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### **Zondo commission – Ramaphosa: commission tightens screws over dodgy ANC funders**

President Cyril Ramaphosa's second day of testimony before the state capture commission started by dissecting established patronage, and concessions over ANC funding from dodgy benefactors. From Bosasa to the Guptas to the Free State asbestos contract, Advocate Paul Pretorius raised the topic of ANC funding by companies allegedly doing dubious business with the state. Pretorius took over from colleague Alec Freund's parliamentary oversight evidence.

While he pleaded ignorance regarding the financial affairs of his own CR17 campaign in 2017, Ramaphosa admitted that donations received by the ANC from other quarters in previous years deserved more scrutiny than they got. He told the commission that it is untrue that his campaign towards the 54<sup>th</sup> elective conference of the ANC, that saw him elevated to party president in December of that year, received donations of up to R1-billion. Rather, he was told that the figure was around R300-million – despite having declared that he was deliberately kept out of the campaign's funding affairs by its managers, in order to avoid conflict.

"There are two aspects to this. The one aspect is the donation that was solicited by one of my colleagues into the funds of the CR17 campaign. The campaign managers had taken a conscious decision that they would not involve me at all in the fundraising process," Ramaphosa said. "They had also taken a conscious decision to say they would not want me to even know who would give money to the campaign because they wanted almost to create a wall so that those people who gave money should never really think that there is anything they will get in return.

"I was far away from the finances that financed the CR17 campaign.

"The other part was how campaign managers went ahead to raise money for the campaign. It's been said that a billion rand was raised, it was never a billion rand. I was told that the money raised was some R300-million or so, but never a billion. I don't know the full facts, because they literally decided to keep it away from me."

On Bosasa, Pretorius put to the president that the company housed an election centre on behalf of the ANC, all the while benefiting from dubious contracts with the Department of Correctional Services, and the party appeared to ignore the public allegations associated with it.

How could it happen, Pretorius asked.

"I think it's a very, very valid question. And one should have been aware at an earlier stage about all this. I went to the election centre which Bosasa helped to finance during the election campaign, but even then it never really – I must be honest – occurred to me firstly that they were bankrolling ... that centre on behalf of the ANC," Ramaphosa said.

“The treasurer-general as well as colleagues and comrades who ran the elections knew, and I must say it never really fully occurred to me.” The treasurer-general of the ANC at the time was current health minister Zweli Mkhize.

He conceded that the party could have been more alert, “particularly to those reports that had emerged a lot earlier, because during the course of all this I think there was an almost nine-year, 10-year period after they had occurred.”

As with Bosasa, the ANC received money from the Gupta family, who even possibly funded the party’s 2012 elective conference in Mangaung in the Free State. Mkhize had admitted to this publicly, Pretorius said. Another concession came from Ramaphosa: “I would concede that there should have possibly been an internal examination. I don’t know to what extent an investigation would have been possible.”

The newly promulgated Political Party Funding Act, said Ramaphosa, will help advance the values of our democracy of transparency, but will be a nightmare for political parties, as it will force them to reject funding that may well be needed for their survival. Some opposition parties opposed it in Parliament, but it came about as a decision of the ANC taken at its conference in 2007.

On the donations allegedly made by Edwin Sodi, the contractor currently on trial for his involvement in the R250-million asbestos project, Ramaphosa said it is another opportunity for ANC structures to scrutinise how such contracts are awarded, and quell the possibility of them originating out of patronage versus competence.

“However, I should say the backdrop to this is that we now have legislation around this, which should regulate donations. I should however say that there is inherently nothing wrong if a business entity donated money which was not given in return for anything or any favours.”

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