



UPGRADES? President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla home is the subject of speculation about more upgrades at the expense of the taxpayers, but his office denies this. Picture: Gallo Images/Foto24

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Presidency denies Nkandla reports

MORE UPGRADES: SUGGESTED BY SUNDAY NEWSPAPER

➔ **'No government department will be permitted to upgrade any of the president's houses.'**

The presidency yesterday flatly rejected media reports of further renovations at taxpayers' expense to President Jacob Zuma's private homestead at Nkandla, in rural KwaZulu-Natal.

"The presidency has noted with concern a report in the *Sunday Times* newspaper about alleged plans by the department of public works to renovate certain aspects of the president's Nkandla residence," the presidency said in a statement.

Zuma wished to confirm and emphasise that there were currently no renovations of the private houses at his residence at

Nkandla and no government department had indicated any proposal for renovations.

"We also wish to underscore that no government department, including the department of public works, will be permitted to renovate any of the president's private houses in Nkandla," the Presidency said.

The *Sunday Times* reported that government was gearing up to spend more taxpayer funds on Zuma's controversial Nkandla homestead, which had already been upgraded at a cost to the country of R246 million.

"Undeterred by the public outcry and a finding by the Constitutional Court that Zuma had failed to uphold the constitution when it came to the money spent on his private home, the department of public works this week confirmed a new round of work was in the offing," the newspaper reported.

"It said processes were under

way to refurbish the property – in some cases significantly – to repair shoddy workmanship and, once again, to address security concerns."

While the assessment was not complete, the cost of additional upgrades and repairs could run into millions of rands and could even involve rebuilding some of the houses on the property, the newspaper said.

Public works chief director for legal services Barnie Ntlou reportedly told the *Sunday Times* in writing that "the process has just started" to have parts of the homestead repaired and that officials had already visited the homestead.

In a series of follow-up phone calls to confirm this, Ntlou reiterated the work would definitely go ahead. "We are forced to do that. We can't allow a presidential residence to be dilapidated," he reportedly said. – ANA