

PEAKING NOTES OF THE PREMIER, DR. PHOPHI RAMATHUBA,
DURING THE MEDIA LAUNCH OF THE LIMPOPO MARULA FESTIVAL
AT MASINGITA MALL

22 JANUARY 2025

MEC for LEDET, Mr. Tshitereke Matibe,
Executive Mayor of Mopani District Municipality, Cllr. Pule Shayi,
Mayor of Greater Giyani Municipality, Cllr. Thandi Zitha,
Chairperson of LTA Board, Mr. Andrew Dipela, and Board Members
present,
CEO of LTA, Mr. Moses Ngoben, and Executive Management of the
Agency,
HOD of LEDET, Mr. Matodzi Rathumbu,
DDG of Environment and Tourism at LEDET, Ms. Keleabetswe Tlouane,
Chairpersons of Tourism Associations and all stakeholders present,
Members of the media,
Ladies and gentlemen

Avuxeni, Ndi maasiari, Thobela, Good afternoon, Goie dag

Long before the arrival of modern festivities, the Marula tree was more than just a tree. It was a sacred cornerstone of community life. In the heart of our villages, its sprawling branches provided shade for gatherings called by the chief, where plans were made, disputes settled, and unity fostered. The Marula tree stood as a silent witness to the birth of traditions that bind us to this day.

When the work of the community was done, it was this same tree that gifted its fruit, a golden treasure transformed by skillful hands into a brew so rich in spirit it brought people together in celebration. The villagers would gather, laughter ringing through the air, as they raised their calabashes of Vukanyi, Mukumbi, Amarula beer. They danced, they sang, and they honored the fruits of their labor under the watchful gaze of the moon, celebrating not just the harvest but the unity that made it possible.

Today, as we stand on the verge of another chapter in the story of the Marula Festival, we honor this legacy. The Marula tree continues to symbolize resilience, community, and the joy of shared traditions, proof that

the roots of our culture run deep and strong, connecting us to our past while inspiring us to embrace the future.

In 2006, that is almost 19 years, the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment, and Tourism (LEDET) initiated a groundbreaking intervention by developing the Limpopo Mukumbi Industries. This effort capitalized on the abundance of Marula trees in our province, particularly in the Mopani District. The Mukumbi Industry has since grown into a vibrant sector, bringing together cooperatives, entrepreneurs, and community members to create economic opportunities from the gifts of the Marula tree.

The Marula Festival has evolved into a cultural and economic beacon, attracting domestic, regional, and international tourists. It promotes the Marula fruit while drawing investments into Marula-dependent industries. From the cooperative brewing of 12,000 liters of Marula beer to the crafts and products derived from the fruit, this festival is a demonstration of the potential of community-driven economic development.

Ladies and gentlemen, The Limpopo Mukumbi Industries (Pty) Ltd has been the official supplier of the home brewed Morula/Mukumbi/Vukanyi beverage annually for several years. The ladies you see here displaying this original African drink, come from some of these Vukanyi, Mukumbi Industries I just alluded to.

The involvement of these registered cooperatives had positive spin-offs on investment into the industry and on the employment of rural community members who assist with harvesting and transportation of the fruit annually depending on the orders from the organizers of the Marula Festival.

Phalaborwa, with its lush concentration of Marula trees and proximity to iconic destinations such as the Kruger National Park, has rightfully been declared the permanent home of the Limpopo Marula Festival. This strategic location enhances the festival's tourism profile and positions it as an international attraction. Visitors from neighboring countries such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Eswatini, as well as tourists from around the globe, are drawn to experience the unique blend of culture, heritage, and natural beauty that Limpopo offers.

For 2025, the Limpopo Marula Festival returns once again to Phalaborwa, coinciding with the peak harvest season of the Marula fruit. This timing ensures the freshest and most authentic experience for attendees. The decision by Limpopo Government to make Phalaborwa a permanent home of Limpopo Marula Festival was the step in the right direction given the town's tourism profile and proximity to other major tourist destinations, including the world-renowned Kruger National Park incorporated within the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

This year's Marula Festival is easily packaged with products around Hoedspruit, Tzaneen, Modjadjieskloof, and Giyani benefiting from the festivities as overflow venues in respect of accommodation. This location and setting are reasons for Limpopo Marula Festival to become a major attraction for locals, domestic, as well as international tourists and revellers. We expect a lot of international guests during this reloaded edition of the festival especially now that we have successfully moved to the actual time slot- from the 16 January to the 2nd March 2025.

As we launch this year's festival, we are thrilled to introduce an early bird ticketing initiative. Tickets will be available at just R150 until Sunday, 26 January 2025. This initiative aims to encourage advance purchases and build anticipation for the main event at Impala Park Stadium on 01 March 2025.

The festival will feature a variety of activities across Limpopo's districts, showcasing the province's tourism offerings and promoting the Vukanyi, Mukumbi Industry. From traditional dance and music to culinary experiences and local crafts, the Marula Festival offers something for everyone.

I extend my gratitude to all stakeholders who have contributed to the success of this festival, including LEDET, the Limpopo Tourism Agency, Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality, and our community cooperatives. Your dedication and collaboration embody the spirit of this festival, a celebration of unity, tradition, and progress.

We wish to thank SANParks for the construction of an activity hub, even if the project is not complete, to break new ground to inspire locals living

closer to Phalaborwa gate to make it their everyday activity to bolster the economy in Phalaborwa and Mopani District.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Limpopo Marula Festival is more than an event; it is a movement. It is a celebration of our heritage, a driver of economic growth, and a reminder of the strength we derive from our shared traditions. Let us come together to make the 2025 Marula Festival a resounding success.

Thank you.