

SUNDAY TRIBUNE NEWS NOVEMBER 4 2001

ANC pushes Nat alliance

The ANC has decided to fast-track its negotiations with the NNP, writes Estelle Randall of our Parliamentary Bureau

The Department of Provincial and Local Government has been working round the clock to complete the first phase of the repeal of the anti-defection law for presentation to Parliament this week.

They began work before the ANC's National Executive Committee decision on Friday to continue negotiations on co-operation with the New National Party.

The legislation will create a window of opportunity of one month, during which councillors would be allowed to cross the floor.

The ANC's NEC this week agreed unanimously at a meeting in Johannesburg on Friday to press ahead with talks with the NNP, despite the reversal of support from NNP MECs in the Western Cape, who switched allegiance from NNP leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk to NNP Western Cape premier Gerald Morkel.

A senior ANC NEC member said: "The decision paves the way for the NNP to gain entry to governance in all nine provinces, municipalities, unicities and

national government."

If all goes according to plan, the new bill could become law before parliament adjourns on November 15. The amendment will give certainty to councillors who want to leave the DA. The NNP has advised them to sit tight until the amendment is passed.

Phases

The ANC sees the talks unfolding in three phases. With the first phase - agreement on principles - having been completed, discussion would focus on specifics of co-operation at national, provincial and local government levels.

The issue of positions for NP and ANC members will be dealt with last - probably by subcommittees.

The ANC and NNP are adamant the sharing out of positions at different levels of government is not the motive behind their moves to co-operate.

According to the Internet newsletter *ANC Today*: "Any co-operation between the ANC and the NNP needs to be informed by the

need to build non-racialism and deepen democratic transformation.

"The ANC is determined these discussions should not be about juggling seats or trading positions, but about fundamentally challenging the racial divisions of South Africa's political life," the ANC said.

However, a likely next step in the moves towards co-operation is that the NNP gives the Democratic Party 30 days notice that the coalition in the Western Cape has ended - opening the way for the ANC and NNP to take over the province.

In this joint takeover the ANC is likely to get the position of premier, with the NNP getting some of the key provincial portfolios.

The ANC won 42% of the votes in the 1999 provincial election, compared with the NNP's 38%.

At a national level, the ANC is likely to include the NNP in the government by creating new deputy ministerial posts in ministries like health and social development, where it could be justified that the workload is too much for a single minister to carry.

The Inkatha Freedom Party already has three ministers in President Mbeki's cabinet and one deputy minister, while the tiny Azanian People's Organisation has one deputy minister.

Durban council throws
HIV drugs off the agenda

Unicity 'killing' babies

Angry DA councillor says the decision is tantamount to murder. 'On whose conscience will their deaths be? This is a gross violation of human rights.' Liz Clarke reports

A painful and horrifying death will come early for hundreds of babies born in the precincts of Durban's unicity because local authorities are continuing to deny pregnant women drugs that could save their children's lives.

In line with the ANC's refusal to implement a national programme to save babies from HIV, Durban unicity speaker Nomusa Dube this week refused a motion for the Nevirapine issue be placed on the council's agenda, stating that the supply of the anti-retrovirals was not a local government function and not part of primary health care.

Replying to a Democratic Alliance motion on Nevirapine, initially tabled earlier this year, the speaker said that until there was finalisation in the anti-retroviral research, it was "premature and careless" for the council to implement the campaign.

Conscience

Said an angry DA Councillor Peter Corbett: "This is tantamount to murder. Since July, when we had asked for the scheme to be introduced, 1 300 infected babies have been born in Durban. On whose conscience will their deaths be? This is not a party political, points-scoring matter. This is a gross violation of human rights."

He said that the Cape Town Unicity Council had introduced this service for its citizens. "Why can't we do it here in Durban? Our view is that savings must be immediately identified for this pro-

gramme. We suggest that the excessive R27 million budget allocated to the mayoral and speaker's office be reduced to accommodate these needs."

Cati Vawda, a Durban-based children rights activist and a member of Treatment Action Campaign, said it was "utter nonsense" to suggest supplying Nevirapine was not the responsibility of a city.

"It is part of primary health care, just as much as immunisation. The council is simply trying to sideline the issue for other reasons."

In a national context, noted Aids authority and head of research at the Nelson Mandela Medical School, Professor Jerry Coovadia, said the "overwhelming" cause of death in young children was Aids.

"It is now essential for Aids activists to knock on the door of the presidency. If the presidency does not want to come to the people."

At present only 10% of pregnant women are being offered the anti-retroviral drug Nevirapine at certain provincial government "test" sites in KwaZulu-Natal. For 90% of pregnant women there is the harrowing knowledge that their babies will start a cycle of acute suffering from the time they are born until the moment they die, usually before the age of five.

