

Bannings mar joy at release

By JENNIFER HYMAN

SEVERE BANNING and house arrest orders were served on three former political prisoners at the weekend — shortly before they were released after serving 10-year sentences on Robben Island.

Mr. Indress Naidoo, 36, Mr. Reggie Vandeyar, 42, and Mr. Shirish Nanabhai, 37, were welcomed by their families and friends in a quietly emotional scene outside the maximum security wing of Leeuwkop Prison.

Minutes earlier, the families had watched through windows as Security Police served five-year banning and house arrest orders on the three men in separate offices.

Women in bright saris and children in their Sunday best rushed to the wrought-iron gates as warders opened the padlock and the prisoners emerged.

Someone shouted "One at a time", referring to the ban on gatherings, and one by one the men were embraced and garlanded in the Hindu tradition by their weeping relatives.

A smiling Security Police officer looked on as the men were driven away in a convoy of cars — to report at their local police stations in terms of their bans and then to reunions at their homes in Lenasia, Doornfontein and Fordsburg.

RESTRICTIONS

The three were sentenced 10 years ago in one of the first sabotage trials held under the heavily-criticised General Law Amendment Act.

They were found guilty of blowing up a railway toolshed between Crown and New Canada stations and of attempting to blow up a signal relay case.

Their families' joy at the release was marred by the severe restrictions served on the men in terms of the Sup-

pression of Communism Act.

They are restricted to their homes each night and at weekends, and may not attend gatherings nor receive visitors. Banning orders restrict them to the magisterial districts in which they live, and prohibit them from preparing anything for publication or from participating in any organisation.

The South African Students' Organisation (Saso) and the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC) are specifically mentioned. The men may also not be quoted.

Mr. Naidoo and Mr. Nanabhai have been "inseparable" friends since their youth, according to their families. After 10 years together with Mr. Vandeyar on Robben Island, the men are now prohibited from communicating with one another, or with any other banned person.

All the families expressed bitterness at the severity of the bans. "After all, Indress, Shirish and Reggie have paid their debt — they have served 10 years in prison. Why not let them go free now?" said one relative.

Mr. Jasmath Nanabhai, elderly father of Shirish, added: "My son is not a communist, and never has been. We are all Gandhians. We support passive resistance.

WEDDING

"One of Shirish's brothers has waited 10 years to get married, so that Shirish could be at the wedding. It will take place later this month, but now we don't know if Shirish is allowed to be there."

The Naidoo family sat up late into the night talking about world events during the last 10 years.

"They were not allowed newspapers on the island and Indress has huge gaps in his knowledge. We had to tell him details about landing a man on the moon, the Vietnam war, and all the changes that have taken place in South Africa," said his youngest brother Prema.