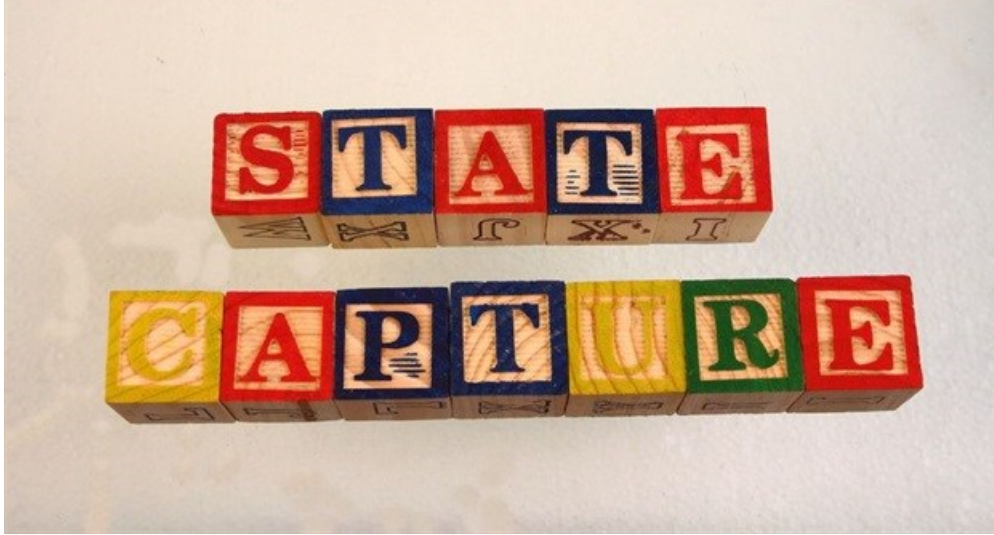


State capture hearings set for August

Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo has announced that the first round of hearings for the State capture inquiry will be held in August.



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“We are planning to have the first hearings in August. We have identified the witnesses who will be able to testify,” said Zondo, who chairs the commission tasked with investigating alleged corruption and fraud in the public sector, including organs of State.

The inquiry will investigate allegations of State capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector, including organs of State.

According to the terms of the reference, the commission will investigate whether, to what extent and by whom, attempts were made, through any form of inducement or for any gain whatsoever to influence members of the National Executive, including Deputy Ministers, office bearers and directors of the boards of State-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Updating the nation Thursday on the work of the inquiry, Zondo said the commission has been hard at work to ensure that it starts its work.

The commission’s legal team has already started reaching out to lawyers of potential witnesses.

In due course, members of the legal team will begin interviews of witnesses, Zondo said.

“The legal team has already started making arrangements for the interviewing of potential witnesses for the commission. In this regard, they have already been in touch with lawyers who represent certain people and they have been cooperative.”

The team has also been in touch with key government departments such as Justice, Treasury and Public Enterprises to seek cooperation in investigations that are beneficial to the work of the commission.

Zondo indicated that there was a delay with regards to the work of the investigators on the ground due to the discussions with government departments, which took much longer than anticipated. There were also issues with confidentiality clauses on the names of the investigators, which will not be known.

Protecting the commission’s integrity

Zondo assured these issues have now been resolved and they are moving forward with their work.

“Just because there was a delay around the investigators, it does not mean no work has been done. Head of investigations Terrence Nombembe did a lot of work to lay the foundation. We identified a high number of investigators with different skills. They are now able to sign contracts with the commission. Those who did not, will do so in the next week or so.”

Nombembe said the investigations are complicated as such they had to identify the best investigators in South Africa.

He said the inquiry will be held "in an environment where there is little room for interference and disruption or infiltration".

He stressed that it is important that there is no room for sabotage, adding that some State organs have committed to help the commission with their investigations.

Other progress includes records received from institutions such as Parliament’s own probes into State capture, which have been handed over to the commission. The notes and records from the Public Protector and from SOEs have also been evaluated.

“We will be requesting more records from SOEs. There have been some meetings and there will be full cooperation from those we spoke to. The documents we need will be available to the commission,” said Zondo, adding that the level of commitment they have been getting is encouraging.

Head of legal services Advocate Paul Pretorius said notices calling on the public to give evidence to the commission have been prepared. This means that the public will be allowed to make submissions and bring evidence to the inquiry anonymously.

Pretorius said they are preparing the rules for the conduct of the commission’s proceedings.

He, however, warned that the terms of reference may become the subject of debate, and rules have to be carefully prepared in order to manage the proceedings of the commission.

A matter of time

Asked when the commission will complete its work, Zondo said “there is simply no way that the massive work of this commission could be done in 180 days”.

From their estimations, he said the inquiry could take 18 months to two years, but that could change.

The public hearings will be held at 16 Empire Road, Johannesburg, while there will be a desk at 17 Empire Road for the public to make submissions. The public will be able to have inputs and evidence via the hotline for inquiries: +27 (0)10 214 0651.

In March, the commission announced six key personnel appointments, which include experienced investigators, lawyers and advocates.

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