

THE MERCURY

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Wise Compromise

WISE counsels have prevailed in KwaZulu-Natal. The main political parties have stepped back from what could have proved to be a precipice.

With the undertaking by the ANC not to introduce retrospective floor-crossing constitutional legislation from national level, and the IFP's decision not to dissolve the provincial legislature and call an election, the province is spared what could have proved to be months of trauma and tension.

The low road scenario which seemed likely until yesterday's 11th hour agreement would have involved challenges and counter-challenges in the constitutional court, at vast public expense; very possibly an enormously expensive election in KwaZulu-Natal, which would have put the province out of synch with the others; and a ratcheting upwards of political tensions which, given a recent past of violence, could have been disastrous for stability and business confidence.

The price of political opportunism was simply too high. The encouraging thing is that both sides recognised it.

The status quo now remains until 2004 when elections will be contested at the same time as the rest of the country, possibly on a new basis combining proportional representation with constituency representation. Rigid proportional representation certainly has its weaknesses. However, the crisis that has just passed shows it is dangerous to interfere with it until something better has been put in its place and has been ratified by the electorate.

KwaZulu-Natal can breathe easier.



ANC RELENTS ON FLOOR-CROSSING CLAUSE

Deal to avert poll in KwaZulu-Natal 'a victory for stability'

JOHN BATTERSBY
Group Political Editor

JOHANNESBURG: Opposition leaders have hailed a last-minute deal between the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) to avert an early election in KwaZulu-Natal as a victory for democracy and stability in the province.

In terms of the deal, the IFP dropped its plan to dissolve the assembly in return for the ANC's agreeing not to give retro-active effect to floor-crossing legislation – which would have led to the IFP's being ousted from power in the province once parliament passed an amendment legalising defections at provincial level.

"We can all be proud that through our exercise of democracy, democracy and stability have been preserved and promoted," IFP provincial premier Lionel Mtshali told the KwaZulu-Natal legislative assembly yesterday at a special session.

Before the agreement with the ANC, Mtshali had intended to put to the vote a motion to dissolve the assembly – a move designed to bring about an early election and avert the possibility of party defections handing the ANC control of the province.

Last year, five members of the provincial legislature defected to the ANC from the Democratic Alliance (DA), the IFP and United Democratic Movement (UDM). But they were caught in limbo when a Constitutional Court ruling nullified, on technical grounds, legislation on defections by national and provincial legislators.

Because of the ruling, the defectors lost their seats.

The government was due to introduce legislation early in the parliamentary session that would have legalised the defections.

UDM president Bantu Holomisa said in a statement the assurance given by the ANC that it would withdraw the retrospective clause was good news for voters.

"The move acknowledges the UDM's warning that the defection law would bring chaos as it was informed by political opportunism and expediency," said Holomisa, who initiated the successful court action to halt the floor-crossing.

"Today we finally move beyond the grievous errors of the ANC leadership that so horrendously drew us all into the legal, political and financial battles that have so hampered this province for seven months," said

the DA's Roger Burrows. He was pleased the ANC leadership had the sense not to insist on retro-active protection for defectors.

The ANC, which had insisted it would not allow an election to take place in the province – because electoral legislation was not in place – and that it would not back down on floor-crossing amendments, put a brave face on its compromise.

"We are confident that the spirit demonstrated by the IFP today will continue to guide us each time we face tactical problems and as we address other outstanding issues," Smuts Ngonyama, head of the presidency at ANC headquarters, said in a statement.

"We remain committed to the strengthening of the working relationship with the IFP."

If the IFP strategy had succeeded it would have compelled the government to pass legislation to create a legal framework for an election. There has been a vacuum since the 1999 election which, according to the 1993 Electoral Act, was the last that could be held under the old voting system.

The deal, struck after two days of correspondence between Deputy President Jacob Zuma and IFP leaders, appeared to be a victory for ANC moderates.

Thursday January 9 2003

Sowetan

A power(ful) rip-off

● From page 1

A *Sowetan* investigation has discovered that one unit of electricity is 10c cheaper when residents buy directly from Eskom.

As a result, a growing number of township residents are converting from conventional electricity meters to prepaid ones.

Prepaid meters mean that residents buy electricity coupons directly from Eskom.

If municipalities bow to the pressure, this exercise could lead to massive loss of revenue.

Residents in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Council and other areas have been punting for conversion of the conventional meters to prepaid ones as they claim they are being overcharged.

