

No public money spent on Nkandla security upgrades

PRETORIA: There is no evidence that public money was spent to build the private residence of President Jacob Zuma, says Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi.

Nxesi was briefing reporters on the findings of an investigation into the security upgrades at President Zuma's residence in Nkandla, KwaZulu-Natal.

"The findings are that there is no evidence that public money was spent to build the private residence of the President or that any house belonging to the President was built with public money," said Nxesi on Sunday.

Nxesi however said there were a number of irregulars with regards to the appointment of service providers and the procurement of goods and services in the project.

The security upgrades done at Nkandla amount to R71 212 621, 79 including consultancy fees. Operational needs for state departments amounted to R135 208 022, 58 including consultancy fees.

To date the investigation has found that the amount paid by the state to be R206 420 644.37 which includes R26 677 240.46 that constitute variation orders for the whole project.

In November, 2012 Nxesi announced the establishment of a task team to look into the matter of which some of the task team's terms of reference include establishing whether the residence was declared a national key point and if so the process followed.

The residence was declared a national key point in April 2010. The terms of reference also included to ascertain in detail security assessments and recommendations made by state security agencies like the South African Police Services (SAPS) and also to ascertain whether supply chain prescripts were followed in the procurement of services in the project.

The supply chain management of the Department of Public Works requires compliance with the principles of fair, transparent, competitive and cost effective process throughout the acquisition of goods and services.

"The investigation has found that that the supply chain management policy and prescripts were not fully complied with," said the minister, adding that it was also revealed that an approval was granted to the regional Bid Adjudication Committee (BAC) to adopt a negotiated and nomination procedure in appointing contractors despite the project being a national one.

"It is very clear that there were a number of irregularities with regard to the appointment of service providers and procurement of goods and services," he said.

The President's home like those of former presidents and former deputy presidents had been declared a national key point.

Zuma was not involved in the details of the upgrade.

"The president is not involved whatsoever in this matter, it's an assessment by the security departments and then it is for Public Works to implement. The President is not involved at all. The president might be informed about the security processes. Even if a letter was written, the President does not deal with the details. The letter does not talk to the details. The details are with public works informed from what comes from the security details," explained Nxesi in response to a question.

The report in view of the irregularities will be referred to law enforcement agencies including the Special Investigation Unit (SIU), Auditor General and the SAPS so as to investigate any possible acts of criminality.

As part of the way forward immediately disciplinary measures on implicated government officials will be instituted. Nxesi would not give out the number of officials implicated. Public Works will review the financial delegation of the BAC for any national key points.

State Security Minister Siyabonga Cwele said that the president is not expected to be involved in the design for security arrangements. He also added that the Zuma family had been involved in the renovation and upgrading of their residence well before "a government department came in. That was in 2008. They were not involved in the design and installation of the necessary security measures," said Cwele.

The report will not be made available to the public.

Speaking to Parliament last November, President Zuma said: "My residence in Nkandla has been paid for by the Zuma family. All the buildings and every room we use in that residence, was built by ourselves as a family and not by government. I have never asked government to build a home for me, and it has not done so."

Nxesi and Cwele was also accompanied by Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa and Justice and Constitutional Development Minister Jeff Radebe.

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