

**12 March 2021**

**Zondo commission – Driver testimony not credible, Singh tells Zondo**

Former Transnet CFO Anoj Singh has rubbished allegations by his former driver that he visited the Gupta residence on several occasions during his tenure to collect cash, placing it in safety deposit boxes at a nearby facility. Singh began testifying before the state capture commission on Friday.

He said not only was the evidence of Witness Three - whose identity cannot be named as per an order by commission chairperson Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo - coerced, Singh was forewarned by the witness before the latter gave testimony last year. Witness Three was assigned to Singh from 2013 to 2015, when the CFO was seconded to Eskom.

“The reason I believe the affidavit of Witness Three is a fabrication, there are no objective facts that he actually relies on to be able to make the allegations he does. Conveniently, there are no log books when patently from Witness One’s testimony, there was a requirement to maintain logbooks,” said Singh.

The two of them had had a cordial relationship, and Singh was not surprised that he received a call from him on the occasion before his testimony. In the telephonic conversation, Witness Three allegedly told Singh that he was being placed under pressure by some individuals at Transnet, as well as the commission’s investigators, to implicate him. After hearing this, Singh encouraged him to comply with the requests of the commission.

He would later claim that he had suspected Witness Three of trying to catch him out by recording their conversation, as he called him from a Pretoria landline number he did not recognise.

Asked at the beginning of his testimony about his impression of Witness Three’s evidence, Singh said it was not credible, given that the contents of his affidavit and what he said in his oral testimony, differ greatly.

“When we first heard of Witness Three, it was actually via the media, so the commission was not gracious enough to advise us in advance that Witness Three was going to testify in this manner.

“So we were relatively perplexed and concerned by his evidence, given the inference he makes. I studied his affidavit very closely, and found that his evidence was not very credible, and was spurious.”

On the day of the appearance of Witness Three and two of his colleagues, named witnesses one and two, the commission’s head of legal team and evidence leader Advocate Paul Pretorius submitted to Zondo that because of the nature of the testimonies, notices to implicated people would only be sent by the commission after their oral evidence had been completed.

Singh was challenged by his evidence leader Advocate Anton Myburgh, who put to him that his initial affidavit did not answer on a direct question asked by the commission to explain the number of times he visited the Saxonwold home of the Guptas. Instead, said Myburgh, Singh sought to deny what he called aspersions that were part of a disparaging narrative about him and the Guptas. His response was that he did not expect to answer to allegations and speculative innuendo.

But when it came to the affidavit of Witness Three, he clarified that he had been to the Gupta home on about 10 occasions.

“I think it was an omission on my part, for which I apologise.”

This was not a satisfactory explanation for Zondo. “When you were asked about the frequency of your visits to the Gupta residence and the reasons for them, your answer seems to object to the questions.”

Singh’s response to this was simply “No.” He denied Witness Three’s version of events, where he said on the occasions where Singh emerged with a bag presumably full of cash, he would instruct him to drive him to Knox Vaults, a facility in Johannesburg North that rents out safety deposit boxes, and spend some time there.

Admitting that he did rent a number of boxes at Knox Vaults, Singh told the commission that their contents were usually family valuables, and not cash obtained from the Gupta home. When he did put cash in there, it would be from his gambling habit of the time and also proceeds from family businesses that he ran from time to time. When his marriage to his first wife ended and she moved with the rest of the family to Durban, Singh stopped renting the boxes. It was also around the time of his suspension at Eskom in 2017.

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