

NUM hits at ban

A 70 to 80-year relationship with the people of Mozambique was being disrupted by the South African Government, the Chamber of Mines and the Progressive Federal Party stressed on Wednesday.

And the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) declared that the move to restrict Mozambique labour "will not be taken lying down".

Although it could not evaluate the security reasons for the decision, the Chamber said it hoped negotiations between South Africa and Mozambique would lead to an early return of normal relationships.

"South Africa should be trying to build up good economic relationships with neighbouring countries, rather than politicising Pretoria's problems," commented Mr Brian Goodall, the mineral and energy spokesman of the PFP.

"The solution to the South African question and peace in the sub-continent is not the termination of services of workers from Mozambique," agreed Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, NUM general secretary.

Mr Ramaphosa described the Government's decision as an "outrageous and unwarranted retaliatory action which the miners would not take lying down". He would not say what steps the union would take.

"The Government continues its policy of destabilisation and aggression against neighbouring states," he said. "Mozambique and other countries in the area are part of a regional economy and have contributed to the wealth of South Africa."

The Government had over-reacted and the move could have far-reaching consequences, said Mr Brian Goodall, the Progressive Federal Party's spokesman on mineral and energy affairs.

"South Africa should try to build a greater community of interests with other countries in the region. The Government should be looking at steps to strengthen the regional economy instead of banning foreign workers from the country.

"Besides, I think the Government is punishing the wrong people. All the workers currently employed in South Africa are being condemned by the actions of a minority," he said.

The Chamber of Mines said it hoped the long-standing relationship between the South African mining industry and the people of Mozambique would be restored as soon as possible.

The Chamber regretted the Government's move but welcomed the fact that the inevitable disruption to its operation would, to an extent, be cushioned by the decision that workers currently employed would be permitted to complete their contracts.

The number of Mozambicans employed on gold and coal mines, which are members of the Chamber, amounted to 51 698 in 1985.