

Queens tired of shabby treatment

King Zwelithini's wives tell KZN premier of 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'mthandayo; 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: "The queen of KwaKhetho'mthandayo conveyed a child to school. The driver left her there and she had to make plans to return."

It also cites an incident where "the 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," 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.

"If 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 whens, which are unnecessary details for him to know. We think the system of administration is not consistent and is unfair," the letter reads.

Several attempts to contact the royal household department's spokesperson, Eric Gumbi, were unsuccessful. His secretary, Nomusa Molefe, refused to furnish City

Press with Gumbi's 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

(1)

PTO

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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.

(2)

King has his wings clipped

Zulu monarch short of transport, phone and hotel — allegedly because he rose above politics



STRIPPED OF PRIVILEGES: King Goodwill Zwelithini of the Zulus

**THABO MKHIZE
and MAWANE JUBASI**

ZULU King Goodwill Zwelithini has 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 privileges they had previously enjoyed.

They include:

- Being denied independence in his royal duties by having to submit all invitations 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, S'bu Ndebele, said the king was being pun-

ished for maintaining "equi-distance" between the IFP and the ANC.

And the chairman of the House of Traditional Leaders, Mpiyezintombi Mzimela, called on politicians not to use the king as a political football.

"I 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," 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 king's 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 couldn't even make a call from his cellphone while attending the launch of Deputy President Jacob Zuma's Orphans of Aids Trust Fund in Durban.

Nor had the Royal Household Department 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.

"There is a widespread feeling that the king was being treated like a commoner," 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's 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.

"Which of the royal palaces has the cars they are talking about?" the king wanted to know.

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.

"The 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," he said.

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

"My cellphone was also barred from last month, making it difficult for me to function in my job," 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.

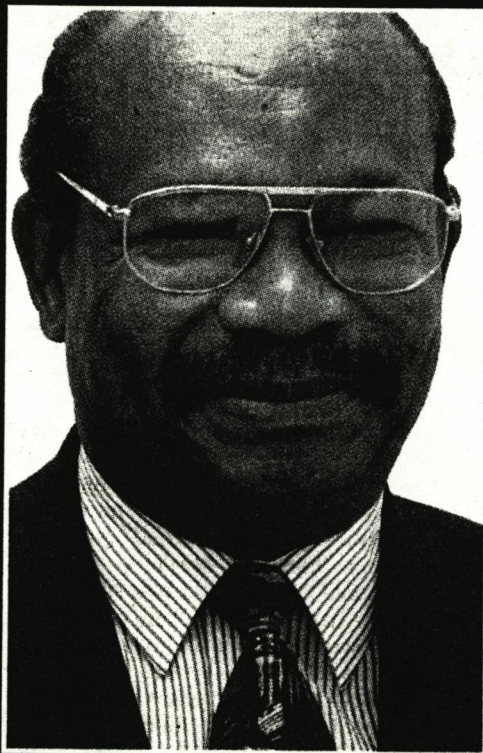
He said the department also provided the five queens with five Toyota Corollas, but they were kept in Ulundi, 62km from the palaces in Nongoma. The queens had to put in requisitions for use of the cars.

Gumbi added: "The 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."

He said he was not aware that the king's phone was barred last weekend.

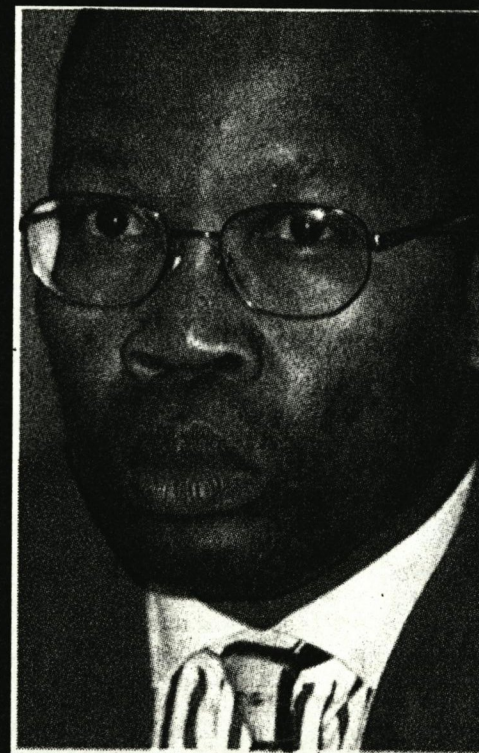
SUNDAY TRIBUNE PERSPECTIVES MARCH 3 2002

SUNDAY ISSUE PARTY ALLEGIANCES



LIONEL MTSHALI

The
battle
goes
on



S'BU NDEBELE

They're beautiful, bright, financially secure and unmarried, yet King Goodwill Zwelithini's family is battling to find princes for his princesses, Thami Ngidi reports



■ Princess Ntomoloyesizwe, left, may be marrying a commoner but for many of her spinster sisters, pictured here leading the reed dance ceremony, finding suitable suitors is proving to be difficult

Waiting for Prince Charming

Will the impending wedding of one of Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini's daughters mean a change of fortune for a family of more than 30 children that is still seeking blue blooded husbands for the young princesses?

None of the daughters is married because there just aren't any princes on the marriage market.

The grapevine has been rich with possible sons-in-law for King Zwelithini, suitors for any of the beautiful daughters of marriageable age.

None has panned out. Instead, the princesses have gone on to complete their studies at private schools, start businesses or find themselves jobs and make lives for themselves in the

real world, often forced to juggle tradition with kwaito culture.

Princess Nandi, one of King Goodwill Zwelithini's 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 figure of 150 cows for lobolo has been given by the rumour mill as having crossed the Tugela River as the

Tembu's asked for "good relations with the Zulu nation".

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's 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.

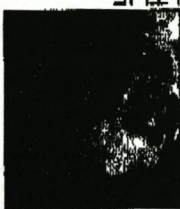
So unpredictable are matters of the heart, that the union was possible only in the imagination of those wishing the days of arranged marriages could return.

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.

SUNDAY TRIBUNE NEWS MARCH 3 2002

Then the DA blinked



At large

Kingdom
IN THE
SAM SOLE

alliance. Hence the hesitancy to be fair, the reasons for the

Next time you read about the outrageous sums spent by Premier Lionel Mchali committing to work in the Democratic Alliance, blame the Democratic Alliance.

It is DA policy that there should be only one provincial capital: Ploermaritzburg. At a guess, more than 80% of its voters support this view. Yet, when the DA had an opportunity this week to co-operate with the ANC to force a vote in the provincial legislature on the capital issue, they blinked.

No, the DA suddenly felt the matter needed more study (despite a commission report which has been gathering dust for years).

It's not hard to understand why the DA has, of course, been pursuing a closer relationship with the IFP, for which the status of

Umtali - at least as a symbolic cap-environment with this problem. This will not be its last

unemployed principles. Welcome to the world of

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