

# More millions for king's houses

Sowetan, pg 1

12/7/17

(part 1 of 2)

- State to spend R1.1m renovating three homes for Zwelithini's guests
- The cost will eventually save taxpayers' money - spokesman

page 7



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(part 2 of 2)

News 7

## Zwelithini gets three free visitors' houses

Refurbishments to cost R1.1m

By Bongani Mthethiwa

Zulu monarch Goodwill Zwelithini has been given R1.7-million worth of government houses for free - so that his guests won't have to book into hotels.

The Times also established the three houses - all in Ulundi, KwaZulu-Natal - are currently being revamped to the tune of at least R1.1-million - again at no expense to the king or to his Royal Household Trust.

Zwelithini is already the beneficiary of generous state funding. He receives an annual budget of more than R50-million, on top of his annual salary of more than R1-million.

He has seven palaces, six in Nongoma and one in Ulundi.

The new royal houses - about 10km away from his Ulundi palace - are among more than a dozen in a neglected ministeri-

al complex used by provincial cabinet ministers when Ulundi was the provincial capital between 1994 and 2004.

Twelve houses in the complex have been allocated to the health department for employees working in rural hospitals. These 12 houses are being revamped at a combined cost of R1-million.

Among the homes allocated to Zwelithini is a six-bedroom home, valued at R620 000 according to the council's property valuation roll, which was the official residence of late premier Lionel Mtshali.

However, Mtshali refused to live there despite R2-million being spent on security.

The other two houses, with municipal values of R570 000 and R510 000, were occupied by the late senior member of the Zulu royal family and two former MECs. All houses have been in disrepair, with vagrants moving in.

Zulu royal family spokesman Prince Thulani Zulu said

the monarch made the request for the houses to premier Willies Mchunu after visiting the complex in 2014.

"He was shocked to find them in a state of dilapidation. Some of them had been vandalised. The king wanted to take all 15 and renovate them as a royal village for his international guests because hotels are often fully booked. But he was surprised that some of them had been allocated to the department of health. But he had no problem with that."

He said Zwelithini recently discussed the buildings with Mchunu and human settlements and public works MEC Ravi Pillay. "He was concerned about state property that is being left unused, like some offices in the legislative building in Ulundi," said Zulu.

Public works spokesman Mbulelo Baloyi confirmed that three houses had been allocated to the king, under which the Royal Household Trust falls.

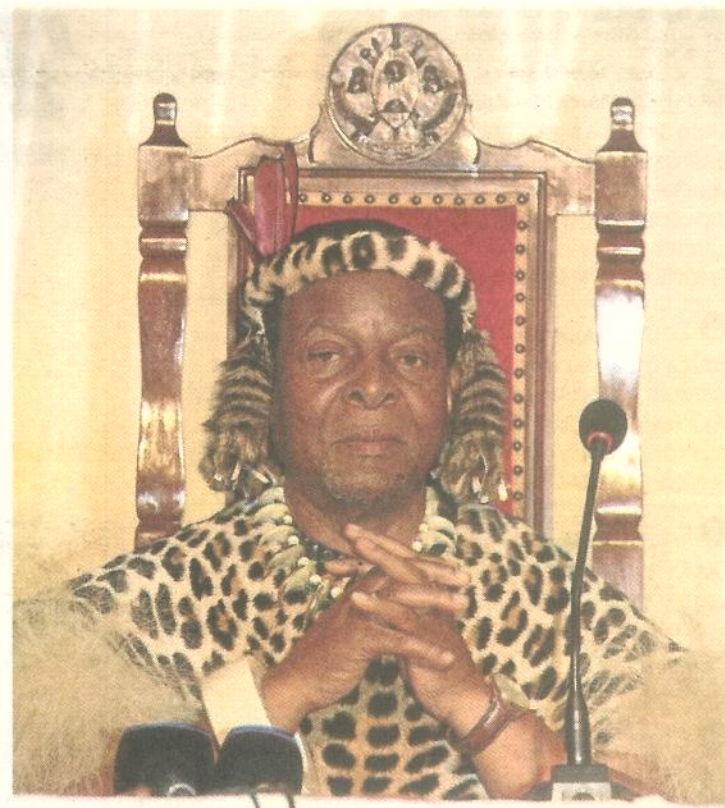
The average value of a house

in the complex was R500 000.

Mchunu's spokesman Ndamabazinhle Sibiyi said it was resolved that instead of using hotels, the houses would be used to accommodate the king's guests during ceremonies, cul-

tural events and meetings of the royal household.

Sibiyi added that, over time, the costs of revamping the houses would be offset by reduced hotel bills - "ultimately saving the taxpayer money".



King Goodwill Zwelithini is taken care of using millions of taxpayers' money. / JACKIE CLAUSEN