

NOTES BY PREMIER CHUPU MATHABATHA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE NETWORKING SESSION WITH MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA, FUSION BOUTIQUE HOTEL, POLOKWANE.

Programme facilitator;
Ladies and gentlemen from various media houses;
Officials from the communication section in the office of the Premier;
Ladies and gentlemen:

I was advised that today I am not expected to speak because the evening is reserved for lighter interactions and networking, not political speeches. I do not have a problem with this advise because I actually did a lot of talking today at the Provincial Economic Development Workshop which is being held at the Ranch Hotel.

I assume that most of you are aware of the workshop and the important discussions which are unfolding there. The theme of the workshop is towards a sustainable industrial trajectory: challenges and prospects for Limpopo.

Take it from me; there is so much to report about which is unfolding that two-day workshop which ends tomorrow.

I was telling you about the workshop and my participation there simply to emphasize the point that I will not be delivering a political speech to this event. We have had enough talk for the day; this evening is exclusively for lighter interactions as I am advised.

Perhaps I should take advantage of the fact that we are still celebrating the International Nelson Mandela Month, and borrow some words from our former President.

Addressing the International Press Institute at a conference it held in South Africa in 1994, President Mandela said the following about the media and the press: "A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference. It must have the economic strength to stand up to the flattery of government officials"

As you know, our struggle against apartheid was also a struggle for free and independent press. We appreciate the fact that no nation can claim to be democratic without the right of the media to conduct its business free from repression and censorship.

Free Press is an active ingredient of a healthy democracy.

It is for this reason that journalists and all media practitioners must jealously guard against the erosion of this hard won freedom. This includes the media's responsibility to report fairly and accurately. We normally refer to this as self regulatory mechanism.

You must always conduct your business with full knowledge that thousands of journalists laid down their lives for the freedom you are enjoying today. They too wanted to operate in an environment where the freedom of press is constitutionally guaranteed.

We do not want those Journalists who are over-creative; I refer here to those journalists who just go behind the computer, thumb suck stories and refer to non-existent sources.

Such unethical behavior poses a grave danger to your profession. You must be a generation that says no to Brown Envelop Journalism; because you appreciate that your predecessors such as Nat Nakasa did not die for such things.

You would agree with me that the recent revelations in the public space, including from some Commissions of Inquires are not covering this important profession in glory.

You are obviously aware about the recent remarks by Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng about some of your colleagues and some of the media houses you work for.

But this is not the reason to undermine the important work of the media and our journalists.

The lawyers say that justice must be done even though heavens may fall –I think this too should remain your attitude, the search for the truth must continue even if it means that heavens must fall.

Programme Facilitator;

As a Premier for this Province I must say that I am particularly happy with the diversity of media organisations in this Province. We have established private radio stations and community radio stations which supplement our existing SABC radio stations.

All of these radio stations are doing a very good job.

I am also impressed with the quality of local newspapers circulating in this Province; most of them are award-winning. I can assure you, that for as long as

we are in government, these locals' newspapers, private radio stations and community radio stations will continue to receive government support. It is the diversity of media voices that keep us on our toes, and this must continue.

I know that you have adopted a complementary and contradictory whenever you interact with us as government.

We appreciate that you expose our shortcomings and loud our successes, this is really good for our democracy.

While it is impornrt for people to hear and read about corruption, political killings and the other negatives, it is equally important that the story of a Limpopo on the move should be told.

It is important for the residents to know about our efforts to rebuild the economy to reduce the levels of inequality, fight poverty and create more jobs.

We need to the story about our flagship Musina-Makhado SEZ project which has already attracted an investment commitment of over R150 billion.

Young people of this Province deserve to know about our initiatives to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Programme Director;

Let me avoid doing what I said I would not do. Let me allow the evening to proceed in line with what has been arranged. The summary of my message is that we are all partners in the building of the Limpopo we want.

Let's continue this great partnership for the benefit of our people.

I THANK YOU