Mr Glad Nkosi, a resident of Hospital View in Tembisa, has pleaded with the council to have a prepaid meter installed.

He accuses the council of issuing inaccurate figures for his municipal account.

However, the council's deputy director for finance, Mr Sammy Skhosana, dismissed the claim that residents were overcharged as untrue.

Skhosana said the council had divided consumers in two categories. These were low, and medium to high.

The low consumers bought a unit of electricity for 32,16c a unit plus 4,5c

VAT which amounted to 36,66c.

The medium to high consumers bought a unit of electricity for 25,30c a unit plus 3,5c VAT which totalled 28,84c. Over and above, this category of consumers paid a R56 fixed charge.

Last month, Provincial and Local Government Minister Sydney Mufamadi admitted during an indaba held in Johannesburg that the billing system of most municipalities was flawed and needed to be reviewed.

He also admitted that some municipalities were issuing inaccurate bills to residents.

He said that this had contributed towards delay in payment as consumers argued they had been overcharged.

Eskom's group communications manager, Ms Susan Chapman, said the utility applied uniform tariffs to all customers, irrespective of their residential areas.

However, she said certain areas, such as Soweto, were charged 10c less than standard tariffs because of their history and uniqueness.

Chapman said electricity for this year is charged 33,11c a unit plus VAT of 4,64c which totalled 37,75c on either conventional meter or prepayment supply.

For domestic use of electricity, eThekweni Metropolitan Council charged 31c plus VAT of 4,35c and the total charge a unit was 35,43c.

A power(ful) rip-off

Township residents charged more for electricity

By Justice Mohale

IN spite of South Africa being renowned for having among the cheapest electricity in the world, millions of township residents are charged more for electricity than those living in the more affluent suburbs.

Municipalities charge township residents between R30 and R56 more than their counterparts in the suburbs for electricity.

The reason given is that those living in the suburbs receive their electricity directly from Eskom, while those in the townships get their electricity via local councils, which acted as middlemen and charge additional amounts.

Local municipalities charge the fixed amounts over and above what the communities consume in electricity – which is charged for separately.

The situation is a throwback to the apartheid era when township residents got their electricity from the local authorities who, in turn, bought it from Eskom.

During apartheid, residents in formerly white areas bought their electricity directly from Eskom at a cheaper rate than township residents. For most townships, the situation has remained unchanged.

Last-minute deal averts possible strife over early KZN polls



Members of the African National Congress toyi-toyi at the entrance to the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature in support of their provincial leaders, who have opposed the proposed dissolution of the Legislature by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). IFP members (right) do their version of the toyi-toyi at the entrance to the Legislature to back KwaZulu-Natal IFP Premier Lionel Mtshali, who has called for early provincial elections. A last-minute deal was eventually struck between the two parties. Full report on page 3. Also pages 12 & 13

PHOTOS: AFP

How KZN was pulled back from the brink

ON SATURDAY, Deputy President Jacob Zuma, made an unexpected call to his old adversary, the Inkatha Freedom Party's Celani Mthetwa. Zuma's call to Mthetwa was on the instructions of President Thabo Mbeki. The President had asked his old negotiator to make contact with the IFP and see how the KwaZulu-Natal crisis can be averted.

Zuma had interrupted his holiday to phone Mthetwa to ask for clarifications of the IFP's position to dissolve the KwaZulu-Natal legislature. Zuma asked Mthetwa whether they could meet the next day. Mthetwa agreed to meet and explain why the IFP was going to dissolve the legislature. The meeting took place on Sunday afternoon.

Mthetwa told Zuma that the IFP's main grievance was the fact that the African National Congress planned to retrospectively introduce the floor-crossing legislation. This would mean that the ANC would get effective control of the legislature and with it the power to appoint a new premier. Zuma then asked Mthetwa if the ANC compromised on this aspect, whether the IFP would withdraw their action. Mthetwa told him that if the ANC could give a written agreement to abandon introducing the legislation retrospectively, the IFP leadership might agree not to dissolve the legislature and call for early elections. Zuma left the meeting and called Mbeki to convey the discussions he had with Mthetwa.

Mbeki then called for an emergency meeting of the ANC's top six leaders in Johannesburg to discuss the KwaZulu Natal impasse. At the meeting, Zuma explained to the rest of the ANC leadership the IFP's request. The meeting went on for two days. KwaZulu-Natal ANC leaders urged Mbeki and the ANC leaders to call the IFP's bluff and for national Government to take over the KwaZulu-Natal government.

