

Queens tired of shabby

King Zwelithini's wives tell KZN premier of

shabby treatment CITY PRESS MARCH 3 2002

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treatment

humiliation by royal officials

By MANDLA ZULU

THE ZULU royal family has broken its silence around what they describe as the shabby treatment of Zulu queens by members of the royal household department which is tasked with overseeing the administrative needs of the king and his family.

The complaint, which is said to be the worst humiliation they suffered under the KwaZulu-Natal government, relates to the lack of water, the denial of transport or the regular non-availability of official drivers for trips. The queens vehemently complained of having been made to answer questions invading their privacy when they have to

motivate their need for cars to consult doctors.

. In a strongly worded letter addressed

to Premier Lionel Mtshali, under whom the royal household department falls, King Goodwill Zwelithini's four wives detailed a long history of abuse from drivers

to junior officials who sign their requisition forms for whatever service they need, including consulting a doctor.

The letter, in the possession of City Press, details the displeasure over the treatment encountered by four of Zwelithini's five wives. The queens who have come out in the open to voice their grievances are Queen Sibongile of KwaKhetho's household; Queen Buhle of

KwaDlamahlahla; Queen Thandi of Linduzulu and Queen Nompumelelo of Enyokeni. .

The name of Queen Mantombi, the daughter of the late Swazi King

Sobhuza II, is conspicuous by its absence in the letter. It is believed that since she is born of a royal family, she may have chosen to stay away from any controversy that the complaints may cause.

The queens have lashed out at the royal household department, saying it was created to humiliate them. They have charged that vehicles allocated for their use were not always readily available. If the vehicles were ready, the queens

complained of the state of the vehicles. They said cigarette butts were left in the cars, which showed that other people were using them.

The letter cites an example: â\200\234The queen of KwaKhethoâ\200\231mthandayo conveyed a child to school. The driver left her there and she had to make plans to return.â\200\235

It also cites an incident where â\200\234the queen' of Linduzulu was caught by traffic officers with a drunk driver. We think it is not fair to have such people (working) for us. Sometimes cars do not arrive in time,â\200\235 the letter states.

The queens complain of incompetent drivers who are unfamiliar with big cities and road signs.

At times the queens said they have had to answer humiliating questions by junior officials and view this as an invasion of their privacy which also lowered their dignity.

â\200\234If you want to consult a doctor or are undergoing treatment. Mr '

(Philemon) Makama, the assistant director of administration in the royal household department, wants to know all the details of your sick-

ness and he wants the who, what and where, which are unnecessary details for him to know. We think the system of administration is not consistent and is unfair,â\200\235 the letter reads.

Several attempts to contact the royal household departmentâ\200\231s spokesperson, Eric Gumbi, were unsuccessful. His secretary, Nomusa Molefe, refused to furnish City

Press with Gumbiâ\200\231s cellphone number, saying he had told her not to give it to the media. She promised

several times that Gumbi would return our calls but he failed to do so.

Makama admitted he used to demand doctors' reports from the queens, saying he was performing his duty as instructed by the department. He refused to comment any further and referred questions to Gumbi.

City Press understands that the Kwakhetho'mthandayo palace has no running water and relies on delivered water.

It is also alleged that Gumbi refused to provide funds for the renovation of one of the palaces' traditional rondavels that was struck by

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Queens tired of shabb
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lightning.

The alleged humiliation of the royal family seems to have begun with the creation of the royal household department in 1999 to handle matters affecting the royal family.

The department reports directly to Mtshali. Gumbi took over as the head of the department in April last year.

Gumbi's department is supposed to render services to King Zwelithini, maintain his palaces and support his farming activities,

The department is also a custodian of all state assets, including the palaces and vehicles that are provided by the provincial government.

Sunday Times,
March 3 2002

ing has his wings clipped

7ulu monarch short of transport, phone and hotel â\200\224 allegedly because he rose above politics

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EGoodwill Zwelithini of the Zulus

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THABO MKHIZE
and MAWANDE JUBASI

become a casualty in the battle for
supremacy raging between the
IFP and the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal.
Since the king switched from his sole
allegiance to the IFP and chose to rise
above party politics, he, his family and
staff have been stripped of royal priv-
ileges they had previously enjoyed.
They include:
@ Being denied independence in his

Z ULU King Goodwill Zwelithini has
. royal duties by having to submit all in-
vitations and requests to be sanctioned
by a Royal Household Department that
was set up in June 2000;

@ Being assigned no vehicles to travel
to official and private functions;

@ Having his cellphone barred and
his cellphone budget limited to R4 000 a
month. His personal assistant and staff
members have also had their phones
barred; and

@ Having no accommodation booked
for him when he travels on official
engagements.

The provincial ANC chairman, Sâ\200\231bu
Ndebele, said the king was being pun-

ished for maintaining â\200\234equi-distanceâ\200\235
between the IFP and the ANC.

And the chairman of the House of Tra-
ditional Leaders, Mpiyezintombi Mzi-
mela, called on politicians not to use the
king as a political football.

