



'LIVID': Lulu Xingwana

Motlanthe stopped Tshwane-Pretoria name change

SIBUSISO NGALWA

DEPUTY President Kgalema Motlanthe has forced Arts and Culture Minister Lulu Xingwana to withdraw a Government Gazette notice which would have effectively changed the name of the capital, Pretoria, to Tshwane without the cabinet's nod.

Had this not happened, President Jacob Zuma, who left the country for a week, would have arrived back without officially knowing that his capital city has changed to Tshwane.

Motlanthe reportedly sum-

moned Deputy Arts Minister Paul Mashatile, on Wednesday, after the department went ahead with its intention to gazette the name change.

At the heart of Motlanthe's gripe was that the department could not issue notice to change the capital city's name while the president was out of the country.

Motlanthe also felt that the matter would create a storm and deflect attention from Zuma's State of the Nation address this week.

Apparently Xingwana did not table the matter before the

cabinet, as required.

It is understood that Motlanthe told Mashatile the government had not been properly briefed about Xingwana's decision and it did not want to deal with the protests and a legal wrangle ahead of the World Cup.

While lobby group AfriForum is convinced Xingwana heeded its call to withdraw the notice - after they threatened legal action - it was Motlanthe who instructed Xingwana that the name change could not go ahead.

"There was a view that for

such a thing to happen, you have to prepare the nation. You can't disturb the (peace) especially ahead of the State of the Nation Address," said a government source.

Xingwana and her director-general, Themba Wakashe, were attending the Midem Music Exhibition in France - where the minister delivered a speech at a dinner to honour the late Miriam Makeba.

It is understood Mashatile told Motlanthe he had believed the decision had the Presidency's blessing.

Mashatile then had to can-

cel a press conference where he was to announce the notice. However it was too late to withdraw the Government Gazette as it had already been printed.

Xingwana is understood to have been livid when Mashatile told her there had been no green light from the Presidency, and she had insisted the name change had to go ahead - even instructing officials not to withdraw the notice, and telling Mashatile she would go straight to the briefing when she landed from France.

However, it took a direct call to Xingwana from Motlanthe

for the process to be stopped.

Presidential spokesman Vusi Mona confirmed an unscheduled meeting between Motlanthe and Mashatile.

On Friday the department officially retracted the notice to change Pretoria's name in the latest Government Gazette.

AfriForum's Kallie Kriel said his organisation was happy about the retraction.

Last week, AfriForum advised the department it would seek an urgent court order to set aside the name change if the government did not retract its notice by Friday.



FIRM: Kgalema Motlanthe