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Inkatha, ANC break deadlock

By BRENDAN BOYLE
in Cape Town

SOUTH Africa's two main black political parties have broken a one-year deadlock that fuelled violence in KwaZulu-Natal province, with each side making a significant concession.

Leaders of President Mandela's ruling African National Congress and Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's federalist Inkatha Freedom Party met for almost four hours yesterday.

It was their first formal meeting since Inkatha agreed at the last moment to contest the country's first all-race elections in April last year, winning control of the Zulu homeland province and three seats in the national Cabinet.

The ANC secretary-general, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, who is also president of the elected Constitutional Assembly, said the parties had agreed to a formal exchange of constitutional proposals.

They agreed to examine agreements and conflicts over Inkatha's demand for virtual autonomy in KwaZulu-Natal and the ANC's drive for central control of the post-apartheid nation.

"In the course of our discussions, it became clear there was quite a lot of misunderstanding, a lack of knowledge on what the positions of the two parties are," Mr Ramaphosa said.

Inkatha negotiator Mr Sipo Mzimela, the Minister of Correctional Services in Mr Mandela's national unity coalition, said: "We are in a better position than we were before."

Yesterday's meeting could herald a thaw in the tense relationship between the ANC, which won almost two-thirds of the vote last April, and Inkatha, which took 10 per cent of the national vote.

The breakthrough was made possible when Inkatha agreed to shelve the implementation of a one-year-old accord on international mediation about its constitutional demands.

Mr Mzimela said the call for foreign mediation, opposed by the ANC, had not been abandoned, but would not be pressed.

The ANC agreed in turn to accept bilateral talks in parallel with the Constitutional Assembly, which was elected to draft a permanent post-apartheid constitution by June 1996.

The two sides will meet again to set an agenda for high-level talks.

On a bleaker note, a parliamentary report has revealed South Africa has charged 1935 policemen with criminal offences, including murder, rape, and robbery, in the six months up to May 15.

Reuters

Inkatha targets ANC strongholds

By a correspondent in Durban

THE Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party yesterday warned it would "declare war" on areas controlled by President Mandela's ruling African National Congress in KwaZulu-Natal province as tensions rose over the issue of constitutional reform.

IFP spokesman Mr Ed Tillet released a list of 84 areas he said were "no-go areas" for the party in the tinderbox province, where the IFP is dominant, and said it was considering holding surprise rallies in these areas.

"This signals its (the IFP's) intention to declare war on ANC no-go areas in the province," Mr Tillet said.

The Zulu nationalist IFP's combative statement came against a background of increasing tension between the IFP and the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal, with both parties issuing threats against the other.

The leader of the IFP, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, repeated his call at the weekend for his supporters to "rise and resist" Mr Mandela's central government, while Mr Mandela warned at rallies in KwaZulu-Natal that he would not allow South Africa's fragile democracy to be undermined.

The two leaders are already at loggerheads over the ANC's refusal to meet the IFP's demand for international mediation on the status of the Zulu king and the powers and functions of provinces.

The IFP demand stems from an agreement signed with the ANC and the formerly ruling National Party in the days before last April's all-race election, which called for international mediation on outstanding constitutional issues.

The ANC now believes mediation would be a waste of time and that the parties can resolve their differences themselves, with both groups due to meet this week to discuss the mediation dispute.

In another development that could lead to conflict, Mr Mandela yesterday moved closer to shifting the control of tribal chiefs away from provincial authorities to central government — an action sure to be opposed by Chief Buthelezi, who stands to lose influence with the chiefs, his main power base in KwaZulu-Natal, if such a plan goes ahead.

AFP

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