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Millions channelled into Gupta media companies, mostly from Free State provincial government

The commission of inquiry into state capture resumed on Monday with the testimony of Jan Gilliland, a senior official within the National Treasury, who testified that the Guptas got just under R250-million in payments from government for its media companies, TNA Media and Infinity Media, over a period of seven years.

The payments run from February 2011 to April this year, with the first significant one to TNA following shortly after the departure of Themba Maseko from the government communication and Information system (GCIS). Maseko testified at the commission last month that he was fired from his position as CEO of GCIS in February 2011 after he refused to abide by an instruction by Ajay Gupta that he re-channel all government budget for media advertising to the *New Age* newspaper, owned by TNA Media. The projected media spend for that year stood at R600-million.

Gilliland outlined payments made by different departments, both national and provincial, to the two companies, as captured in the basic accounting system (BAS) used by Treasury to track payments made by different entities for goods and services.

Having initially identified 11 different accounts that payments went into between 2011 and 2018, Gilliland pointed out that many of these were duplications. Because TNA would have been paid by different departments at different times, there were several variations of the company name in the BAS. However, the accounts into which payments were made were mostly common and narrowed down.

Gilliland was positive that the accounts were to the same supplier. The highest amount paid into one such account was R173.5-million. Infinity Media, on the other hand, would receive much less regular payments over time, in comparison to TNA. While TNA Media-owned *New Age* only went into business in December 2010, it was not until around August 2013 that Infinity's ANN7 television news channel started broadcasting.

'Exorbitant' payments for business breakfasts

Evidence leader Vincent Maleka further pointed to the disparities in payment patterns between the two companies from around the time of their respective inceptions. From this, he said, the commission may make the inference that TNA received exorbitant payments because these facilitated the TNA Business Breakfasts run by the *New Age* on a regular basis.

While for instance, TNA received a first payment from government of R6-million in 2011, an amount which would then leap into double digits over the next seven years, Infinity's first payment in 2014 was only R3-million and would gradually decrease over the next four years to the point of its liquidation earlier this year.

Free State the top Gupta benefactor

Because payments were made from both national and provincial departments, Maleka further pointed to evidence detailing that of all provinces, the Free State paid the most amount of money to the two media entities, totalling R79-million. Just over R53-million of this came from the premier's office alone. The second highest benefactor of the companies was the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government, which paid a total of R25-million.

Maleka asked that Gilliland provide the commission with graphic presentations of payment patterns to the two companies during the periods of the different heads of the GCIS since 2011.

Mzwanele Manyi, having taken over from Maseko in February 2011, was succeeded by Phumla Williams in an acting position. Williams had been deputy CEO at the time of Maseko's tenure. Donald Diphoko was then appointed to act in the position after Williams, and was later replaced by Williams who returned to the post and has occupied it to date.

Useful links:

[Zondo Commission website](#)

[Government Communication and Information System \(GCIS\)](#)