

State renovations probed

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THE Department of Public Works is working on a policy that will set acceptable standards for the renovations of the homes of the country's president, deputy president, cabinet ministers and MPs.

It is a bid to stop expensive makeovers that have seen some of these politicians' homes fitted with soccer fields, Jacuzzis, spas and other vanity items, at a cost of millions to the taxpayers.

Government has come under fire over the millions of rands spent on expensive renovations to, among others, the private home of President Jacob Zuma in Nkandla, and ministerial homes in Pretoria and Cape Town.

"Policy proposals on norms and standards [regarding the renovations of such homes] will be presented to the executive for a

Policy to set acceptable standards

decision by June 30," Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi told the National Assembly in his budget vote speech.

The exorbitant cost of renovating the homes of ministers and MPs has caught the attention of the auditor-general, Terence Nombembe.

A number of high-priced projects canned

He will probe the gross overspending and possible collusion between contractors and the prestige unit responsible for managing renovations of ministerial homes.

"All prestige projects are now undergoing investigation. The process is complete with regard to Pretoria. We have now extended the investigation to Cape Town,

resulted in the cancellation of a number of high-priced projects.

He said his department was also investigating under-performance by service providers, the pricing of renovations and other irregularities, and would hold culprits to account.

As part of the turnaround, he said, the department was conducting an exhaustive register of all the state's immovable assets and a comprehensive audit of all leases entered into by government.

The Times reported recently that provinces such as Gauteng were battling to identify and locate all the buildings they own.

The Department of Public Works has confirmed that it has 2 788 leased properties it manages across the country. Following a review of these leases, 1 316 were found to "require attention" and will either be revised or renewed.