Besides the suffering, much of the cost of caring for these sick children is borne by the state and the province.

In accordance with policies laid down by the minister of health, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, doctors and spe-

cialists in public health facilities outside of the pilot sites are also barred from prescribing the free drug, even when the mother-to-be's status is known.

But frustration over the slow delivery of Nevirapine to pregnant women in South Africa is beginning to reach boiling point. In a second watershed case, due to be heard in the Pretoria High Court on November 28 and 29, a demand will be made that the minister make Nevirapine available to pregnant women with HIV on prescription by doctors and other medical professionals working in the public health sector. In addition, a comprehensive national plan to prevent mother-to-child transmission, voluntary counselling, testing and formula feed as a substitute for breast feeding, is being sought.

Remarkable

The action is being brought by the Treatment Action Campaign, Haroon Saloojee, head of the division of community paediatrics and child health at Wits University and the Children's Rights Centre in Durban. A full page newspaper advertisement this week urged the minister to "settle the case" or face the consequences. A picture of the funeral of Sihongile Mazeka, who died of Aids on September 11, aged five, is part of the legal campaign against the state.

According to the World Health Organisation, the use of anti-retroviral drugs during pregnancy and delivery has been shown to reduce the HIV rate of newborns to a "remarkable" degree.

Nevirapine works by slowing the rate of DNA replication, thereby inhibiting the virus. It crosses the placenta efficiently after a single dose to the mother at the onset of labour. A single oral dose in suspension is given to the newborn within 72 hours of birth.

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KZN's security plan to stop exam leaks

YASANTHA NAIDOO & SAPA

PROVINCIAL education officials are hoping its innovative security system will score top marks by preventing any leaks in the matric examinations.

On Friday, the Gauteng department of education said the national department and police were homing in on a syndicate leaking exam papers to pupils.

Gauteng education MEC Ignatius Jacobs said the leaks had occurred outside the province and only a limited number of pupils had access to the paper.

Three pupils from Nirvana High School in Lenasia, south of Johannesburg, were arrested on Friday for "having access to unauthorised exam material."

Earlier in the week a physical science paper was also found to have been leaked.

This year the mathematics, physical science, biology, accountancy and English papers were set centrally to ensure a uniform standard.

Provincial director of examinations Morgan Naidoo said KwaZulu-Natal's security system was different to the systems used in other provinces.

"We have not found any leaks in this province. There have been many rumours and all of these have been investigated. We deliver examination papers on a daily basis. Other provinces lodge the papers in batches overnight. We also have a specific monitoring team which visits schools every day. This is a good deterrent which we believe is one of the reasons that we have not had any leakages in this province."

"We have also made plans for the defence force and police to help us if the weather creates a problem."

He said 61 different exam papers had been written and matric pupils would write their final paper on November 27.

"Markers will convene on November 30 to start marking at 17 centres on December 1. We expect the results on December 27."

SUNDAY TRIBUNE NEWS NOVEMBER 4 2001**'Voetsek Kortbroek' is message from NNP****JOHN MATISONN**

SNEERINGLY calling their national leader "kortbroek" in public, top Western Cape NNP have mutinied against New National Party leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk.

Meeting at Goudini near Worcester yesterday, the NNP's Western Cape leadership under provincial pre-

mier Gerald Morkel defied an NNP threat of disciplinary action for holding the unauthorised meeting and came out in open rebellion against Van Schalkwyk.

The meeting demanded a special provincial party congress to stop Van Schalkwyk's talks with the African National Congress with a view to forming an

alliance to govern Cape Town and the Western Cape.

At present the Democratic Alliance of the NNP and Democratic Party controls the city and province, but Van Schalkwyk and DP leader Tony Leon are at loggerheads over Leon's firing of Cape Town Mayor Peter Marais. This has led to Van Schalkwyk suspending the

NNP's membership of alliance and exploring a coalition deal with the ANC.

"I won't sell my people out or betray them," Morkel told the cheering crowd. "You pay a price for a principle. But I hold my head high."

Van Schalkwyk suspended Morkel's NNP membership and provincial leadership this week after he refused to

work with the ANC. He was reinstated after the temporary out-of-court settlement on Friday of an application to the High Court for an order setting aside the suspension. The case will be heard this week.

A thousand NNP members, including the entire Western Cape provincial cabinet, members of parliament,

members of the provincial legislature and numerous mayors and town councillors, attended the meeting at Goudini.

Mayors and town and city councillors strongly attacked Van Schalkwyk for doing a somersault after voicing his support for the DA at a Western Cape NNP congress three weeks ago.