

There's no threat to SA's constitution, says Ramaphosa

By SIPHO MASONDO

THE constitution was not under threat from any political party or individuals, Cyril Ramaphosa said yesterday.

Ramaphosa, a senior ANC politician and member of the ruling party's national executive committee, was speaking at the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the signing of the constitution, held at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg.

Responding to questions about the constitution being under threat, Ramaphosa said: "There is no threat that I perceive. The constitution is a solid and wonderful document. It is an enduring document."

The celebration was organised by the Constitutional Hill Trust, of which Ramaphosa is chairman.

Constitutional Hill Trust board members former Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson and Cheryl Carolus said there was also nothing wrong with government want-

ing to study Constitutional Court judgments and the effects they had on citizens.

This follows government's announcement two weeks ago that it would be appointing an independent research institute to study the Constitutional Court's judgments to ensure that they conform to the country's transformation agenda.

"Everybody is welcome to read our judgments," Chaskalson said.

"They are studied by many countries all over the world, including well-established democracies like America, and have been considered in high regard. It's good that government wants to study them."

Carolus said it was time, not only for government but for all South Africans to reflect on the court's judgments and how they had continued to defend democracy.

Of late, the ANC has voiced concerns about "certain" people who co-governed with it through the

courts, and the Constitutional Court in particular.

Examples include Johannesburg businessman Hugh Glenister – who successfully challenged the disbanding of the Scorpions – and the DA, which recently succeeded in getting the courts to declare the appointment of NPA boss Menzi Simelane unlawful and invalid.

However, Carolus said it was a healthy thing to challenge decisions and laws.

"We should not look in the negative when people test the laws. It's good that South Africans think that they can use the [Constitutional] Court.

"The Constitutional Court has stood us in a good stead; it is underpinned by a solid judiciary."

The constitution, Ramaphosa said, had so far achieved what its founders had in mind.

It was, he said, the birth certificate of South Africa's democracy. "It is what our people struggled for and suffered for a very long time."