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### **Zondo commission – Guptas funded Gigabas' lavish lifestyle, says Noma**

The stuff that movies are made of. This is the only way to characterise the testimony of Nomachule 'Noma' Gigaba, the estranged wife of former cabinet minister Malusi Gigaba, at the state capture commission on Monday evening.

Noma revealed how significant parts of her husband's personal life were funded by the Gupta family, including family trips, home renovations and even the clearing of a family member's bad debt. The trade-off involved him submitting to instructions from Ajay Gupta on how state-owned entities under his watch, in the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), should be run.

Gupta, the eldest of the three brothers in the business family, was a regular feature in the former minister's tenure in the DPE between 2010 and 2014, and would often threaten him with removal from his position and return to the Department of Home Affairs, if he did not comply with his wishes, said Noma.

An increasingly frustrated Malusi would be conflicted over instructions from Gupta with regard to appointments and dismissals of senior managers in state-owned entities in his portfolio. Monwabisi Kalawe and Brian Dames of South African Airways (SAA) and Eskom respectively, were highly regarded by Malusi, who enjoyed working with them, said Noma. But over time Gupta wanted both of them out as they didn't fit his plans, creating difficulty for Malusi.

"[At] the time Mr Brian Dames was the CEO of Eskom, and what I remember was that Malusi liked Brian Dames, and there was a certain time when Ajay didn't like him, and he would say Brian Dames needs to resign. He would be talking to him, not me. I think even myself, I liked him." Dames was later replaced, and according to Noma, it was because the Guptas did not like him. The pressure over Kalawe's removal also came from then SAA chairperson, Dudu Myeni, whose relationship with Malusi soured over time owing to her interference.

While his initial relationship with the Guptas was a close one – with Malusi learning of his DPE appointment from Gupta months before it was officially announced – it soured over time when he began to stand his ground against interference. Noma said her husband would often tell her of conversations he had with Gupta, and their impact on him, showing frustration at the meddling.

The first time Noma learned of the Guptas was when she was told they were "unofficial advisors" of Malusi, who had been promoted from deputy minister of home affairs in late 2010.

"There were times when I'd be confused when he talked about advisors. Because sometimes he would be with Thami Msomi, whom he introduced as a friend and advisor, but then at a later

stage he'd say I'm going to see an advisor, but I'd already seen Thami. Then I would ask him who are the advisors and he would differentiate them."

Evidence leader Advocate Anton Myburgh wanted to know what Malusi's reaction was to being told about his promotion by Gupta. "He was excited about it, that's why I even asked what is DPE, then he explained," she said.

Although their role in his career was explained to her early on, Noma told the commission that she was initially uncomfortable about Malusi's frequent visits to the Gupta residence in Saxonwold, Johannesburg. To allay her discomfort, he invited her along on her first visit in 2012, as well as their young son. A year later, the couple met guests of the Guptas arriving at Waterkloof air force base on the eve of a family wedding.

"Malusi asked me to accompany him to meet the Gupta family at Waterkloof ... I went with him, we waited for them, but I stayed at the airport [building] with my son, so he went out to fetch them." He would also express to her a day later that they were compelled to attend the wedding.

Soon after the wedding, however, the couple were at Saxonwold when Noma witnessed large sums of cash being placed in Malusi's bag in their state car.

From this stage, Malusi would regularly use cash to pay for purchases of clothes, including his famous tailored suits, at an outlet at Sandton City. He would hand cash to his bodyguards and leave the shop, for them to handle the payment. The couple would also take trips to Dubai, paid for by Gupta, as well as one to India, which Noma said was altered to reflect as a state visit, while it was actually characterised by meetings between Malusi and members of the extended Guptas family and their associates. While this happened, she would go shopping.

On another occasion, Malusi called the Guptas to the rescue during the renovation of his family homestead in Mandeni, KwaZulu-Natal. Gupta also allegedly funded the debt rescue process for Malusi's sister, Nozipho Gigaba, who was R850 000 in debt at some point. Their father called a family meeting at the homestead where he presented Nozipho's problem to Malusi, instructing him to help his sister. Nozipho was at this point employed by Gupta company Sahara Computers, in Midrand.

Another sister, Gugu Gigaba, had a position created for her by Siyabonga Gama, the former CEO of Transnet, when her employer, paper processing company Sappi, wanted to relieve her of her job. Gama and Malusi were very close, said Noma, with Malusi having played a significant role in his reinstatement to the group after his dismissal from Transnet Freight Rail, a topic of interest for the commission.

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