



PHOTO: AFP

A Palestinian protester uses a slingshot to throw back at Israeli soldiers a tear gas canister during clashes in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, near Ramallah yesterday following a protest against the confiscation of Palestinian land to expand the nearby Jewish settlement of Hallamish.

# US eases investment curbs on Myanmar

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama Thursday eased investment sanctions on Myanmar and named the first US ambassador to the country in 22 years, seeking to reward an easing of "iron fist" rule.

But Obama, seeking maximum leverage on Myanmar's nominally civilian government and to preserve his options in case of "backsliding," maintained wider US sanctions on Myanmar and figures linked to the former junta.

"As an iron fist has unclenched in Burma, we have extended our hand, and are entering a new phase in our engagement on behalf of a more democratic and prosperous future for the Burmese people," Obama said in a statement.

The US government will now license certain types of investment in financial

services and allow US businesses to work in Myanmar, though will ensure that those who abuse human rights and seek to slow progress do not benefit.

"It is a recognition of progress, it is a recognition that opening up greater economic engagement between our two countries is important to support reformers," a US official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Obama also said however that current sanctions law would stay on the books to encourage further reform and to allow a speedy reimposition of tough measures if needed.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who made a historic trip to Myanmar in December, also pressed the authorities to release more political prisoners, after meeting Myanmar Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin.

The US decision could usher in the first major trade and investment between the United States and

Myanmar for years, and help pry open a backward economy left behind by speeding Southeast Asian development.

The US government will maintain restrictions on investment with the military, which has deep commercial interests in the country's economy.

Obama also nominated Dere Mitchell, who has been serving as the State Department's special representative to Myanmar, as US ambassador, pending confirmation by the US Senate.

Washington withdrew its ambassador to Myanmar, also known as Burma, after a crackdown on a democracy uprising in 1988.

A statement from Republican Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell and his party colleague Senator John McCain pointed to strong bipartisan support for Obama's approach on Capitol Hill.

## NEWS IN brief

### US grants visa to Castro's daughter

AFP, Washington

The United States Thursday defended its decision to grant a visa to the daughter of Cuban President Raul Castro, saying there was no blanket ban on visits by officials from the communist state.

Mariela Castro, a sexologist who backs gay rights, is due to attend the annual conference of the Latin American Studies Association on May 23-26 in San Francisco.

Some US lawmakers criticized the move, however.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio, whose parents emigrated from Cuba to the United States, blasted the decision as an "outrageous and an enormous mistake."

White House spokesman Nuland declined to



Mariela Castro

## Students take O-level exams

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exam at 11:30am the very next morning.

During a visit to the British Council compound in Dhaka University campus on Thursday midnight, The Daily Star correspondent found 37 students taking the examination.

"This type of situation brings mental anguish [for the students]," said Hasibul Hossain, a parent residing in the capital's Dhanmondi.

His son had to sit for an exam on Thursday midnight and another on the very next morning.

"The [political] leaders of the country should pay some attention to the convenience and inconvenience of the common people," Hossain added.

The opposition parties are expected to announce more political programmes and general strikes in the coming weeks, threatening to disrupt the ongoing O-

level examinations that are scheduled to end in June.

Unlike the SSC and HSC examinations that are administered nationally, the O and A-level examinations are governed by international bodies, which hold the test in different countries within a certain timeframe.

If the tests are not taken within that time, the examinees would have to wait for around six months to appear for the next session of the exams that take place twice a year.

"The examinations need to be held within a certain time on a scheduled date," said Monzoor Hussain Mamun, school exams Manager at Edexcel International--one of the two institutes that administer the exams in the country.

If the exam is not taken within that time, the examinees would have to wait for the next session and reregister to sit for the exam,

hesaid.

Thursday's incident was not the first time when O and A-level examinations had been rescheduled for late night due to a general strike.

"I am reappearing in a couple of exams that I could not take last time due to illness," said Sajidur Rahman, a private student appearing for the O-level exam this year.

"I have already wasted six months, and cannot afford to lose another six months. I hope there will be no hartal during the exam time," he added.

Earlier last month, several tests of the ongoing HSC and equivalent examinations were also rescheduled due to a series of general strikes.

Meanwhile, Thursday's scheduled exams of HSC were postponed due to a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal. The exam was held yesterday following a decision of an inter-board coordination committee meeting on Thursday.

