

Swaziland state suspends two newspaper editors

MBABANE: Swaziland's state daily newspaper has suspended two senior editors, it said Monday, 16 July 2012, after a series of critical reports on Africa's last absolute monarchy.

The Swazi Observer's acting chief editor Thulani Thwala and weekend edition editor Alec Lushaba have been suspended pending "proper investigations" into "various acts of gross misconduct", chief executive Alpheous Nxumalo announced in the newspaper.

The paper's financial administrator was also suspended.

Nxumalo did not elaborate on the reasons, but a source at the newspaper said prime minister Barnabas Dlamini pushed the suspensions after critical reporting on the government.

Among the reports that apparently angered the monarchy were stories on a nearly one-month strike by public-sector workers and a resolution by neighbouring South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) to push for the unbanning of political parties in Swaziland.

"The problem with the two editors now is their reportage of the ongoing public service strike and their stories in the weekend *Observer* on the ANC resolution on Swaziland," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The feeling is that the newspaper has shifted from its monarchist disposition."

Dlamini closed the paper for two years in 2000 following reports on a mother's lawsuit against King Mswati III for abducting her daughter. The daughter is now Queen LaMasango, one of 13 royal spouses.

The tiny mountain kingdom, Africa's last absolute monarchy, does not allow criticism of the king, whose lavish lifestyle and resistance to democratic reforms have nevertheless drawn protest.

The Swazi Observer is wholly owned by Tibiyo TakaNgwane, a multi-million-dollar trust fund owned by the king, theoretically on behalf of the people of Swaziland.

The trust fund has long been a subject of dispute in the country as critics say it is used as a royal piggy bank.

Source: AFP

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