



**15 January 2021**

### **Zondo commission – Covid-19 exposure interrupts state capture hearing**

The commission of inquiry into state capture was forced to stop proceedings after the lunch break on Friday after chairperson Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo revealed that a staff member who works closely with him had tested positive for Covid-19.

Prior to that, the commission had been hearing the evidence of former Eskom CEO Brian Molefe.

Zondo said under the circumstances he would have to self-isolate, as would some of the other staffers who have come into close contact with him recently.

“It is unfortunate, but it is the reality that we are all faced with now, and we have to find ways of how better to handle the situation.”

If this sort of situation recurs, it would cause a problem for the commission, which is under time pressure with a tight deadline. Molefe’s evidence could be postponed to sometime next week, with Zondo presiding over video link, but his lawyer Advocate Thabane Masuku expressed that Molefe’s preference would be to appear at the venue in person.

As for the scheduled hearings of next week, initially set aside for the evidence of former president Jacob Zuma, it will remain to be seen how the commission proceeds, Zondo said.

“The commission has been informed by the attorneys representing the former president Mr Zuma that he will not be appearing before the commission next week.”

This should not in any way be seen as disrespect on his part for any legal process, said Zondo of Zuma, as the review application as well as the Constitutional Court matter related to him are both still pending.

Before the break, Molefe had told the commission that he was unashamed of having a relationship with the Gupta family, unlike some people who treated them like they were lepers. For him they represented the ability to live out the freedoms that many South Africans fought for in the past, because they are hard working.

Zondo took Molefe to the evidence of former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas, who testified that on the day that he was offered a promotion and a cash bribe by Ajay Gupta, the latter mentioned that the family was responsible for Molefe’s prosperous career.

“I don’t know whether it happened, or Mr Jonas is remembering it wrong, or it’s just a figment of his imagination or he can’t distinguish it from something that he dreamt and something that really happened,” said Molefe.

“I can tell you now, under oath, as evidence, that there is no Gupta brother that took care of my career.”

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