerson Electric and Tyson Foods.

While still a minority of shareholders, these counts are high enough to force management to take notice, corporate governance experts say.

"There's a general discomfort with the notion of corporate funds for political purposes," said Charles Elson, corporate governance chair at the University of Delaware Alfred Lerner College of Business & Economics.

"If it's explained and it's legitimate, there's nothing wrong with it. The question is the trans-

parency."

Companies are already required to account for annual lobbying expenditures in reports to Congress that detail the targeted issues and the amounts spent.

However, proponents of the stepped-up measures say there are no requirements for reporting other aspects of lobbying, such as activities at the grassroots level or donations to trade organizations that lobby.

Activists point to companies like GE and Disney that favor climate change policies and their links to groups like the Chamber of Commerce which have opposed key climate policies.

They argue the companies should disclose their trade group memberships and the amount of money given to those groups that is then used for lobbying.

"Transparency is good for investors and good for companies and it kind of goes to the principle of what gets disclosed gets managed," said John Keenan, corporate governance analyst at public employees union AFSCME, which has been in a leader in pushing for the measures.

In response, companies argue that the additional sunshining is unnecessary and misstates the nature of a company's relationship with a trade group.

"The associations and coalitions to which GE belongs perform many valuable functions," GE said in urging a "no" vote. "Lobbying is not the primary focus of these entities."

"GE may not agree with every position or lobbying action taken by such associations," the company added.

Disney said the proposal would exceed legal disclosure requirements and would "be misleadingly suggestive of the control we exercise over" trade groups.

Some companies have revised their policies following talks with shareholders. Keenan said Wal-Mart Stores agreed to provide lobbying spending by state, while defense company Raytheon increased its disclosures, including providing a list of its trade association dues.

A Wal-Mart spokesman declined to comment on the specifics about negotiations on lobbying disclosures, but said shareholders regularly decide to withdraw proposals following talks with the company.

Raytheon declined comment.

This year, Pfizer strengthened its oversight of lobbying by amending the corporate charter to place the responsibility with the Corporate Governance committee.

As they battle this year's shareholder proposals, large companies through the Business Roundtable, a trade group, are pushing to limit future battles involving activists.

In a letter to National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, the Business Roundtable urged officials to "tighten eligibility" to restrict investors "with insignificant stakes" from making proposals "that pursue social or political agendas unrelated to the interests of shareholders as a whole."

The Business Roundtable argues the current \$2,000 minimum requirement is "no longer a reasonable standard" to get on the ballot and should be raised to at least 0.15 percent at large companies.



Michael Sommer, vice chairman of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), speaks at the launch of the Academy of Work, a three-month training programme in international relations and social partnership for trade unionists, at Lakeshore Hotel in Dhaka on April 20. The training programme is a joint collaboration of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, FES and Brac Institute of Governance and Development.

FES BANGLADESH

IMF members set aside trade split as French vote rattles nerves

REUTERS, Washington

International Monetary Fund members on Saturday dropped a pledge to fight protectionism amid a split over trade policy and turned their attention to another looming threat to global economic integration: the first round of France's presidential election.

Concerns that far-right leader Marine Le Pen and far-left rival Jean-Luc Mélenchon, both critics of the European Union, could top the field in Sunday's vote added to nervousness over US trade policy at the IMF and World Bank spring meetings.

"There was a clear recognition in the room that we have probably moved from high financial and economic risks to more geopolitical risks," IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde told a news conference.

Lagarde, a former French finance minister who has warned that a Le Pen presidency could lead to political and economic upheaval, added that a policy shift from "growth momentum to more sharing and inclusive growth" was now needed.

A communique from the IMF's steering committee on Saturday dropped an anti-protectionism pledge, adopting language from the Group of 20 nations that the Trump administration sought last month in Germany as it develops a strategy to slash US trade deficits. Earlier in the week, the IMF had warned that protectionist policies that restrict trade could choke off improving global growth.

Instead, the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) statement pledged that members would "work together" to reduce global trade and current account imbalances "through appropriate policies."

Mexican central bank chief Agustin Carstens, the IMFC chairman, said most countries have some trade restrictions and that protectionism was an "ambiguous" term.

"Instead of dwelling on what that concept means, we managed to put it in a more positive, more constructive framework," Carstens told a news conference.

Some officials chose to focus on the brightening global economy instead of the risks posed by the French election, new US trade barriers and Britain's decision to leave the European Union, said James Boughton, a former IMF official.

