

Article rank | 22 Mar 2013 | Daily Dispatch | By THABO MOKONE

Zuma's wife in tuckshop row

Not built by the state, president tells parliament

PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma has denied taxpayers' money was used to build a tuckshop for one of his wives, Sizakele Khumalo.

Zuma told parliament the tuckshop had been in existence all along.

Responding to questions in the national assembly on Wednesday, Zuma told MPs the tuckshop run by Khumalo has been operating from the centre of his Nkandla homestead, but government officials recommended it be moved to the front entrance of the compound after its original location was identified as a security risk.

DA parliamentary leader Lindiwe Mazibuko had asked if Zuma was informed about government's sponsored renovations to his Nkandla home during the month of November 2010.

Zuma insisted the tuckshop had been built by his family, but government had to foot the bill for its reconstruction because it had been rebuilt as part of the R206-million security upgrades to his Nkandla homestead.

"The tuckshop has been there all the time at the centre of my homestead. My wife MaKhumalo has lived and used this tuckshop even when I was away," said Zuma amid heckling from opposition MPs and clapping of hands from the side of the ANC house.

"What was explained to me by the security was this tuckshop was at the centre of the homestead and people were coming into the homestead to buy and the explanation was it was a security risk because nobody knows who comes into the centre of the house carrying what.

"And on the security consideration the department said this is a security threat, it must be removed from the centre of the homestead to the gate so it can deal with the considerations of the security."

Zuma said his family had neither the intention nor the money to pay for the removal of MaKhumalo's tuckshop from its initial location but had simply complied with the security requirements of government.

The City Press newspaper reported last month the government's R206million splurge on Zuma's Nkandla compound included a tuckshop for MaKhumalo's use.

The newspaper reported this called into question Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi's contention that government only spent money on security upgrades and operational measures at Nkandla.

Mazibuko had also asked Zuma if he had received a letter detailing the Nkandla security upgrades from former Public Works Minister Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde, which he denied.

"Firstly, I never received any letter. No letter has ever been received by me. Very clear, straight answer," he said. But Mazibuko responded by accusing Zuma of "tap dancing around" the Nkandla issue.



"I have a letter that shows he must have known. A letter addressed to him by former Public Works Minister Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde, setting out the details of the project, including that money was being spent on non-security items," she said.

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