

Offensive 'against rebels' 036

Lisbon: a right-wing rebel movement claimed yesterday that Mozambique Government troops, backed by Zimbabwean and Tanzanian forces, have begun an offensive against guerrilla bases in southern Inhambane province of Mozambique.

A spokesman for the rebel Mozambican National Resistance said the clashes were around Morrumbene. The group's claims came a day after allegations that a 15,000 man combined Mozambican, Zimbabwean, and Tanzanian force had built up around Morrumbene and the towns of Panda and Vilanculos in preparation for an action against rebel strongholds.

Thousands of Mozambicans—perhaps 17,000—will be sent home from South Africa by the end of the year, South African radio reported. It quoted the Department of Cooperation and Development as saying that all employers in the Eastern Transvaal province, where most of the Mozambicans work, have been sent letters telling them that all Mozambicans should be sent home.

The repatriation order was likely to be seen by black states as an attempt to destabilise anti-apartheid countries. Last year, the Government ordered thousands of black Zimbabweans to return home, citing a Zimbabwe minister's statement that his Government did not approve of its people working in South Africa.

Thousands of Mozambicans try to cross the border into South Africa every month, seeking work and food. In June, one district police commandant said, "We are now apprehending about 2,000 a month and, in a single day, 80 were caught."

White farmers in the area, short of labour, have hired many of the Mozambicans. The broadcast said the repatriations could cut the farm work forces in the area by 40 per cent.

Zimbabwe formally extended its state of emergency by six months yesterday and introduced new laws shielding Government leaders, security forces, and civil servants from criminal or civil prosecutions.

Also published in the Government Gazette are emergency powers prohibiting legal action against members of the security forces if "it is in the national interest."

The indemnity covers the defence forces, the police, the intelligence organisations, and the prison service. It also includes the President, the Prime Minister, cabinet Ministers, junior ministers and "any person" acting on official orders.—AP.