

HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATION SPEECH BY PREMIER DR. PHOPHI  
RAMATHUBA AT GA-RAMOKGOPA STADIUM, MOLEMOLÉ LOCAL  
MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

24 September 2024

Programme Director,

Speaker of the Legislature Ms Makoma Makhurupetje,

Deputy Speaker Ms Tebogo Mamorobela,

MEC for Sports Arts and Culture Mr. Jerry Maseko, Members of the  
Executive Council,

His Majesty Chief Ramokgopa,

Traditional Leaders present,

Military Veterans,

Capricorn District Executive Mayor Cllr Mamedupi Tefo, Molemole  
Municipality Mayor Cllr Edward Paya,

Honorable Mayors,

Councillors,

Dignitaries and esteemed guests

Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Good Morning, Goie More

We gather here today for a truly special occasion in celebration of a momentous occasion—Heritage Day celebrated under the fitting theme: "Celebrating the lives of Heroes and Heroines Who Laid Down Their Lives for Our Freedom." This is more than just a day of festivities; it is a time of reflection on the rich and diverse cultural heritage that makes us who we are as South Africans and, more specifically as proud residents of Limpopo.

Today, we are privileged to be in a province renowned for its cultural diversity, where the heritage of the Pedi, Venda, Tsonga, Ndebele, English, Afrikaner, Indian, and Coloured communities converge into one harmonious tapestry. Limpopo is a testament to the beauty of diversity and the strength that lies in embracing different cultures. There is no better place to reflect on our shared heritage than here, in our province blessed with natural beauty and cultural diversity.

Today's celebration coincides with Tourism Month, and it gives us the perfect opportunity to reflect on how deeply intertwined our heritage is with our tourism sector. Our mountains, rivers, wildlife, and cultural history form the bedrock of our tourism industry, drawing visitors from across the globe. Let us be reminded of the vital role both tourism and heritage play in shaping our identity and driving economic development.

Programme Director, as we celebrate this day, it is fitting to take a moment to appreciate the natural beauty that surrounds us. Limpopo our beloved province, is blessed with awe-inspiring landscapes- from the majestic Soutpansberg mountains to the life-giving rivers such as the Limpopo, Luvuvhu, and Olifants, stands as a testament that our province is rich in heritage. Limpopo's nature reserves, like the Mapungubwe, Marakele National Park, Lekgalameetse Nature Reserves, and Kruger National Parks, are not only conservation sites but sacred spaces where our heritage and biodiversity intersect.

How can we not boast our other heritage sites like: the Makapans Valley World Heritage in Waterberg, the D'Nyala Nature Reserve in Waterberg, the Doorndraai Dam in Waterberg, the Flag Boshielo Dam in Sekhukhune and the Schoemansdaal Museum in the Vhembe District, Muti wa Vatsonga Museum in Mopani District, Dzata Museum in Vhembe District, Tjate Heritage Site in Sekhukhune District, and Tshitangadzimeni Resistance and Liberation Route in Vhembe District.

As we look upon these wonders, let us remember that this province is not only a reservoir of natural beauty but also a repository of rich cultural traditions that have stood the test of time.

I therefore urge every one of us to become ambassadors of Limpopo's rich heritage and tourism offerings. Let us promote our local attractions, support local businesses, and invite tourists from all corners of the world to experience the beauty and culture of our province.

Programme Director, Heritage Day is more than a commemoration; it is a day to reflect on the legacy that our forebears have entrusted to us. Our heritage is the thread that binds us to our ancestors, to our culture, and to one another. It is through celebrating our heritage that we preserve our history, traditions, and languages, and it is through this preservation that we ensure that our children and their children have a sense of who they are.

The importance of celebrating our heritage can not be overstated. It reminds us of the resilience of our people and the diverse cultural expressions that make us uniquely South African. Whether it is through song, dance, stories, or rituals, we are reminded of the generations that came before us who fought for our freedom and for the right to express our culture without fear. Today, we stand in their footsteps, enjoying the fruits of their struggles.

