Fresh row erupts over

South Africa Aids drug

By CHRIS ERASMUS.

NATION Correspondent.

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A fresh row has erupted over the so called Aids "wonder drug" developed by South African scientists with a request for an investigation into whether the ruling

African National Congress has a financial interest in the development of the drug.

The drug, Virodene PO58, came into the limelight early last year when Health Minister Nkosazana Zuma circumvented the usual medical testing procedures and arranged for its three Pretoria University

discoverers to make a presentation to President Nelson

Mandela and the rest of his Cabinet.

The scientist told the Cabinet meeting that initial trials on patients and laboratory trials on infected human cells showed dramatic reductions in the virus in blood and other tissues.

However, the drug was banned by the South African Medicines Control Council (MCC) which argued

that the developers had failed to follow ethical testing

procedures and that it had no proven effect on HIV in people.

But now the opposition Democratic Party has asked public protector Selby Biwa, to investigate

whether the ANC has a financial interest in the development of Virodene.

It said documents in its possession indicate that the ANC was promised a six per cent stake in the company developing the drug.