â\200\234I am worried about the respect given to the king. During the opening of the legislature, the politicians were squabbling and fighting right in front of the king, something unheard-of in Zulu culture,â\200\235 he said.

Zwelithini is a direct descendant of the 19th-century founder of the Zulu nation, Shaka Zulu.

When, before 1994, the king fell in line with the KwaZulu homeland government headed by the IFP and the kingâ\200\231s uncle, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, he was feted and paraded as monarch.

Six palaces were built for him all over northern KwaZulu and he had unlimited access to cars and travel.

That was a far cry from the king's predicament last Saturday when he couldnâ\200\231t even make a call from his cell-phone while attending the launch of

Deputy President Jacob Zuma's Or- -

phans of Aids Trust Fund in Durban. Nor had t! - Royal Household Depart-

ment reserved any accommodation in

Durban for him. Zwelithini's personal

secretary, Nhlamvuyelanga Sithole, said this was only one of a series of logistical problems faced by the king.

â\200\234There is a widespread feeling that the king was being treated like a commoner,â\200\235 said Sithole.

He said for the past six months Zwelithini had battled to carry out his duties because he had no transport.

This week, the ANC'sâ\200\231s Ndebele said he had to intervene personally and lend the king a Mercedes-Benz from the provincial Department of Transport after realising the king was immobile.

Zwelithini said he had been surprised to hear on the radio that the head of the Royal Household Department, Eric Gumbi, had said there were cars at one of his palaces.

â\200\234Which of the royal palaces has the cars they are talking about?â\200\235 the king wanted to know. â\200\231

Explaining the delays in meeting the king's transport and accommodation needs, Gumbi said every invitation had to be received 14 days before the event for it to be considered by the Royal Household Department, which in turn

sent it to Premier Lionel Mtshali for discussion in the provincial Cabinet.

â\200\234The general practice is that the office of the king in Nongoma did not hand

over invitations received by the king, and this meant that we could not provide the necessary support services,â\200\235 he said.

But Sithole insists he sent invitations and requisitions for trips and accommodation in time to the department, but seldom received responses.

â\200\234My cellphone was also barred from last month, making it difficult for me to function in my job,â\200\235 he said.

He said the king attended most functions using his own resources.

But Gumbi said the Royal Household Department had ordered a new R1.8-million armoured sedan for the king. The vehicle was meant to have been delivered in December, but the company had missed the deadline. .

He said the department also provided the five queens with five Toyota Corollas, but they were kept in Ulundi, 62km from the palaces in Nongoma. The queens had to put in requisitions for use of the cars.

Gumbi added: â\200\234The king had no limit on his usage of the personal phone but, since the beginning of this month, we have limited it to R4 000 to ensure better control of expenditure.â\200\235 ,

He said he was not aware that the kingâ\200\231s phone was barred last weekend.

| (SUNDAY ISSUE PARTY ALLEGIANCES)

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wedding of one of
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: mÃ©sdes or find themselves jobs
'and make lives tâ\200\230or themselves in the

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B Princess Ntomoloyesizwe, left, may be marrying a commoner but for many of her spinster si
sters,

â\200\230pictured here leading the reed dance ceremony, finding suitable suitors is proving
to be difficult

Prince Charming

real world, often forced to juggle tra-
dition with kwaito culture.

Princess Nandi, one of King
Goodwill Zwelithiniâ\200\231s daughters is
set to marry a member of the Tembu
royal family in the Eastern Cape,

No date has been set yet, but a
member of the Zulu royal family

said when the time was right the
nation would be told officially of the
good news.

Wanting to make a wife of a
princess comes at a hefty price. A fig-
ure of 150 cows for lobolo has been
given by the rumour mill as having
crossed the Tugela River as the

Tembuâ\200\231s asked for â\200\234good relations
with the Zulu nationâ\200\235.

Contacted for comment royal spokesman Prince Derrick Zulu would not be drawn to confirm or deny the figure of the bride price. He also refused to shed any light on the rumoured weddings.

The impending marriage of Nandi, who is named after the mother of King Shaka, has opened the floodgates for the king's many other eligible princesses.

Princess Ntandoyesizwe, royal watchers say, is also on the verge of getting married to a commoner from Gauteng. :

A while ago the rumour mill abounded with stories that one of the king's daughters, Sibusile who was born in 1972, would be marrying the then unmarried Lesotho King Letsie III.

Such a marriage would perhaps have helped atone those Basotho who are yet to forgive prominent Zulu nationalist Mntwana Mangosuthu Buthelezi for invading Lesotho in September of 1998 while he was acting president of South Africa.

So unpredictable are matters of the heart, that the union was possible only in the imagination of those wishing the days of arranged marriages could return.

Royal watchers say although in the ideal world princesses marry into royal families, this has become difficult to insist on, as you cannot determine the way in which one's heart will point you.

The king's children are born out of -polygamous unions as he has five wives. The first wife is Queen Sibongile married in 1969.

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