**THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**Question 3131**

**Mr W Horn (DA) to ask the Minister of Trade and Industry:**

Whether, since he served in Cabinet, he (a)(i) was ever influenced by any person and/or (ii) influenced any of his department’s employees to take any official administrative action on behalf of any (aa) member, (bb) employee and/or (cc) close associate of the Gupta family and/or (b) attended any meeting where any of the specified persons were present; if so, what are the relevant details in each case?NW3496E

(a) No.

(b) As previously indicated, including in an engagement with the former Public Protector as she was preparing her report “The State of Capture”, I met with members of the Gupta family on a number of occasions between 2009 and 2013. As Minister of Trade and Industry, my work involves frequent interactions with a wide range of business people as well as actual or potential investors.

In 2009, I received a request to meet with Duduzane Zuma to discuss some of his business ideas. I knew Duduzane since he was a child in Maputo and agreed to a meeting at my residence in Cape Town. Mr Zuma arrived with Mr Ajay Gupta and this was the first time that I met a member of that family. Mr Gupta told me that his company had spent a considerable sum on preparation of a feasibility study for a mining project, which had been submitted to the IDC. He complained that the application was taking a long time to process and that they were in danger of losing the option to buy from the existing owners. If this happened, he said, hundreds of workers would lose their jobs.

As with innumerable similar representations made to me both before and since, I responded saying that as Minister I could not and would not get involved in deciding on the merits of any particular application. That was the task of professionals employed to assess applications according to defined criteria. In this regard I had confidence in the robustness of the procedures of the IDC, overseen by a board then chaired by the wife of a prominent opposition politician. I did, however, say I would refer his complaint of the time delay to the IDC - as I have with numerous other similar complaints with regard to procedures by the department or agencies reporting to it.

The IDC advised me that they would assemble a team to take the application to the point of decision and I left it at that. I was never advised as to whether the project had merit or otherwise, nor did I give or receive any directive as to the outcome of the decision. Shortly thereafter the IDC ceased reporting to the Minister of Trade and Industry and I heard nothing further of the progress of this application.

The period after 2009, was one in which government made considerable effort to enhance South-South relations, including with India bilaterally and within the context of BRICS. I participated in numerous business fora, both in South Africa and India, organised by different formations in both countries. Members of the Gupta family attended a number of these.

In a few occasions (maybe 5 or 6 times) I accepted invitations to social events organised by members of the Gupta family (as at the time did many other politicians, including the Premier of the Western Cape, Helen Zille). These included a cultural event on the side-lines of an international cricket match and on occasions, I also went to a few events at their residence. Most of these were social occasions where several other people were also present. On very few occasions, I accepted personal dinner invitations with my wife at which the mother of the Gupta brothers was also present. Discussion on these occasions were broad and general and mostly social in nature with an emphasis at the time on the value of deepening economic relations with India. They also informed me, in general terms, of their plans to establish a new Newspaper.

To the knowledge of the Ministry, approximately 6 years ago a meeting at the request of the Gupta family was held at the dti offices in Tshwane. This was attended by myself and dti officials. The nature of this meeting was similar to innumerable other meetings of the type with other potential investors, both domestic and foreign. My consistent message on all such occasions (and in all interactions with members of the Gupta family) was that requests for access to any programme or facility should be directed to the department or agency concerned following the prescribed procedure and would be decided on by officials charged with assessing such applications according to defined criteria. In the event no follow up meetings were requested or held.

On one occasion I was invited, while on a visit to Mumbai, to a warehouse where computers assembled at the family’s facilities in South Africa were received for export to India. At the end of this visit, I was given a laptop computer. I subsequently donated this for use by the Small Enterprise Development Agency and showed the documentation on this to the former Public Protector.

I attended the family’s wedding at Sun City, largely because I was under the impression that there would be a number of Indian business people and government officials it would be with while interacting with. That, in fact, did not materialise. Thereafter I have had no direct contact with any member of the Gupta family.

As indicated earlier, the information given above was shared with the former Public Protector and her team, who interviewed me in preparation of her report, “The State of Capture”. I am similarly prepared to interact with the Zondo Commission or its investigators in any way they see fit.