

# Official set to defend Nkandla upgrade tender

By NATHI OLIFANT

JAYSHREE Pardesi will today have a chance to defend herself against allegations that she unfairly and incorrectly awarded contracts to a company to do upgrades to President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla homestead.

Pardesi, one of the 10 so-called "Nkandla fall guys", is currently facing charges by her employer, the national Department of Public Works.

Her disciplinary hearing started in Durban yesterday.

She is accused of illegally awarding a contract to Moneymine Investments 310 CC, a company that built Phase 1 of Zuma's R246-million home.

Moneymine was awarded a R6.1-million tender for security upgrades to the main house, surrounding rondavels, a bunker and a perimeter fence.

Pardesi, national director of key accounts management, was part of the bid adjudicating committee that procured, approved and awarded the tender to Moneymine in one day, on June 1 2010.

The department's witness, the Special Investigating Unit's chief forensic investigator Christian Legwabe, told the disciplinary hearing that the bid adjudication committee could have chosen not to deviate from regular

tender processes.

But instead the committee awarded the contract without following correct processes – a situation that Legwabe said was not fair, not transparent, not equitable and not cost-effective.

According to testimony led yesterday, Pardesi was on a public works panel that appointed Moneymine as one of the contractors on the R246-million project.

Pardesi's lawyer, Adrian Moodley, who objected several times to Legwabe's testimony – and often threw his arms into the air, seemingly exasperated at what he was hearing – is expected to tear into Legwabe during cross-examination of the SIU.

Moodley takes particular issue with Legwabe's claims that the unfair awarding of the tender meant the department did not get the value for its money.

Legwabe claimed that the department paid almost double on at least one of the elements of the upgrade because of wrongdoing in the contract award.

Legwabe was also adamant there was no need to rush the tender award process, so any flouting of procurement rules could have been avoided.

"There was no emergency and no urgency and as such the process should have been fair and transparent," he said. — DDC