

## African states call for ceasefire in Zaire

NAIROBI, Mar 20: African heads of state meeting in Nairobi called Wednesday for an immediate ceasefire in Zaire and "the creation of the necessary environment to facilitate a negotiated settlement" of the civil war there, reports AFP.

The six-nation conference called for urgent implementation of a five-point peace plan drawn up by Mohamed Sahnoun, the special envoy of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity to the Great Lake region. But made no new proposals to end the turmoil in the giant central African nation.

A final communiqué said the leaders "urged all parties to do their utmost to facilitate access for humanitarian assistance and other humanitarian organisations to provide this assistance."

Attending the summit, which lasted just over four

hours, were Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, Zairean Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo, sacked Tuesday by Zaire's transitional parliament in a vote his supporters have rejected as unconstitutional. Presidents Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Pascal Lissouba of Congo, Vice President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge of Cameroon.

The communiqué said they "expressed grave concern at the rapidly deteriorating situation in eastern Zaire, in particular the continued loss of lives suffering of refugees, displaced persons and other victims of the conflict as well as destruction of property and infrastructure."

Moi did not invite Zairean rebel leader Laurent desiré Kabila to the summit because he is not a head of state, and the communiqué avoided naming Kabila or his rebel alliance.

HELSINKI, Finland, Mar 20: Leaving behind problems at home, President Clinton and Russian leader Boris Yeltsin come together Thursday voicing a common commitment to peace in Europe but deeply divided on how to ensure it, reports AP.

The main point of contention on their summit agenda: Clinton wants to expand NATO's security blanket eastward to cover former Warsaw pact members; Yeltsin says that would isolate Russia and mark a return to Cold War divisiveness in Europe.

Whatever the outcome of the two-day summit — and both sides played down expectations in advance — NATO enlargement appeared inevitable.

Clinton, before departing Washington on Wednesday night, promised to pursue a robust partnership between NATO and Russia, a relationship that makes Russia a true partner of the alliance.

"NATO is not an aggressive organization trying to limit, restrict or undermine anyone who wants to treat their neighbours with respect," he said.

Yeltsin, facing enormous opposition at home to any expansion of the 16-member alliance, appeared determined to talk tough to the end and extract as many concessions as possible.

On the eve of the summit, his spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, did not rule out "gradual progress," but complained the

expansion plan "already has undermined the mutual trust" between Russia and the West, particularly the United States.

"The achievement of a formal agreement is not foreseen," Yastrzhembsky told reporters in Helsinki.

Clinton and Yeltsin plan to take up a US-proposed charter to give Russia a larger role in NATO deliberations, but no veto over alliance military actions.

NATO is preparing to invited former Soviet allies from Central and Eastern Europe to join the alliance in 1998 at a summit in Madrid this July. Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic are leading candidates.

The two leaders come together on neutral turf for their 11th meeting in four years.

They meet Thursday night with Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari and again Friday at the sprawling Finnish presidential palace on the seacoast outside central Helsinki.

Despite a chilling wind from the north and a dusting of snow, the city was anxious to show a warmer welcome.

"We'll take good care of you here so that you'll be able to make good decisions for Europe and mankind," Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen promised.

On a more tangible level, Finlandia vodka put out a special summit label, street sweepers worked around the clock, and summit organizers fed details to a global audience on the Internet.

## Hindu nationalists, low-caste decide to form coalition govt in India

NEW DELHI, Mar 20: Right-wing Hindu nationalists and a party representing low-caste Hindus Wednesday decided to form a coalition government in India's biggest state to end a six-month political impasse, reports AP.

The two parties will have rotating state chief ministers for six months each — the first such experiment in India.

The coalition partners will meet Romesh Bhandari, the state governor, in Lucknow, the state capital, on Thursday and stake their claim to form the government, said L K Advani and Kanshi Ram, leaders of Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party respectively, at a joint news conference in New Delhi.

The BJP had won the most votes in an indecisive state election in September but it could not win enough support from other parties to form a government.

In the 425-member state assembly, the BJP and its allies won 176 seats and the BSP 67.

The BSP had allied itself with the Congress Party in the last elections but decided to end the cooperation and join hands with the BJP.

Federal authorities have been directly ruling Uttar Pradesh state in the absence of an elected government.

The United Front, which won from 134 voting districts in the state, says a BJP-dominated government would fan religious tension in the state.

The BJP controlled Uttar Pradesh in 1992, when bloody riots broke out after Hindu zealots destroyed an ancient Muslim mosque near the state capital.

Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani will be among the top heads of state converging on Islamabad on a guest list which also includes Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

King Hassan of Morocco is also expected along with the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Ahmed Al-Sabah and Turkish President Suleiman Demirel.

Jordan will be represented by Crown Prince Hassan Ibn Talal if King Hussein himself cannot make it to Islamabad, Pakistani officials said.

Police sources said entry into and exit of all vehicles from Islamabad would be subject to strict checks at all points by special teams deployed for the purpose.

The 15-kilometre (nine miles) route from the airport and all other sensitive roads around the convention centre and villas where the dignitaries will stay will be guarded by troops. Connecting roads will be fenced off with barbed wire.

Before the special summit the heads of delegations will join Pakistani leaders at a grand hour-long military parade commemorating the 50th independence anniversary of the world's second largest Muslim country after Indonesia.

Clinton decides to nominate George

Tenet as CIA chief

WASHINGTON, Mar 20: President Bill Clinton has decided to nominate acting CIA Director George Tenet to be permanent chief of the spy agency and director of the whole US intelligence community, senior administration officials said Wednesday, reports Reuter.

"The president believes Tenet is well qualified for the post," said one senior White House official. "He's more than satisfied."

The nomination of Tenet, 44, who was Deputy CIA Director before his interim appointment as acting director last December, replaces that of Anthony Lake, who withdrew from consideration on Monday after harsh Senate confirmation hearings.

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