

World/Nation

South Africans of all races vote in elections, black turnout low

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) — Security forces ringed polling booths Wednesday as South Africans of all races, voting simultaneously for the first time, elected segregated municipal councils nationwide.

President P.W. Botha's National Party faced a fierce challenge from the extreme-right Conservative Party in white communities. Many of those communities experienced their first partisan local elections after decades of Nationalist dominance.

The turnout was low in many black townships where anti-apartheid activists urged an election boycott in defiance of state-of-emergency regulations.

There were scattered arson and stonethrowing attacks but no fatalities or major clashes, reported South African police.

In Soweto, a township near Johannes-

burg where more than 2 million blacks live, only 4,000 people had voted by mid-afternoon, the state radio reported.

The radio said 20,000 of Soweto's 347,000 registered voters had cast ballots before the election.

Nationwide, 7,229 council seats were at stake in 1,071 communities.

The state radio said only 905 of the 1,839 black council seats were being contested.

Anti-apartheid clergymen such as Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, opposed the elections and urged South Africans to fast and pray during the day.

The government spent millions of dollars on advertising to promote a high turnout, contending that the municipal elections broadened democracy even

though blacks cannot vote in national elections.

Critics say turnout percentages will have little meaning because millions of blacks were considered ineligible to vote.

Many leading black opposition groups are banned.

Many schools in black, mixed-race and Asian townships near Johannesburg and Cape Town were virtually deserted as students stayed away to protest the elections.

In the white elections, the pro-apartheid Conservative Party hoped to capture the city council in Pretoria, the capital, and sweep to power in most northern towns.

Formed only eight years ago, and never before a factor in local elections,

the Conservative Party won 26 percent of the vote in national elections in May 1987.

Its leaders believe they could seriously challenge the National Party in parliamentary elections expected by early 1990.

The Conservatives view Botha's gradual race reforms as capitulation to the black majority and seek to reimpose strict segregation.

Under apartheid, the 5 million whites control the economy and maintain separate districts, schools and health services.

The Conservatives want to toughen enforcement of residential segregation and restrict the presence of blacks in urban areas.

Bush confident, Dukakis intent

Republican George Bush sounded like a man counting down the hours to victory in the race for the White House on Wednesday as he renewed his pledge not to raise taxes. Democrat Michael Dukakis vowed to work, to campaign and to win despite the odds against him.

The latest news from the pollsters was anything but good for the Democrats. A Washington Post survey in Maryland —

one of the nation's most Democratic states — showed Bush with a nine-point lead, on top of two national polls Tuesday that showed a double-digit Democratic deficit.

Bush's lead was back down to a single digit in an ABC News-Washington Post poll released late Tuesday in which he was ahead by 52-44.

The survey of 1,242 likely voters was conducted during seven days — a longer sampling period than in the other surveys — and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.

The vice president began his campaign day in Detroit, where he said Dukakis sounds like a man "just itching to repeal" the income tax cuts of the Reagan era.

The vice president also defended his call for a capital gains tax cut from Dukakis' criticism.

"It's not a tax break for the rich," he said. "It is a break for those who want to have a job in this country."

Dukakis was in Colorado, meeting privately with Hispanic leaders who later said high voter turnout among their constituents could deliver a Democratic up-

set on Election Day.

He laid claim to strong Hispanic support and said that was due in part to his stand against drugs.

hope you'll tell them that."

Advisers insisted the campaign's own polling reflects a closer race than the Bush lead in national polls.

"The pollsters are not going to call this election," the candidate said. "It's the people who are going to be voting."

Bush optimistically looked beyond the election.

"If I am elected in 13 days, 8 hours and 22 minutes from now . . . I will work with Congress — got to do that — telling them the American people in electing me voted against a tax increase," he said.

"Now let's sit down together, honor the people's decision, and hold spending increases to the rate of inflation."

Bush also contended that there have been a "staggering" number of jobs created as a result of Reagan-era tax cuts.

"My opponent thinks they were a disaster," Bush said. "Those sound to me like the words of someone who is just itching to repeal one of the most successful economic policies in our history."