## S Lanka's ex-army chief gets bail

AP, Colombo

A Sri Lankan court has granted bail for the country's ex-army chief and presidential candidate in one of the cases against him. The move is seen as a step toward a full presidential pardon.

Sri Lanka's high court set Sarath Fonseka's bail at \$8,000 in a case where he is accused of harboring army deserters. His lawyer Saliya Peiris said Friday that Fonseka was also asked to surrender his passport.

However, Fonseka will not be free immediately because he is serving a 30-month jail term after being convicted by military court martial of engaging in politics while still serving the army.



PHOTO: AFP

Ameerah Haq, left, the top UN representative in Dili, shakes hand with outgoing East Timor's President Jose Ramos Horta after receiving the presidential medal for her service in East Timor yesterday ahead of the country's 10th anniversary of independence tomorrow. The top Bangladeshi technocrat was made the under secretary general of the United Nations in April, 2012.

## 5,000 workers cheated over work permits

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present the documents," added Sirajul, who is also managing director of recruiting agency -- Akhwan Trade International Ltd -- back in Bangladesh.

Tenaganita said it lodged the case on the basis of complaints made by 32 defrauded workers that indicated some 5,000 Bangladeshi workers, who sought services from Akhwan Group, were victims of gross deception and now remain in a highly vulnerable situation facing arrest and detention.

In its complaint to police, the rights body said the deception began when Malaysia started its amnesty

programme on August 1 last year to allow irregular foreign workers to get regularised or leave the country without facing penalties.

To avail themselves of the opportunity, irregular foreign workers had to get registered with the private companies authorised by the immigration department. Then, the workers had to submit applications to the department along with their passports. The deadline for submitting applications expired on April 10 this year.

About 2.7 lakh irregular Bangladeshi workers got registered. Many already obtained work permits and the others are waiting for it.

According to a press statement of Tenaganita, Akhwan Group was not appointed by the Malaysian government to register irregular workers, but it used 11 biometric machines that it borrowed from two authorised companies -- Sri Jaya Perkasa Sdn Bhd and Framco Sdn Bhd.

The company (Akhwan) advertised publicly offering registration of workers and arranging passports [who needed] and work permits under a package. Then, it registered an estimated 5,000 irregular migrants in various parts of Malaysia, said Tenaganita.

"Despite paying exorbitant sums, to date, none of

the migrants who came forward to Tenaganita have passports, work permits or any legal documents [that prove Akhwan submitted applications to the immigration department for work permits]," Tenaganita Executive Director Irene Fernandez told this correspondent who visited Malaysia recently.

She said Sirajul Amin also threatened workers with arrest, detention and deportation. He could do so because he had kept their passports in his possession.

Md Arshad, a victim, told this correspondent, "We are afraid of arrest. We could not send home money for

months since we had to pay charges for work permits. And you can see our plight now."

There were also other allegations against Akhwan, Irene Fernandez said. According to rules, irregular workers had to mention the names of their employers while getting registered, and that no worker should be registered under the outsourcing companies that supply workers to other companies, she mentioned.

Tenaganita said it found evidence that many workers, who had employers, were registered under the two outsourcing companies -- Sri Jaya Perkasa and Framco Sdn Bhd -- from which

Akhwan borrowed biometric machines to register workers.

Akhwan also registered workers showing that Payungmas Cleaning Services and Ladang Gemilang Maju Sdn Bhd are their employers. Sirajul registered these companies in Malaysia in partnership with a few Malaysian citizens in September last year, Tenaganita said.

"Are these bogus companies? Workers do not know... To date, none of these workers are working in any of these companies," the Tenaganita statement said, asking the police to conduct a thorough investigation into the matter.

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|--|----------------------|---|
| <b>1. Leadership Development</b>           |                      |   |
| June 03-14<br>09:30 - 13:30                | Dhaka<br>Tk. 4,000/- | A.H. Mostafa Kamal Khan<br>Cell : 01715111719<br>E-Mail :                       |
| <b>2. Human Resource Management</b>        |                      |   |
| June 24- July<br>05, 2012<br>09:30 - 13:00 | Dhaka<br>Tk. 5,500/- | Mohd. Mainul Islam<br>Cell : 01720462202<br>E-Mail : mainul0786@<br>yahoo.co.in |

Courses mentioned above are suitable for Managers / Executives of public and private sector organizations NGOs and individuals. The course is also suitable for the people not yet in service. Interested person/organization may apply. For details visit our website.

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## Four H Group

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