

Nkandlagate report still to be debated and scrutinised by Parliament

SUNDAY'S briefing by the Minister of Public Works Thulas Nxesi on Nkandlagate was a failed attempt by the government to shield President Jacob Zuma from scrutiny.

The task team seems determined to pin the scandal on low-ranking officials. This is the oldest trick in the book by governments that have something to hide.

It is a desperate attempt to cover up how Zuma allowed this extravagant expenditure to take place.

In a style that is reminiscent of apartheid-era secrecy, this report will not be made public. This calls



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into question its integrity, and casts another dark shadow over the entire scandal.

As the parliamentary leader of the Democratic Alliance, I have a responsibility to ask serious questions about this matter.

I will, therefore, be calling on Nxesi to table this report in Parliament for full scrutiny and debate by members of the National Assembly.

If Nxesi is not prepared

to do so, I will ask the Speaker Max Sisulu to intervene to make this happen.

There are several key questions which the "task team" report fails to answer.

How can the president of the Republic of South Africa not have known about the costs of the upgrade to his own private residence?

The hard fact is that media reports are showing that the president did, in fact, receive a briefing about the upgrade in 2010.

So if Zuma persists with his dubious claim that he did not know, how can he possibly claim that he is

servicing the best interests of the public?

He made a solemn oath to do so.

As ordinary South Africans struggle to make ends meet, how can the government justify spending money on what are clearly non-security requirements?

These non-security, unbelievably, include a well-appointed private home, a state-of-the-art air conditioning system, an AstroTurf field, a visitor's centre, a private clinic, a helipad, swish elevators, and accommodation for staff.

So what will happen to this expensive compound

when Zuma finally bows out as president of South Africa?

Will the president get to keep his publicly financed palace?

Nxesi must not think that the findings of this secret report will stop difficult questions from being asked.

The government has also been using the shady apartheid National Key Points Act to try and keep a lid on this scandal.

Yet they have failed to follow the processes set out in the legislation.

Indeed, why did Zuma not receive a notice in terms of

Section 3 of the Act, informing him of the amount he

must contribute for the upgrade?

It is clear that the government is trying to reverse engineer itself out of this scandal, in a desperate attempt to avoid admitting that this expenditure is both illegal and unethical.

The public protector, the auditor-general and Parliament's standing committee on public accounts' reports are still to come.

We hope these independent institutions will go a long way to shed light on these many unanswered questions without fear or favour.

● Mazibuko is the parliamentary leader of the DA