However, Mbeki and the ANC leadership in the end resolved to offer to give in to the IFP request. After the ANC meeting Mbeki drafted a letter, signed by him, offering not to amend the floor-crossing legislation retrospectively. Mbeki on Monday sent the letter to IFP president Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

The key phrase in the letter stated: "President Mbeki in consultation with the ANC officials as well as the Minister of Justice, agreed that part of the amendment (which says that the Bill should be passed retrospectively) should be removed. That is

Yesterday, KZN, a politically volatile province, headed off a potential slide into its violent past. In this piece, Senior Assistant Editor **William Mervin Gumede** looks at the frantic diplomacy behind the deal



Reverend Celani Mthetwa

to say that the retrospective part will no longer form part of the bill". The letter added: "The President, together with the officials of the ANC, will present the matter to the national executive committee of the ANC which is meeting this month (January) to formalise this decision. Therefore the matter of the retrospectivity of the Bill will no longer be a contested issue."

Immediately after reading the contents of the letter, Buthelezi phoned the rest of the IFP leadership and called for an emergency meeting of the IFP's national council the next day (Tuesday).

At the meeting, Buthelezi read Mbeki's statement to the rest of the IFP leadership. A large section of the IFP leadership rejected Mbeki's promise, saying the ANC had reneged on previous agreements. Buthelezi, IFP deputy leader Musa Zondi and Mthetwa were the key people arguing for acceptance of the ANC's intent.

An agreement was reached between the IFP leadership that Mbeki's offer will be accepted on condition that Mbeki or the Minister of Justice issue a public statement "indicating without qualifications that the effectively retrospective provision in the constitutional amendment bill will be withdrawn and that the chairman of the portfolio committee will soon be advised in

writing accordingly".

Some IFP leaders still remained sceptical. However, the IFP national council, agreed with a narrow majority to accept Mbeki's offer. Those sceptical were reluctant turned around with a condition that if the ANC reneged on the agreement, the IFP will immediately go ahead and dissolve the KwaZulu-Natal legislature and call for early elections.

"In the end the majority of the IFP leadership accepted," said one senior IFP leader.

Buthelezi was mandated by the IFP's national council to draft a letter to Zuma offering the acceptance of the ANC's offer. The IFP's reservations were expressed in the letter: "Unfortunately, our constituency has experienced many instances in which undertakings made by ANC leaders at the highest level were then overturned by ANC

structures... I can also mention the undertaking by President Mbeki to appoint me deputy president which, according to him, was vetoed by the ANC KwaZulu-Natal provincial leadership which requested the premiership of the province". It added: "The memory of the breach of the Agreement for Reconciliation and Peace signed by me, (former) presidents Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk is also very vivid in our national council."

When the meeting ended Buthelezi contacted first, the KwaZulu-Natal Democratic Alliance leader Roger Burrows and told him about the ANC letter and the IFP's decision to accept the ANC's offer.

The DA agreed that the IFP should accept the ANC offer. A crisis was averted for now.

However, it is clear that not everybody in the different parties were happy about the deal. The KwaZulu-Natal ANC was particularly aggrieved.

Last night a KwaZulu-Natal ANC leader accused the DA of entering a secret deal with the IFP and of deliberately engineering the crisis. Its clear that the deal provides the ANC with breathing space, whether it will last is a moot point.

(Additional reporting by **Khangale Makhado**.)

Comment

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Omar's road to carnage

THE holiday seasons, particularly the December-January festive period, must be the worst times of the year for the minister of transport, Mr Abdulah Omar, and his provincial counterparts. And, as national minister and, therefore, the most senior and powerful of the 10, Omar must, understandably, feel that the spotlight falls disproportionately (and unfairly) onto him.

But it is hard to sympathise with him. His leadership of the portfolio is uninspiring. And, during the holiday season, which has seen the worst carnage on our roads, he has looked more and more like a lame duck without a game plan.

In the face of rising death toll on our roads and, lately, our railways, he has been on the defensive offering more analysis of why people are being slaughtered on our roads. This week, we published a letter by the minister, spelling out his thoughts on how to deal with the problem of safety on our roads.

