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Irregularities on state homes: probe

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PUBLIC Works and Infrastructure Minister Sihle Zikalala has promised strong action and demanded an explanation of some of the questionable procurements related to the maintenance of houses occupied by public representatives.

According to Lennox Mabaso, head of communication at the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, Zikalala has ordered an investigation into all procurement practices for the refurbishment of properties occupied by public representatives within his portfolio.

Mabaso said this follows revelations that involve a kitchen refurbishment to the tune of R1.4 million, curtains procured to the value of R54 000, and a fumigation at a cost of R240 000 on government properties in Cape Town and Pretoria.

"The minister wants to get to the bottom of what, at face value, appears to be hugely inflated prices, and he said President Cyril Ramaphosa has directed us as Ministers to, under no circumstances, tolerate wasteful or any excessive, unreasonable, or potentially corrupt practices.

"It is time that we get to the bottom of these issues that, in the court of public opinion, discredit public representatives and portray them as if they have sanctioned such procurement.

"We have a duty to lead by example and set the right tone in spending public money, and we are alive to the reality that everyone is facing a financial squeeze because of the rise in the cost of living; therefore, we need to ensure that we spend public money

to ensure that we spend public money prudently."

Mabaso added: "Our procurement legislative regime is clear and excludes the participation of elected representatives in matters of procurement.

"The panel will look into the pricing practices and procurement related to maintenance and do comparisons. As a government, we are not prepared to defend the indefensible, but we will exercise our strong oversight to clean up this area, which is unfairly discrediting public officials.

"The costs on some of these items are not justifiable and smack of mischief by service providers."