

ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, AMBASSADOR CHUPU
MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE JOINT FUNERAL SERVICE OF
THE 24 COMMUTERS KILLED ON THE N1.

27 October 2018

Programme Director, and our MEC for Transport, Mme Makoma Makhurupetje;
Members of the bereaved families;
Mong-mabu, Kgoshi Malebogo;
Our religious leaders from various churches;
The Speaker of our Provincial Legislature;
Representatives of the National Department of Transport;
MECs present here today;
Executive Mayors and Mayors of our municipalities;
President of SANTACO,
The leadership of the Bochum Taxi Association, and other Associations;
The people of Molemole and Blouberg local municipalities;

The past eight days, or so, have been very difficult on all of us.
We cannot even begin to imagine what you have been going through since the
devastating news of the death of your loved ones broke.
However, we have come here as government, we have come here as leaders and as the
people of Limpopo to say to you that your loss is our loss.
The feeling of devastation you are experiencing today is equally our feeling;
Your feeling of loss is also a feeling that has engulfed all of us.
The pinching pain you are experiencing at this moment is a pain we also bear as the
government and the people of Limpopo.
I am speaking with authority when I say that everyone in this Province has been touched
and saddened by what has happened.
We have been receiving messages of condolences and support from many people from
across the country. We have therefore come here, not only to express our condolences,
but the condolences of all South Africans for your sad loss.

We are told that the accident was caused by a tyre burst from a truck which was
travelling in the northerly direction.

As a result of this tyre burst, the truck lost control and hit several vehicles including a
mini-bus taxi which was carrying our deceased brothers and sisters.

As a result of this terrible accident, we have lost 25 people from the mini-bus taxi and
another 2 from an SUV. The overall number of lives lost on that fateful afternoon is 27.

About 4 others have sustained serious injuries –we wish them a complete and speedy
recovery.

As we speak, another funeral is taking place at Ga-Chuene outside Polokwane, where the driver of the truck is also being laid to rest.

We have equally sent our heartfelt condolences to his family. We have also deployed some of our MECs to join the funeral proceedings at Ga-Chuene.

Yesterday we have also laid to rest the two other victims who were travelling in another vehicle. MEC Makhurupetje represented government at that funeral and expressed our collective condolences to the families and loved ones.

The driver of the taxi which was involved in horrific accident will be buried tomorrow in Sebayeng village outside Polokwane. We will also join the family as he would be laid to rest.

Programme Director;

This accident has renewed calls for the improvement of the N1 between Kranskop and Polokwane. There is a strong view that there is something in the design of that road which contributes to the high volume of accidents.

We cannot even count the number of deadly accidents which occurred on that road this year alone.

The number of people who have lost their lives on that road is just too high.

If there is indeed something wrong with the design of the road, that something must be attended to as a matter of extreme urgency.

I am happy that our MEC for Transport has already communicated this view to the National Department of Transport and SANRAL.

There is already a commitment from SANRAL that their engineers will look into this area of concern.

We are also looking at other road safety measures from other countries around the world. For an example, in some parts of the world trucks are not permitted to drive with ordinary passenger vehicles, there are dedicated lanes for trucks.

The other call which has been made in the past is to regulate driving times for trucks and other heavy vehicles on our roads. The suggestion that trucks should not be allowed on the road during peak hours deserves serious attention.

However, I want to stress a point that the design and the conditions of the road are not the biggest killer on our roads. The biggest killer on our roads remains the human factor.

It is the actions or lack of actions by human beings that results in so many deaths on our road.

Even if we can design world class roads, for as long as the mentality of those who use the roads does not change we will continue to lose innocent lives.

On Thursday we were hosting a Provincial Transport Indaba at the Ranch outside

Polokwane. One of the attendees to that Indaba was Reverend Mautji Pataki. He was invited to say a few words of prayer before we could start with the Indaba. Before Reverend Pataki could proceed with his sermon, he told us a story that worried me and should worry all of us.

He said that, as he was driving to the Indaba he was behind two other drivers who were disregard all the rules of the road. They were crossing barrier lines, ignoring the speeding limit and they were generally reckless on the road.

To his shock, Reverend Pataki says when he finally arrived at the Ranch, the two vehicles which were being driven recklessly were also there at the Ranch –they had come to attend the Transport Indaba –they were there to discuss issues of safety on the road. What an irony and what a shame.

This is the point that I am trying to drive home; it is our behaviour that kills people on the road. Some of us think that it would not happen to us because we are more experienced or we are clever enough.

The saddest thing is that, it is always innocent people who die.

Programme Director;

We know that our traffic officials are doing a good job on our road. The situation on our roads would be very bad if it wasn't because of their passion for road safety and the respect for their oath of service.

Our message to our Traffic Officials is that let us go back to doing what we were taught to do at Traffic College. Even if it takes time, let us do a proper examination of these vehicles that you are stopping. It should not just be about whether the driver has a licence and whether the car has a valid disc.

You must do a comprehensive diagnosis of the vehicle. You must check the condition of the tyres –you must check the indicators –you must check the reflectors –you must even check the condition of the wiper blades.

Overloading is also a serious cause of accidents on our roads - the truth is that when a truck is overload it becomes impossible for the driver to even take an evasive action when faced with possible danger.

These are the things we must deal with on our roads so that we can save lives.

To honour the names and memories of these departed compatriots, we must all recommit to the message of road safety.

The government will continue to build top quality, reliable and safer roads. We will also continue to loud-hail the message of road safety every single day.

However, at the end of the day, we rely on individuals who use the road, to eternalise the message and do the right thing.

Driver must always make sure that all passengers in the vehicle wear their seatbelts;

Drivers must at all times observe the rules of the road;
Drivers must always ensure that their vehicles are roadworthy before every single trip;
Drivers must only overtake when it is safe to do so;
Those who drive long distances must make regular stops so that they can rest and reenergise.

Programme Director;

As I conclude, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been there for the families since this sad news broke.

We have noticed and appreciated the support from the South African Council of Churches; the apostolic churches, the ZCC, and the St. Egenas ZCC. Thank you for walking this painful road with us and the families in particular.

I also want to commend both the Molemole and the Blouberg Local Municipalities for providing support and ensuring a dignified send-off to our beloved brothers and sisters. I once again wish to express our deep condolences to all the bereaved families. We wish all those who were injured a complete recovery from both their physical and emotional wounds.

To the families, allow me to leave you with the following words of comfort from the Book of Revelation, Chapter 21 verse 4;
It says, "The Lord will wipe every tear from your eyes. There will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain."

I thank you!