

MEDIA BRIEFING SPEECH BY LIMPOPO PREMIER DR PHOPHI
RAMATHUBA ON BAFANA BAFANA'S WORLD CUP QUALIFIER
FIXTURE AGAINST LESOTHO

PETER MOKABA STADIUM, POLOKWANE

10 FEBRUARY 2025

Programme Director, Mr. Jerry Maseko,
MEC for Sport, Arts, and Culture,
SAFA President, Mr. Danny Jordaan,
Capricorn District Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr. Mamedupi Tefo,
Polokwane City Mayor, Cllr. John Makoro Mpe,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Members of the Media,

Thobela, Ndi Mathabama Inhlekani, Good afternoon, Goeie dag,

We gather here today with great excitement as we welcome our national team, Bafana Bafana, back to Polokwane for their crucial 2026 FIFA World Cup Qualifier match against Lesotho on 17 March 2025.

This match is not just another fixture on the football calendar, but it is a momentous occasion for our city, our province, and our country as we rally behind our boys in their quest to secure a spot on football's grandest stage.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup, set to be hosted jointly by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, will be the first edition to feature 48 teams. Africa has

been allocated nine spots in this expanded tournament, and we are confident that Bafana Bafana will claim one of them. South Africa finds itself in Group C alongside Rwanda, Benin, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho, and every match is critical in the race to qualification.

Programme Director, allow me to extend our deepest gratitude to the South African Football Association (SAFA), under the leadership of President Dr Danny Jordaan, for once again entrusting Polokwane with the honour of hosting this significant fixture.

This marks Bafana Bafana's long-awaited return to Peter Mokaba Stadium, a venue rich in history and footballing excellence. The last time our national team graced this pitch was in 2016 against Senegal during the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifiers.

Polokwane has an impressive track record of hosting major football events. During the 2010 FIFA World Cup, this very stadium saw titanic clashes such as France vs Mexico, Greece vs Argentina, Algeria vs Slovenia, and Paraguay vs New Zealand.

We are more than capable of delivering another world-class experience, ensuring that the match against Lesotho is conducted with excellence both on and off the field.

Hosting Bafana Bafana is an opportunity for economic growth, community engagement, and provincial pride. The presence of our national team in Polokwane brings a significant economic boost to the city and surrounding areas. Hotels, lodges, and guesthouses will welcome visitors from Limpopo, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Northwest and beyond.

Our local restaurants, transport services, and informal traders will also benefit from the influx of football fans.

Moreover, this match will serve as a powerful platform to inspire young footballers in our province. Limpopo is already making its mark in South African football with three teams - Magezi FC, Sekhukhune United FC, and Polokwane City, competing in the highly competitive Betway Premiership.

This is proof that our province is a fertile ground for football talent, and we look forward to seeing more of our young stars donning the famous Bafana Bafana jersey in the future.

Programme Director, our national team needs us now more than ever. They are performing well in Group C, currently sitting in second place with seven points after four matches, tied with group leaders Rwanda. A victory against Lesotho will be a massive step toward securing qualification.

We call upon all football lovers, families, and communities across Limpopo to fill Peter Mokaba Stadium to capacity and create an electrifying atmosphere that will spur our boys to victory. When the stands are packed with passionate South Africans in green and gold, our team performs at its best.

Sport has a unique power to unite a nation, break down barriers, and inspire hope. It is through football that we have witnessed moments of national pride, moments that remind us of our shared dreams and aspirations.

In the words of the great Nelson Mandela: "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does."

As we stand together in support of Bafana Bafana, let us also remember that this game is a symbol of our resilience, our unity, and our unwavering belief in the future of South African football.

Let us make history on 21 March 2025 by turning Peter Mokaba Stadium into a fortress of support. Together, we can push Bafana Bafana one step closer to the FIFA World Cup.

Go Bafana Bafana Go!!!!

I thank you