

Zuma pledges full investigation into 1986 Machel death

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MAPUTO: President Jacob Zuma says the government is committed to "a full investigation" into the circumstances of the death "in mysterious circumstances" of Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel.

Zuma was speaking at a banquet in his honour given by Mozambican President Armando Guebuza during his state visit to Mozambique.

Machel died in 1986 when his plane, a Soviet-made Tupolev 134, crashed into a hillside in Mbuzini, just inside South Africa. Mozambique has always argued that the plane was lured off course by a pirate radio beacon, set up by the apartheid military and broadcasting on the same frequency as the Maputo airport beacon.

The Mozambicans also believe that no proper investigation was done after the fall of apartheid and insist that

the job be finished now.

The matter has taken on renewed urgency since the Mozambican government has declared 2011, the 25th anniversary of Machel's death, "Samora Machel Year".

Guebuza has repeatedly insisted that Machel "was assassinated by the apartheid regime". Zuma acknowledged the sacrifices made by Mozambique during the anti-apartheid struggle.

"The support this country gave us in the fight against

apartheid is immeasurable," he said. As a result, he added, Mozambique "was at the receiving end of the destabilisation policies of the apartheid government, which resulted in untold suffering and destruction".

Zuma noted that Mozambique was the country with the largest number of bilateral agreements with SA - about 60 in a wide variety of areas.

On Tuesday the two presidents witnessed the signing of further agreements, setting up

a South Africa-Mozambique Bi-National Commission, intended to put their co-operation on a firmer footing than the existing Presidential Economic Commission.

Part of Zuma's visit is a "business forum" to boost trade and investment.

Guebuza also thanked Zuma for his role in attempting to settle disputes within the Southern African Development Community, notably in "the search for political stability in Zimbabwe.