

Bridging the credibility gap

Police face up to improving the force - image and act

By SUE VALENTINE

HOW to bridge the chasm of credibility between the police in South Africa and the communities they must serve was one of the many complex questions examined during a conference hosted by Idasa in Vanderbijlpark in October.

After nearly two years of planning and negotiating, the conference finally brought together representatives of the South African Police and the various homeland police forces with political and non-governmental organisations, international policing specialists and private citizens.

It was a memorable gathering, if only for the announcement at the start of proceedings requesting all delegates who were carrying guns to please hand them in to the hotel safe!

Some 73 speakers participated (the only no-show was the PAC) and the substantial SAP and homeland police presence provided the chance

for meaningful interaction between community representatives, monitors and the police.

Opening the conference, Idasa executive director Dr Alex Boraine appealed to delegates not to embark on a "police-bashing" exercise. At the same time, however, he emphasised the almost total lack of credibility of the SAP in the eyes of the majority of South Africans.



Ivor Jenkins of Idasa with police liaison officer Col Frans Malherbe and the Venda Commissioner of Police, Lt-Col Mulder van Eyk.

number of officers killed in recent years - 107 in 1990, 145 in 1991 and 174 up to September 1992.

Key issues which emerged, both from Dr Boraine's welcoming address and during the

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Economy sets pace for change

THE only hope for the future in South Africa lies in the recognition that economic restructuring is as necessary - and urgent - as political restructuring. The country cannot afford "chicken-and-egg" debates on political and economic restructuring.

In an article in this journal, Idasa economics consultant Warren Krafchik warns against the political process holding development to ransom.

He says there is a lobby that argues that, although development is needed to create a stable democracy, a political settlement must precede a development settlement. On these grounds, numerous development initiatives have been postponed or aborted. The government is unable to implement development initiatives as these will be rejected as unilateral restructuring; however, without political power, neither can any of the opposition groups negotiate development.

"What this means is that the political process is effectively holding the development process to ransom," writes Krafchik.

Failure to address popular material expectations would threaten the stability of the transition.

"The removal of political distortions will obviously not miraculously restore us to the growth rates of the 1960s."

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