Like many other such blue-prints, the plan is comprehensive. This means the drafters have thought about all possible angles of how the problem can – and should – be tackled. Famously, it promises a shakeup in terms of “policing, overloading fine structure and general overloading tolerance by traffic and road authorities”. They have even thought about the “development and implementation of a programme that includes a short-term strategy”.

Now, common sense would suggest that we should all express collective relief that the authorities are on top of the issue. Problem is there is no sense, at all, that Omar & Co are on top of the issue.

Conceptually, the 2001-2005 plan is very appealing. But its main problem is that the road users and their families can hardly feel its intended positive effects. If any thing, the current season is a rude reminder of how ineffectual the plan is. The death toll is higher and the offenders are becoming more reckless and showing less remorse. Some even gleefully call national radio stations from their hospital beds to gloat about how they make our roads unsafe.

When the victims turn to the lawyers to access some financial aid, they get screwed once more by unscrupulous lawyers.

Omar does not seem to understand what is required. Yes, South Africans want Omar to show them sympathy for their loss. But, more importantly, they need – and deserve – immediate relief and safety. Period. Not a five-year plan. Not a promise of safety in 2005 when Omar, who looks immensely bored in his portfolio, might not be in charge of our safety anymore.

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ANC celebrates 91st birthday with a 'back to basics' plea

THE African National Congress has celebrated its 91st anniversary with its leaders urging members who gathered in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, last night to go "back to basics" and "study the Constitution".

Hundreds of people were bused to the Oliver Tambo Hall from around the peninsula for the celebration, during which ANC national chairman and Defence Minister Mosiuoa Lekota, Western Cape leader and Finance MEC Ebrahim Rasool, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, Transport Minister Dullah Omar, and Pallo Jordan, chairman of parliament's for-

eign affairs portfolio committee, sang and danced with performers who entertained the crowd.

In the keynote speech, Lekota said: "The ANC in the Western Cape must work hard to win the elections in the new year to eventually rule this province."

"For this our members must go back to basics, study the Constitution and learn how government budgets work."

Lekota also urged each member to educate the public about human rights.

Representatives of the SA Communist Party and Congress of SA Trade Unions also made speeches. - Staff Writer

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Township residents charged more for electricity

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PHOTOS: AFP

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Deal averts early elections, but much bridge building still ahead

DUMISANI ZONDI
and SAPA

THE ANC and IFP in KZN emerged from their dramatic stand-off over parliamentary defection laws yesterday claiming victory over each other, but no closer to conciliation.

Both parties agreed that they need to work on mending their relationship, strained by squabbles over the site of the provincial capital, provincial cabinet reshuffles and now the floor-crossing saga.

Premier Lionel Mtshali told journalists after yesterday's special session of the legislature that talks between the national leaders of the IFP and ANC on the future of their working relationship are in the offing.

A follow-up meeting to discussions in December between ANC president Thabo Mbeki and IFP president Mangosuthu Buthelezi is expected soon, Mtshali said.

Asked if the latest row has driven the IFP and the ANC further apart, IFP national spokesman Musa Zondi said: "It's difficult to say, relations here in the province are bad, they are non-existent as far as I am concerned."

ANC provincial leader S'bu Ndebele told the legislature earlier that he wants his party and the IFP to discuss the future of their coalition agreement, which he said Mtshali

had breached last year by expelling two ANC MECs from the provincial executive.

"We need to go back to the drawing board. The coalition between ourselves and IFP will be discussed [afresh]," ANC spokesman Mthole-

phi Mthimkhulu told Sapa later.

Earlier at the special session, Mtshali announced the IFP would withdraw a planned motion to dissolve the legislature after a last-minute deal was brokered by Buthelezi and Deputy President

Jacob Zuma.

The ANC agreed to scrap a "retrospective" clause in the draft Constitution of SA Fourth Amendment Bill currently before Parliament, that would have effectively given the ANC a majority in KwaZulu-Natal.

In turn, the IFP agreed not to table the dissolution motion that would have paved the way for fresh provincial elections.

The retrospective clause would have allowed five members who

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Photo: IAN CARBUTT

Supporters of the IFP, DA and UDM wait outside the legislature building yesterday for the outcome of the special sitting to discuss the issue of the dissolution of the legislature and a call for an early election. The dissolution was shelved after a last-minute deal between the IFP and ANC.

Hard work to rebuild relationships awaits after deal averts crisis

From page 1

defected to the ANC from the IFP, Democratic Alliance and United Democratic Movement last year to carry their seats to the ANC and give it a simple majority in the legislature and the power to form a new provincial government.

