

Zumas get Nkandla jobs

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President's family employed by state subcontractors

THE extent to which President Jacob Zuma's relatives were hired to work on the R248-million upgrade of his home at Nkandla has been laid bare for the first time.

Court documents filed in the High Court in Pietermaritzburg spell out an abandoned liquidation dispute between a contractor hired for the state-funded project and subcontracted creditors owed more than R5-million in outstanding payments.

Thandeka Nene, the sole director of Bonelena Construction Enterprise and Projects, reached an out-of-court settlement in February with 23 creditors who provided services for the project at Nkandla.

The documents reveal that more than 34 villagers in Nkandla, some of them close relatives of the president, were

hired and paid about R75 a day by Nene.

Zuma's relatives were employed from 2010 until February 2011 as security guards, labourers and "community liaison officers".

Nene also subcontracted Zuma's nephew, Vincent Zuma, to construct a brick-paved road from the homestead's main entrance to a security compound for the president's bodyguards.

The contract was worth R18.9-million.

Vincent Zuma co-owns Bhekumuntu Construction with a relative, Caroline Zuma. The company has to date been paid R12.9-million, with R4.6-million still outstanding.

Vincent Zuma said he did not see a conflict of interest in obtaining the subcontract because his family had not been known to the president. He is the son of

Zuma's deceased half-brother, Richard, and started working on the project at Nkandla in June 2011.

Zuma's granddaughter, Phumelele Zuma, who was hired by Bonelena Construction as a community liaison officer,

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claimed she was still owed about R3 000 by Nene. She referred questions to Nene.

But the businesswoman declined to comment, citing a confidentiality agreement with the Department of Public Works.

Zuma's spokesman, Mac Maharaj, yesterday declined to

comment on whether there had been a conflict of interest in the president's relatives being hired to work on a project funded by the taxpayer. He referred queries to public works.

Sabelo Maki, the department's spokesman, would only say: "Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi is on public record saying issues pertaining to Nkandla are under investigation by the Special Investigating Unit."

Documents seen by the Sunday Times show that other relatives hired by Bonelena included Phumelele's older sister, Fisana Zuma, who was employed as a security guard, and Mxoveni Zuma, who worked as a labourer. Another relative, Sibusiso Zuma, also employed as a security guard, said he had worked for 11 months on the project and was owed R7 500 by Nene.

Another relative, who asked not be named for fear of reprisals, said when villagers were approached for jobs they did not hesitate to sign up. "There was no criteria in the selection ... we were required to submit our names and appointed on the availability of vacancies," she said.

Bonelena, which built a state-of-the-art clinic for the exclusive use of Zuma and his family, was the biggest beneficiary of the Nkandla homestead upgrade, having been awarded two major contracts worth about R100.4-million.

The contractor renovated a tuck shop run by Zuma's first wife, Sizakele Khumalo, and built a guard house and 21 thatched units for Zuma's bodyguards and medical personnel.

Nene's company, which has won state tenders worth millions of rands, has worked on several schools and clinics in KwaZulu-Natal.