Indian techies, IT firms fret as Trump orders US visa review

REUTERS, Mumbai

For Grishma, an Indian software designer, President Donald Trump's review of the visa programme for bringing highly skilled workers into the United States comes at a bad time.

Fresh from gaining a master's degree in Europe, and with an offer of employment from a well-known US design firm, she was well on her way to fulfilling the ambition of many young Indian IT workers - a dream job in America.

But as she waits in the H-1B visa queue for the green light, she is caught in a bind.

"It's a weird time to be applying, with all the scrutiny," said Grishma, who gave only her first name for fear of jeopardising her chances of getting a visa.

The United States has already suspended the "expedited processing option" for applicants, under which she may have received a visa in weeks.

More broadly, uncertainty over the review announced this week has unsettled Grishma and many others like her.

She will have to wait until at least around August to learn her fate, but having accepted the US job offer she is not in a position to apply for positions elsewhere, including in Europe.

"It's pretty debilitating," Grishma told Reuters. "I'd like to start work to mitigate the financial damage."

Trump's decision was not a huge surprise, given his election campaign pledge to put American jobs first.

But the executive order he signed, though vague in many areas, has prompted thousands of foreign workers already in the United States or applying for visas to work there to re-think their plans. Companies who send them also face huge uncertainty.

The concerns are particularly acute in India, where IT firms like Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys Ltd and Wipro Ltd are top beneficiaries of the H-1B visa programme, using it to send computer engineers to service clients in the United States, their largest overseas market.

Experts say Trump's order to review visa processes is aimed at firms like TCS, Infosys and Wipro, which from 2005-14 snagged around 86,000 H-1B visas, roughly equiva-

lent to the number of H-1B visas the United States issues in total each year.

Two industry sources said Infosys, India's No. 2 information technology (IT) services company, is applying for just under 1,000 H-1B visas this year, which one of the sources said was down from 6,500 applications in 2016 and some 9,000 in 2015.

It was not clear whether the sharp reduction in 2017 was in direct response to Trump's presidency, although the company has said for some time it wanted to cut dependence on "fly-in" staff.

TCS, Infosys and Wipro said they would not share data on the number of H-1B visas they had applied for this year.

With fewer visas going to Infosys, more might become available for smaller IT companies and big US tech companies, like Facebook and Microsoft Corp, that typically send in fewer H-1B applications each year.

US-based immigration lawyer Murali Bashyam, managing partner of Bashyam Spiro LLP which advises and works with small to mid-sized Indian IT firms, said clients had been in contact seeking clarity, while the number of visa applicants had fallen.

"I think the reason for that is they get the sense that it's going to get so much tougher to comply with all of the changes ... that it might not be worth their money," he said.

"There is a fear that radical immigration changes are coming, and if those radical immigration changes come then it could completely change the way IT staffing companies do business."

Bashyam said the number of people on H-1B visas already working in the United States who were considering returning to their home country had risen.

An engineer working at Cisco, who has been in the United States since 2011, said that three months ago he would not have considered returning to India.

But the review of the visa system, and any rule change that revoked the right for his wife to work in the United States on a dependent visa, could force him to change his mind.

"If that happens, then I would definitely be interested in going back to India. Even though I'm secure, I don't want to be in a situation where my wife cannot work," said the engineer, who declined to be named.



Masudur Rahman, chief financial officer of Rankstel, hands over a cheque for Tk 4 crore as licence fee for up to June 2017 to Ashish Kumar Kundu, director for accounts and finance at Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, at a programme.

RANKSTEL

পশ্চিমাঞ্চল গ্যাস কোম্পানি লিমিটেড
(পেট্রোবাংলার একটি কোম্পানি)
প্রধান কার্যালয়ঃ নলকা, সিরাজগঞ্জ

পাবনা শহর ও তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকায় জরুরি গ্যাস শাট ডাউন বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা পশ্চিমাঞ্চল গ্যাস কোম্পানি লিমিটেড-এর আওতাধীন পাবনা শহর ও তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকার সম্মানিত সকল শ্রেণীর গ্রাহকগণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, নির্মাণাধীন ঈশ্বরদী-ঢালার চর রেলক্রসিং-এ গ্যাস পাইপ লাইন প্রতিস্থাপন কাজে গ্যাস শাট ডাউনের জন্য নিম্নে বর্ণিত ছক অনুযায়ী গ্যাস সরবরাহ বন্ধ থাকবেঃ

