

MEDIA RELEASE

09 July 2025

TO: ALL MEDIA

RE: PREMIER DR RAMATHUBA SADDENED BY DEATHS OF TWO INITIATES

The Premier of Limpopo, Dr Phophi Ramathuba, has expressed profound shock and deep sorrow at the tragic news that two initiates have lost their lives in separate initiation schools in the province since the commencement of the 2025 initiation season.

The first incident involves a 19-year-old initiate from Sekhukhune, who experienced severe complications and sadly passed away on Sunday, 06 July 2025, at a local hospital. The second tragedy occurred in the Mopani district, where a 12-year-old boy was a victim of an accidental fire that broke out in the camp last week. Despite receiving treatment in hospitals in both Mopani and Gauteng, he succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday, 09 July 2025.

"When we received news of these tragic deaths, we were overcome by grief and compassion; it is heart-breaking that such promising young lives have been cut short. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the departed; this is not how we would have wanted to gather as families, during such difficult times of mourning," stated Premier Dr Ramathuba.

The Premier further said: "It is our collective responsibility to ensure that all initiates attending these schools are protected and safe."

"We call upon all individuals entrusted with the oversight of these young men to exercise utmost vigilance. Whether you are a principal of the initiation school, a traditional surgeon, or a senior traditional leader, you must recognise that the lives of these initiates are in your hands. We cannot allow the loss of life to occur under the banner of tradition," emphasised Premier Dr Ramathuba.

The Premier reiterated that any incidents resulting in such fatalities will be thoroughly investigated to determine the underlying causes. While the government is committed to honouring and preserving rich traditions and customs, it is equally bound by the obligation to protect lives. It cannot permit lives to be lost in the name of tradition. Such tragedies cast a negative shadow over the entire initiation ceremony and rigorous measures must be undertaken to uphold its dignity.

The Premier has directed that the MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements, and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA) will lead a formal investigation in collaboration with the Department of Health to provide a comprehensive report on both incidents.

Limpopo has always held a good record of registering few casualties during the winter initiation season.

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