President Reagan ventured into Democratic Maryland and said Dukakis has unjustly accused Bush of running a negative campaign.

"The pollsters are not going to call this election. It's the people who are going to be voting." Michael Dukakis

U.S., Soviets break the ice to free whales

BARROW, Alaska (AP) — Superpower savors were close to opening a path to the sea for two trapped whales Wednesday after Soviet icebreakers bashed through an ice ridge and Americans hacked iceholes toward the Russians.

The whales are acting in a very excited manner, almost like they can sense freedom, said Sgt. Ian Robertson, spokesman for the Alaska National Guard.

At first light, the Soviet icebreakers were a half-mile from the line of breathing holes being cut by Americans working in the opposite direction, he said.

Later Wednesday, rescuers planned to use a gargantuan, tractor-like device propelled by pontoon augers to cut the relatively thin ice remaining between the whales and the icebreakers' farthest advance.

Rescue coordinator Ron Morris of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the whales could be free by late Wednesday if all went well. The weather was 5 degrees Fahrenheit, Robertson said.

The breakthrough in the effort to free the migrating gray whales caught in an early freeze came after more than a week of delays and disappointments.

"We feel very good about it," said Rear Adm. Sigmund Petersen of NOAA. "The cooperation has just been fantastic. The Soviets came in here with a very positive attitude and went to work immediately."

On Tuesday, the Americans moved swim around the shallow water they had refused to pass.

When the Eskimos started cutting the air holes, the whales followed the water to the end, Petersen said. They like that deeper water."

Working in the other direction, the Soviet icebreakers reduced to rubble the ice ridge standing between the whales and open water. The ridge, formed by colliding ice masses, was a jumble of ice blocks as big as small houses.

China enters market of satellite launching

XICHANG, China (AP) — Turbaned peasants trudge by, prodding water buffalo and lugging firewood, and taking little notice of the towering hollow structure from another time and for another universe.

Surrounded by green mountains in an isolated corner of Sichuan province, the Xichang Satellite Center and its 11-story gantry is the takeoff point for China's entry into the international satellite launching market.

The base, normally closed to foreigners, is on display as China enters final negotiations with Washington on issuing

U.S. licenses for the launch of three Hughes Aircraft Co. satellites. They would be the first American satellites put into orbit by a non-Western country.

Agreement has been reached on safeguarding U.S. technology secrets during the launch process and establishing China's liability in case of accident.

Officials meet again in November to work out how to ensure that Chinese prices, much lower than those charged by the U.S. space shuttle or European Ariane services, won't jeopardize the American commercial launching industry.

Xichang's first commercial venture could come as early as 1989 with the launch of Westar 6, an old satellite retrieved by the space shuttle in 1984, for AsiaSat, a Hong Kong consortium.

An Australian company, AUSSAT, intends to put two Hughes communications satellites into orbit in the early 1990s.

China decided in the mid-1970s to build a rocket base in this remote area because it is easy to defend, sparsely populated and has clear winter days well suited for launches.

Mexico: Oil industry must adjust to lower crude prices

MEXICO CITY, (AP) — The state oil export committee held an emergency meeting, and the government-owned oil company Pemex said the oil industry must adjust to lower prices because there will be no recovery soon.

The Committee on Petroleum Exports met in an emergency session Tuesday as Mexican crude oil prices continued to plunge, the Mexico City newspaper *La Jornada* said Wednesday.

On Wednesday, the national oil com-

pany Pemex announced the petroleum industry must get used to low prices because a rapid recuperation of prices is not foreseen.

Pemex said the average price for its Isthmus grade of crude oil had dropped to an average price of about \$10.75 per barrel.

Pemex must seek alternative ways to remain competitive in the world oil market, the officials said. Those include new technology, more efficient operations,

exploration, development and new ways of buying and selling.

Though Mexico is not part of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Companies, the country has closely followed its pricing and production policies, slowly reducing petroleum production.

Nevertheless, *La Jornada* said, the government committee in charge of oil export policy discussed the possibility of increasing production to bring in more money at the reduced prices.

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