ক্রমিক নং	রেলক্রসিং-এর স্থান	গ্যাস সরবরাহ বন্ধের তারিখ	গ্যাস সরবরাহ বন্ধের সময়	গ্যাস সরবরাহ বন্ধের এলাকা
০১.	সিংগা উত্তর পাড়া রোড	২৪/০৪/২০১৭ইং	বিকাল ৩:০০টা হতে রাত্রি ১১:০০টা	সিংগা উত্তর পাড়া মহল্লা ও তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকা।
০২.	মহেন্দ্রপুর, পাবনা-নগরবাড়ী রোড	২৫/০৪/২০১৭ইং হতে ২৬/০৪/২০১৭ইং	রাত্রি ১০:০০টা হতে ভোর ৬:০০টা	পাবনা পৌরসভা ও তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকা। স্কয়ার ফুড এ্যান্ড বোভারিজ, স্কয়ার পেট বোতল ও ২টি সিএনজি স্টেশন চালু থাকবে।
০৩.	মেরিল রোড	২৬/০৪/২০১৭ইং	বিকাল ৩:০০টা হতে রাত্রি ১১:০০টা	মেরিল রোড, সরকার পাড়া সহ তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকা।
০৪.	মহেন্দ্রপুর, পাবনা-নগরবাড়ী রোড	২৭/০৪/২০১৭ইং হতে ২৮/০৪/২০১৭ইং	রাত্রি ১০:০০টা হতে ভোর ৬:০০টা	পাবনা পৌরসভা ও তৎসংলগ্ন এলাকা। স্কয়ার ফুড এ্যান্ড বোভারিজ, স্কয়ার পেট বোতল ও ২টি সিএনজি স্টেশন চালু থাকবে।
০৫.	স্কয়ার টয়লেট্রিজ	২৮/০৪/২০১৭ইং	বিকাল ৩:০০টা হতে রাত্রি ১১:০০টা	সুধুমার স্কয়ার ফুড এ্যান্ড বোভারিজ ফ্যাক্টরী।
০৬.	লক্ষরপুর-কবিরপুর রোড	২৯/০৪/২০১৭ইং	বিকাল ৩:০০টা হতে রাত্রি ১১:০০টা	লক্ষরপুর ও কবিরপুর এলাকা।

সম্মানিত গ্রাহকগণকে গ্যাস সরবরাহ বন্ধকালীন সময়ে গ্যাসের চুলা/সরঞ্জাম বন্ধ রাখার জন্য অনুরোধ করা গেল। গ্যাস সরবরাহ পুনরায় চালু করা হলে রান্নাঘরের/ছাপনার দরজা-জানালা খুলে চুলা/সরঞ্জামাদি জ্বালানোর জন্য পরামর্শ প্রদান করা হল।

পিজিপিআর-৪১/২০১৬-২০১৭
জিডি-৮৫২

ধন্যবাদান্তে
পশ্চিমাঞ্চল গ্যাস কর্তৃপক্ষ

মোটরযানে সংযুক্ত অননুমোদিত বাম্পার, এ্যাঙ্গেল, চোখালো-ধারালো ছক এবং বাম্পার সংযোজনের জন্য ড্রাইভার কেবিনের সম্মুখস্থ চ্যাসিসের বর্ধিত করা অংশ অপসারণ সংক্রান্ত বিআরটিএ'র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

মোটরযান বিশেষ করে বাস, মিনিবাস, ট্রাক, কভার্ডভ্যানের সামনে-পেছনে অননুমোদিতভাবে বাম্পার ও দুপাশে তিনকোণা লোহা/স্টিলের পাত (এ্যাঙ্গেল) লাগিয়ে আকার/আকৃতি বা কাঠামো পরিবর্তন এবং ট্রাকের বডিতে সংযুক্ত চোখালো-ধারালো ছক অপসারণের বিষয়ে বিআরটিএ'র পক্ষ থেকে ইতিপূর্বে সতর্ক করে ব্যাপক প্রচার করা হয়েছে। কিন্তু লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে কোন কোন মটরযানে এসব বিপজ্জনক অবৈধ সংযুক্তি এখনও অপসারণ করা হয়নি। সারাদেশে মোটরযানে উক্ত অবৈধ সংযুক্তির বিরুদ্ধে ভ্রাম্যমান আদালত পরিচালিত হচ্ছে।

অনতিবিলম্বে বাস, মিনিবাস, ট্রাক, কভার্ডভ্যানের সংযুক্ত বর্ধিত বিপজ্জনক সংযুক্তিসমূহ অপসারণের জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট মোটরযানের মালিকগণকে পুনরায় অনুরোধ করা হলো।

পরিচালক (এনফোর্সমেন্ট), বিআরটিএ

জিডি-৮৫১