

DA blasts ANC for blocking debate on R206m 'Nkandlagate'

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THE ANC and the DA have again clashed over a parliamentary debate on President Jacob Zuma – this time over his Nkandla residence.

The DA has hit out at the ANC for blocking a debate about Nkandla and about the constitutionality of the National Key Points Act, an apartheid-era law in terms of which Nkandla is being protected from public scrutiny.

The latest row over what MPs may debate follows the opposition's asking last year for a no-confidence debate in President Zuma to be scheduled.

The taxpayer-funded R206-million upgrading of Zuma's Nkandla residence has been a controversial topic since details emerged last year.

DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko said that at yesterday's chief whips forum meeting, the ANC rejected her notice of motion for a debate on "Nkandlagate" on Tuesday.

"This is despite the DA being allocated the space in the programme to have one of its motions debated on this day. When we proposed as an alternative the motion by DA MP Anchen Dreyer on the constitutionality of the National Key Points Act, this was also rejected by the ANC MPs on the committee," Mazibuko said.

"This position is equally problematic given that Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin has admitted that this archaic act is unconstitutional."

Mazibuko said the ANC was determined to do everything in its power to

protect Zuma from scrutiny on Nkandla.

"The DA will be raising this decision to block our motion at the National Assembly programming committee meeting tomorrow and we hope that the Speaker of the National Assembly, Max Sisulu, will intervene."

Mazibuko said that for as long as the spending of R206m on the residence went unchecked, "this scandal will remain a symbol of the government's failure to fight corruption".

ANC chief whip Mathole Motshekga said the ANC had "reserved its support" for the DA's proposal to have parliamentary debates on the president's residence in Nkandla and on the constitutionality of the National Key Points Act.

"A parliamentary debate on the

president's residence at this stage is unhelpful and tantamount to putting the cart before the horse," Motshekga said.

"This is because the matter is currently under formal investigation and the findings have not been made.

Institutions such as the Office of the Public Protector, which is accountable to Parliament, must be afforded space to do their work "without undue political influence from Parliament", he said.

The DA has said it intends re-table the motion of no confidence in Zuma as soon as the Constitutional Court has heard its application arising from the high court's dismissing an application for an order that the debate be held late last year. The matter is set down for March 28.