

Israel, PLO sign partial agreement on self-rule

CAIRO, Feb 10: Israel and the PLO have signed a partial agreement on details of Palestinian self-rule and Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank, reports Reuter.

"We came feeling like sphinxes and we leave feeling like pyramids. We didn't know what would happen and now feel that something important did happen," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in a speech after the signing cer-

Serbs reject NATO ultimatum

PALE, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Feb 10: Bosnia's Serbs today rejected NATO's ultimatum to end their siege of Sarajevo and said their heavy weapons would not be removed from around the city, reports AP.

"Despite this ultimatum, the Serb artillery will not move an inch," said their main spokesman, Miroslav Toljoh. "We are ready to retaliate."

He called the NATO threat

GENEVA, Feb 10: Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said on Thursday his forces around Sarajevo would implement an agreement to withdraw its artillery and put it under United Nations control, reports Reuter.

to hit Serb positions with air strikes if the artillery is not pulled back within 10 days as "a terrorist threat" and said the Serbs would respond "by all means" to any attack.

"From the first air strikes, war will spread throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina and degenerate into world war III," he added.

JS session adjourned

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Siraj, who had worked with late Makhan closely during their university days, demanded that the normal proceedings of the House be adjourned immediately to take an obituary reference for the late former MP.

He also demanded that the government take necessary steps to ensure a heroic burial befitting a valiant freedom fighter.

At this stage Deputy Leader of the House Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury took the floor to support Siraj's views and urged the chair to adjourn the House as a mark of respect to the departed leader. The Deputy Leader also requested the chair to allow some legislators of both the Treasury and Opposition benches to say a few words in honour of late Makhan.

The Deputy Speaker, who was presiding over the scheduled question-answer session, suspended the proceedings to mourn the death.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdu Samad Azad, acting Chief Whip Mahbubul Alam Tara, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Abdul Mannan, Rahmat Ali of the Awami League and Ebadur Rahman of the Jatiya Party spoke on the occasion.

Donors favour reforms

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The reform programmes may create hazards in some cases, but there is no alternative to going ahead with the reform programmes for reaching the cherished goal, and it is essential to continue the ongoing process, they asserted.

They viewed that Bangladesh was undergoing political and economic transition. Establishment of parliamentary democracy, ensuring rule of law and other political reforms have been possible due to consensus between the opposition and the government parties, they noted.

It is necessary to strengthen the process of collective consensus in the field of economic reforms, the representatives said.

Expressing the government's firm vow to continue the implementation of the reform programmes, the Finance Minister said for achieving higher growth and alleviation of poverty the reform programmes are essential.

A balance has been established in the economy paving the way for private investment. The government will continue its efforts to eliminate the barriers to private investment, he said.

The Finance Minister, who is Chairman of the Board of Governors of the World Bank and IMF, sought cooperation of all in forging consensus among all groups which is needed for creating a congenial atmosphere of investment in the country.

He informed the meeting that steps had been taken to overcome the weaknesses in

economy in the Egyptian presidential palace on Wednesday night.

"We could have gone the Bosnia way, to fight, shoot and kill. Instead we went our way, to agree to find common ground, to tell the Israelis and the Palestinians that we are serious and credible."

"It looks simple but it is very difficult to depart from a bitter past and offer a new horizon. In this great city of Cairo we made an incredible step, a new future for the children of all of us."

Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat, who signed with Peres in Cairo, said the two documents went an important step beyond the self-rule agreement signed in Washington in September but some gaps still needed to be filled in.

"We are sure we can create a new era for our people. We can say that Palestine and the name of Palestine have returned to the map of the Middle East," he said.

US President Bill Clinton addressed the agreement as a "big milestone."

Another report says Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said today a full agreement with the PLO on Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho will take another month.

In his first reaction to partial Israeli-PLO agreements on security reached in Cairo late on Wednesday, Rabin told Israel radio the deal was "an important step forward" to implementing the declaration of principles on Palestinian autonomy signed in Washington last September.

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He informed the meeting that steps had been taken to overcome the weaknesses in

implementation of the Annual Development Programme, as a result of which investment in the public sector will increase rapidly during the remaining part of the current fiscal year.

He was responding to the observations made in the World Bank report on implementation of economic reform programmes and the ADP, which was presented in the meeting in view of the ensuing Aid-Group meeting in Paris in April.

The report termed the government plan of action in alleviating poverty and creating employment opportunities as appropriate. However, it noted, the implementation of the programmes is being delayed and hampered.

During the review meeting, the World Bank representative said Bangladesh had enhanced self-reliance by increasing domestic savings during the last three years. However, investment of this savings has been slowed down by weaknesses in some sectors.

The representatives of donor agencies commented that the implementation of development programmes was not satisfactory during the last fiscal year. Implementation of the programmes during the first six months of the current fiscal year has not also shown any sign of improvement, they said.

The donors' representatives identified certain sectors where implementation is very slow.

They said investment in the private sector was also not satisfactory and observed if it did not come forward, the desired growth would not be achieved.

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