Programme Director, today we celebrate our giants who walked before us, the visionaries and warriors who made our freedom possible. Chief Sekhukhune, a leader whose bravery and strategic wisdom led his people to resist colonial forces. Let us remember Hosi Ngungunyane, a beacon of resistance, who fiercely defended his kingdom against imperial encroachment. We honour Khosi Makhado, who fought against foreign domination, a leader who stood firm in the face of adversity.

Programme Director, we can not forget our heroines from this area, who paved our way for liberation of our masses. One great heroine we must remember is the great warrior of the Batlokwa people, Queen Manthatise. She was the warrior queen who led strong men to protect the Tlokwa people, and she was a strong and feared woman warrior in all ages in Southern Africa after fighting all the Dufaqane battles in 1820s.

In our South African Navy, we are proud as Limpopo that we have 3 submarines that are named after our heroines, that's S101 named SAS Manthatise after the female warrior of the Batlokwa, S102 was named SAS Charlotte Maxeke and S103 was named after the South African rain queen SAS Modjadji.

Furthermore, let us recognise our own daughter of the soil, Mme Charlotte Manny Maxeke, who was born in this area where we are. Let us be reminded of her contributions towards women's emancipation. A trailblazer who achieved a lot on the medical fraternity and never wanted to leave others behind. She graduated as the first black female medical doctor in BSc degree in Wilberforce University in Ohio in 1901 when it was not fashionable, paving a path to the generations to come. Today, we have many female doctors who follow in her footsteps.

Programme Director, today just before we come here, we visited our legendary South African actress, Ms Lydia Mokgokoloshi, best known for her iconic roles as Mankwesheng in “Bophelo ke Semphekgo” and Koko Mantsha in the popular SABC soap opera “Skeem Saam”. Ms Mokgokoloshi’s contribution to the arts, especially her portrayal of characters that resonate with the struggles and triumphs of South African society, reflects the spirit of endurance and resilience in the entertainment industry.

These leaders laid the foundation for the freedoms we enjoy today. Their lives were a testament to courage, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to the preservation of their people’s way of life. As we remember their sacrifices, we are reminded that the torch of leadership and cultural preservation has been passed down to us. It is now our responsibility to ensure that future generations know the names of these heroes and understand the values they stood for.

The wars and battles that have been fought by our heroes and heroines, gives expression to the liberation stories, history, monuments, statues, published materials, stories, performing arts and other tangible and intangible heritage assets as part of the heritage that we need to preserve and pass to the generations to come. It is therefore of great importance to note that the department of Sports Arts and Culture will be developing the three resistance and liberation routes which are Tshitangadzimeni, University of Limpopo, and Tjate as part of heritage to preserve the memories and history of the battles that have been fought against the apartheid regime. We should also continue to honour our military veterans, who are part of us today as the living human treasures that have history and good stories to tell that have led to us attaining the freedom we have today.

Programme Director, as we honour our cultural leaders, we must also take a moment to reflect on the importance of preserving our languages. Our languages are the vessels through which our history, values, and traditions are passed down from one generation to the next. We must encourage our children to read, write, and speak in their mother tongues. This is not just about communication; it is about ensuring that the soul of our culture lives on. Each time we speak our indigenous languages, we reaffirm our identity and our connection to our ancestors.

Programme Director, as we reflect on the importance of heritage, we must also recognise its potential to drive economic growth. Our cultural heritage is not only a source of pride but a vital economic asset. By preserving our cultural sites, artefacts, and traditions, we have the opportunity to create jobs, promote tourism, and foster entrepreneurship in our province.

Let us work together to capacitate our heritage sector so that it can generate employment, particularly for our youth. By investing in cultural tourism, building museums, and supporting local artisans, we can create a sustainable heritage economy that will contribute to the development of Limpopo.

Our heritage has the power to unlock opportunities for economic development in areas such as tourism, hospitality, and creative industries. As a province, we must recognise this potential and work diligently to ensure that our heritage continues to contribute to our economy.

Together, we can build a future where our heritage serves as a foundation for unity, economic growth, and national pride.

Thank you.