

BUSINESS DAY, Wednesday, November 21 2001

Pressure mounts on ANC and NNP to conclude deal

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CAPE TOWN — Pressure is mounting on the African National Congress (ANC) and the New National Party (NNP) to clinch a deal on co-operative governance as the deadline for the election of the Western Cape premier nears.

Failure to reach agreement before December 12 would force the dissolution of the legislature and elections would have to be held.

A deal could see the NNP hanging on to 70 of the 107 Democratic Alliance (DA) councillors.

Yesterday the provincial legislature had to call off its sitting after both the ANC and NNP chief whips said they needed more time to finalise the talks. Legislature secretary Pieter Pretorius said the pow-

er-sharing negotiations between the two parties would determine whether a new premier would be elected before the deadline date.

"The provincial legislature must get an indication from the political parties ... It is difficult to say what is going to happen," Pretorius said.

"The two parties are very wary of overlooking significant constitutional and legal aspects of the deal, which could lead to hold-ups (and) lengthy Constitutional Court delays," said a source.

The source said the NNP was confident that the ANC would settle for the position of Cape Town mayor, giving the premiership of Western Cape to the NNP.

"Right now there is a lot of recruitment going on in the municipal council chambers ... we want to ensure that all our supporters are on

board when the anti-defection clause is lifted early next year."

More than 300 members of the SA Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) staged a sit-in at the municipal offices protesting against the alleged unilateral appointments by the city's management.

Samwu spokesman Majidie Abrahams accused management of making political appointments in an attempt to "desperately shore up its power in Cape Town ahead of its likely political ousting".

He claimed the city recently appointed 12 senior managers. Ten of these were white, while two of them were coloured.

Kylie Hatton, spokeswoman for acting mayor Belinda Walker, dismissed Abrahams's claims, saying that the appointments were "strictly administrative".

Expect not antiretroviral aid

DOCTORS, nurses, scientists, trade unionists and religious leaders who attended a recent Treatment Action Campaign seminar on AIDS were adamant that government had no legal, ethical, scientific or financial grounds for refusing to provide free antiretroviral drugs.

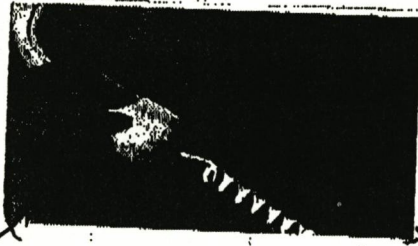
This follows President Thabo Mbeki's most recent attempt to explain his curious stance on the issue, in which he used selective quotes to claim that official US treatment guidelines supported government's position that the drugs "are as dangerous to health as the things they are supposed to treat".

However, judging from Finance Minister Trevor Manuel's response to a parliamentary question shortly before the session came to an end, if Mbeki was going to misquote anyone, it should have been former US President John Kennedy.

We suggest something like "Ask not what the treatment can do for you, ask what the treatment can do for your country" might be most appropriate, bearing in mind Manuel's contribution to the debate:

"There is no evidence anywhere that suggests, except within the pharmaceutical companies, that the administration of antiretroviral drugs in the quantities sought by South Africans who live with HIV/AIDS, at the costs of even the supposed free drugs, is beneficial to the economy or indeed affordable by a poor country like SA."

Will it take a tax on the real value of free antiretrovirals to persuade this government that there is a benefit to be found in saving the lives of unborn babies?



Determined to take his run in Parliament to 100 not out

INKATHA Freedom Party chief whip Koos van der Merwe was one of only a handful of MPs who observed the parliamentary "tradition" of wearing a hat during the last session this year.

Whether this was out of nostalgia or flamboyance is unclear, but his crowning glory was a racy panama.

Bidding farewell on behalf of Inkatha before departing for the summer recess, Van der Merwe said this had been his 24th consecutive year in Parliament — and he hopes to see out another 24.

By then he would be about 100 years old, Van der Merwe mused, adding that it was his fervent hope that Parliament would have approved the much-rewritten Immigration Bill before then.

The legislation is, of course, sponsored by his boss, Inkatha leader and Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Of the few who were paying attention, Speaker Frene Ginwala was also kind enough to respond — by offering her sincere condolences to whoever is the presiding officer when Van der Merwe achieves his century.