Had Mtshali tabled the motion, it would have easily passed since the IFP, together with the DA and the UDM, would have had a majority.

ANC celebrates 91st birthday

THE ANC celebrated its 91st birthday yesterday but most eyes were on Pietermaritzburg as rival politicians and supporters grappled with the storm of controversy over the future of a coalition government in the province.

The ANC birthday celebrations went ahead under IFP noses outside the provincial legislature as both sides displayed political maturity while they waited to hear KZN Premier Lionel Mtshali's decision on whether the provincial legislature would be dissolved.

Rival toyi-toyiing supporters came face to face with each other for an amicable showdown as the ANC progressed from the legislature to Freedom Square. But any real confrontation between the old political rivals was avoided under the watchful eyes of over 300 policemen who were brought into the city to handle fears that the bloody faction-fighting of the 1980s and 1990s would again spill over onto the streets of the CBD.

— Witness Reporter.

The deal was outlined in a letter conveyed to Mtshali from Buthelezi on Tuesday following last-ditch talks between Zuma and IFP Public Works MEC Celani Mthethwa in Greytown on Sunday. Mtshali read it out in the legislature.

In a replying letter to Zuma, Buthelezi said his party has experienced many instances in which undertakings made by ANC leaders at the highest level were over-

turned by ANC structures. He said former president Nelson Mandela was supposed to visit violence-torn areas with him but this was thwarted by the ANC's midlands structures.

Buthelezi also said Mbeki was prevented by the provincial leadership of the ANC from appointing him deputy president.

But further personal assurances from Zuma led to the IFP agreeing to suspend its intended action.

The IFP claimed victory, saying it forced the ANC to scrap the retrospective clause. The ANC also claimed victory, saying it acted "responsibly" to avert a political crisis in the province.

The deal was widely welcomed by other political parties who, along with organised business and labour, feared that the dissolution and subsequent election would be costly and destabilise the province.

Justice Minister Penuell Maduna confirmed in an announcement in Cape Town that the bill will be amended. The IFP indicated that its national parliamentarians will still vote against the bill, even without the retrospective clause, as they did with

earlier floor-crossing legislation.

In his earlier speech to the legislature, Mtshali gave a veiled warning to the IFP's opponents not to use the next round of defec-

tions to "destabilise our government".

"If a new window for the crossing of the floor is allowed, I hope that we will not see a repeat performance of the attempts to destabilise this government and this province through cheque-book politics," he said.

In his address to the legislature, Ndebele took on the IFP for breaching the coalition deal with the ANC and cautioned that the ANC could as easily exclude the IFP from a new government if the ANC controlled a majority in the legislature.

"The ANC and IFP could have been in government [together]. The IFP excluded the ANC. The ANC could be the government and exclude the IFP. There is no problem at all with being in opposition. We are ready," a visibly angry Ndebele said.

Last year, Mtshali sacked the ANC's Dumisani Makhaye and Mike Mabuyakhulu as MECs and replaced them with DA members.

Asked later if he would consider changing his cabinet to readmit the ANC members, Mtshali said: "Forming a cabinet is a principled action, it is not a matter of responding to whims and fancies. The cabinet is in place with two DA members."

DA KZN leader and Economic and Tourism Affairs MEC Roger Burrows applauded the ANC's change of heart and said the legislature will now begin with some 15 months of constructive activity

until the next formal election in 2004.

"The supporters of democracy joined hands and stood together and stood firm. Today we see the result," said Burrows.

THE NATAL WITNESS
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LOCAL & NATIONAL

Analysts say the offer may be a last-ditch bid to save Zimbabwe from ruin

Business gives Mugabe a rescue

ZIMBABWE'S struggling business community has presented an industrial survival plan to President Robert Mugabe's government that analysts say is a last-ditch bid to save the country's crumbling economy.

The rescue plan, details of which came to light yesterday, includes proposals on how to tackle food, fuel and other short-

ages and a broader economic crisis that Mugabe blames on his domestic and foreign opponents.

But political and economic analysts say the fate of the private sector plan — which industry officials say was submitted to Mugabe's deputies three weeks ago — is uncertain.

Although the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI), which

submitted the plan, and the government have not published full details, local newspapers say it calls for interest rate and tax incentives for farmers and exporters, as well as changes to foreign currency and fuel price regulations.

The rescue plan also advocates realistic price controls and prudent management, and for a boost

in energy production and supply to help companies threatened by rising input costs.

"The plan contains some sound proposals critical to reviving the economy, but the bottom line is that all these suggestions depend on the government's attitude, and so far there is no sign that the government wants to change its policies," said a bank economist.

But senior officials in Mugabe's administration said yesterday the government is studying the proposals with an open mind.

Meanwhile, a State Department official said the U.S. is readying a new round of punitive sanctions against Mugabe and his top aides that could take effect by the end of this month.

The official said the sanctions

plan

would be more extensive than those currently in place against Mugabe and a small group of senior government officials.

Also yesterday, four people were arrested as they tried to take part in a demonstration called for by the opposition to show support for the embattled mayor of Harare, the opposition said.

— Sapa-AFP-Reuters.

Sartorial advice and political grandiosity bridges uncrossed

THE open enmity has been avoided for the moment, but it was clear at yesterday's special provincial legislature sitting that the hatchet is not yet buried.

Two hours before the sitting there were several hundred supporters gathered outside the legislature building, some in ANC and others in IFP colours.

Members of the legislature arriving for the sitting were loudly cheered or jeered according to party affiliation. Indeed, some were so roundly cursed they chose not to linger outside.

"Why are you trying to creep in here? We know what mischief you are up to in here! Don't try to

avoid me, you *skelm*," a woman in an ANC T-shirt shouted at a prominent IFP member.

In the meantime, the authorities realised there were more supporters than the small public gallery could accommodate, and it was decided to let in only 15 members from each party.

David Ntombela and Mandla Molokoana, two of the most well-known IFP MPLs, took names of their supporters, but battled to be heard over the chanting of both IFP and ANC members.

The police approached with razor wire and a Casspir, but nothing came of the threatened violence.

Inside the legislature, well-known faces were seen in the visitors' gallery, including the NNP's Renier Schoeman, deputy minister of Health, and several members of the national Parliament, ready for the sport to begin.

Even during the opening prayers it was clear that the ANC and IFP do not trust each other. Some members did not even close their eyes, so hard were they staring at each other.

Despite a bit of floor-crossing before the sitting got under way as members of both the ANC and IFP greeted colleagues after the Christmas recess, when the debate began the heat was on.

Mike Mabuyakhulu (ANC), one of the MECs recently replaced by a DA member, proposed a motion stating that his party is the only one that has not abandoned its principles.

In his turn, Alex Hamilton (IFP) gave Dumisani Makhaye stick over his statements to the media hinting at violence.

The outspoken former Housing MEC shot back with a motion asking for a whip-round so Hamilton could buy another jacket to replace the beige one "he has worn to every sitting for a year".

Makhaye, clad in a bright orange shirt and with fashionable sunglasses on his forehead, later

counted out R2,80 in coins on the Speaker's podium.

This donation was topped up with 10 cents from Peter Miller, the IFP's Finance MEC, so Hamilton can also get another tie to replace his KZN Indaba tie from the 1980s. Hamilton just grinned.

Hard words were also heard when Minority Front leader Amichand Rajbansi called the DA "villains" and "Judases" out to undermine black political unity.

"The honourable MEC for economic development would sell his own family for a position," he said in reference to DP KZN leader Roger Burrows, who took over that portfolio from the ANC dur-

floor

ing the recent reshuffle.

In his turn Burrows described Rajbansi's actions during the apartheid years as "prostitution".

Speaker Bonga Mdletshe (IFP) had his hands full trying to control matters, and ANC members defied him because they allege he is biased against them.

After Tino Volker of the NNP accused the IFP of besmirching the good name of the Zulus, he felt the sharp side of Eileen Nkosi-Shandu's tongue when she told him the NNP can thank its lucky stars that there will not be an early election, because if there had been they would have ceased to exist. — Own Correspondents.



Senior Inkatha Freedom Party negotiator Reverend Celani Mtethwa (left) talks to David Ntombela, IFP Midlands leader, at a meeting in Durban last night. An 11th-hour deal between the ANC and IFP averted the dissolution of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature and early elections in the province. PHOTO: RAJESH JANTILAI

KZN election move gets the thumbs-up

By Sapa and Noxolo Kweza

THE Democratic Alliance yesterday applauded the decision taken by the Inkatha Freedom Party to avert an early election in KwaZulu-Natal, saying this sealed the growing working arrangement between the two parties.

Provincial DA leader and MEC for economic development and tourism in KZN, Roger Burrows, said: "We are pleased with this outcome. We were part of the decision to set aside a motion to dissolve the legislature when it was taken on Tuesday night."

Burrows said as a result the DA gets to keep the people who replaced those members who crossed the floor to the ANC.

This follows a decision by KZN Premier Lionel Mtshali to set aside a motion to dissolve the legislature at a special sitting in Pietermaritzburg, after the ANC agreed not to retrospectively amend floor-crossing legislation.

The IFP and DA were expected to vote in favour of the motion, thus precipitating an early provincial election.

The head of the ANC presidency, Smuts Ngonyama, said in a statement to mark the party's 91st anniversary, that the agreement was "a valuable birthday gift".

"We believe that this latest development in KZN is a confirmation that our country is located among the best in the

world when it comes to conflict resolution.

"We are confident that the spirit demonstrated by the IFP today will continue to guide us each time we face tactical problems. We remain committed to the strengthening of the working relationship with the IFP," he said.

UDM president Bantu Holomisa said the assurance given by the ANC to withdraw the retrospective clause was good news for all South African voters.

"The move by the ANC acknowledges the UDM's earlier warning that the defection law will bring chaos in the country as it is informed by political opportunism and expediency."

The New National Party – which broke away from the DA in 2001 to form a coalition with the ANC – said the deal was a victory for stability in the province.

"We are very pleased that reason has prevailed because the whole idea of holding an election now was ill-conceived," NNP provincial chairman Renier Schoeman said.

The African Christian Democratic Party welcomed the agreement, but said it was regrettable that it took so long to reach "what was always an obvious solution".

Cassie Aucamp, leader of the Afrikaner Eenheidsbeweging, said his party had always believed the scrapping of retrospective protection for defectors was the only way to solve the crisis in the province.

Last-minute deal saves legislature

By Khangale Makhado and Sapa

THE deal between the Inkatha Freedom Party and African National Congress, which forced the KwaZulu-Natal premier to set aside his intention to dissolve the legislature yesterday, followed protracted last-minute negotiations and trade-offs between the two parties on Tuesday night.

However, the agreement does not cover other unresolved issues between the parties that also led to the cooling of their relations.

The ANC made an undertaking that it would no longer push for amendments to the floor-crossing legislation, which was to be introduced next month, to apply retrospectively.

This means that the five members of the IFP, Democratic Alliance (DA) and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) who were fired after aligning themselves with the ANC, will not be reinstated when the legislation is finalised.

At a special session of the legislature yesterday, Premier Lionel Mtshali announced that he would not table the planned dissolution motion after the ANC's promise on the amendment, which would have given it effective control over the KwaZulu-Natal government.

Mtshali told the House that his party had received written assurances from President Thabo Mbeki, Deputy President Jacob Zuma and Justice Minister Penuell Maduna that the "controversial amendment" to the legislation would be withdrawn.

He said that as a result, and "despite the misgivings of some members of the IFP", the leadership of the IFP and DA agreed that the dissolution motion should be held in abeyance for the time being.

The last-minute deal was struck after

an exchange of letters between IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Zuma late on Tuesday.

In his letter to Buthelezi, Zuma said: "President Mbeki, in consultation with the ANC officials as well as the Minister of Justice, agreed that the part of the amendment should be removed. That is to say that the retrospective part will no longer form part of the Bill."

In his reply to Zuma, Buthelezi asked the Deputy President to issue a statement "without qualifications" confirming that the ANC had scrapped the retrospective part of the amendment.

Mtshali quoted from both letters at the special sitting.

IFP spokesman Reverend Musa Zondi Zondi hailed yesterday's developments as a victory that protected the voters, but warned that they could still dissolve the legislature if the deal fell through.

"We have taken the ANC on their word just to give them the benefit of doubt. However, if they renege, we can still go back there and dissolve the legislature," he said.

He also said that the deal was not related to the issue of sacked ANC MECs Mike Mabuyakhulu and Dumisani Makhaye, which was a completely different issue that Mbeki was handling.

But it is understood that the issue formed part of the letter that Buthelezi sent to Mbeki.

The ANC's Smuts Ngonyama said the deal bodes well for future negotiations with the IFP and would create an atmosphere conducive to dealing effectively with other issues. He said that these included the question of the sacked MECs and the 1999 agreement between the two parties, which has since been discarded.