

TRIBUTE BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE FUNERAL OF MS
MATHABA PETRA TSEBE AT CHRIST THE KING ACADEMY, PALEDI, MANKWENG,
POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

10 OCTOBER 2026

Programme Director,
The Tsebe family,
Acting Executive Mayor, Cllr Jussaf Peema,
Chief Executive Officer of Mankweng Tertiary & Academic Hospital, Dr Monene
Mogashoa,
Our Traditional Leaders,
Faith-Based Leaders,
Executive Management of University of Limpopo School of Medicine,
University of Limpopo Student Representative, Dr Tsheola Paballo,
Members of the University of Limpopo community,
Fellow mourners,

Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni, Good morning, Goeie Môre.

We gather here today with hearts weighed down by a grief too profound for words, struggling to comprehend the painful silence left in the wake of a life that shone so brightly and touched so many hearts. At just twenty-two years old, Mathaba had barely begun to explore the endless possibilities of life, yet she had already made an impact that will not easily be forgotten. She did not merely exist in this world; she illuminated it with her presence, her brilliance and the promise of a future filled with hope.

The echoes of Mathaba's untimely death have travelled far beyond the immediate circle of those who knew and loved her, leaving communities near and far in shock, sorrow and disbelief. The magnitude of this loss reminds us that the value of a life cannot be measured by the number of years lived, but by the hearts touched, the dreams inspired and the legacy left behind.

Today, we mourn a daughter, a granddaughter, a student and a future medical doctor whose light has been taken from us far too soon.

Popularly and affectionately known as Thabi, Mathaba Petra Tsebe was a remarkable young woman whose story was one of promise, discipline and determination. As the only child, she was the centre of her mother's world and the pride of her grandparents, who raised her with immense love and strong values.

From an early age, Thabi demonstrated an exceptional love for education. She was joyful, respectful and determined to excel. When she completed her schooling at Flora Park Comprehensive High School, she distinguished herself as the top matric learner in the Class of 2022, achieving an outstanding six distinctions.

This was not merely an academic accomplishment; it was evidence of a young woman who understood the value of hard work and was prepared to pursue her dreams with unwavering commitment.

In 2023, she enrolled at the University of Limpopo to pursue a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. Her ambition was not simply to obtain a qualification, but to become a doctor who would serve humanity and make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

Her leadership qualities were equally evident. In 2024, her fellow students elected her Secretary of the University of Limpopo African Medical Students' Association and in 2025, she rose to the position of Chairperson. At the time of her passing, she was in her fourth year of medical studies.

Programme Director, imagine the possibilities that lay ahead of this young woman. Imagine the lives she would have touched, the patients she would have treated and the families she would have given hope. Imagine the day she would have returned to her community wearing her white coat, ready to heal those who needed her most.

As the Limpopo Provincial Government, we mourn this loss deeply. We mourn not only for the life Thabi lived, but also for the many years, opportunities and dreams that have been cruelly taken away. Her story reminds us that behind every young person is a world of potential that deserves protection, encouragement and the opportunity to flourish.

We acknowledge that the circumstances surrounding Thabi's death remain a source of anguish and unanswered questions. We trust that the ongoing police investigations will establish the facts and that anyone found to have committed a crime will be held accountable in accordance with the law.

This tragedy also compels us to confront the scourge of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in our society. We cannot continue to lose women and young people to violence while treating every tragedy as an isolated incident. We must speak out, challenge harmful behaviour and build communities where women and girls can live without fear.

To our men, we appeal to you to stand up and declare, with conviction: "Not in our names!" Protecting life and dignity is a collective responsibility.

To her mother, her grandparents, her relatives, friends and fellow students, please know that you do not mourn alone. To her mother, Ms Mmasagate Calphonia Tsebe, whom I had the privilege of working with during my tenure as MEC for Health, I extend my deepest condolences.

No words can adequately describe the pain of losing a child and no speech can fill the emptiness left by her absence. May you find strength in the love that surrounded Thabi, comfort in the memories you shared and courage in the knowledge that her life mattered profoundly.

Programme Director,

If we want to see a safer society, a better future and real change for the generation Thabi represented, we must use our voices. I urge everyone here to go out on the 4th of November and exercise your democratic right by voting. Do not stay at home. Go out and vote for the change you want to see.

Thabi's journey was tragically cut short, but her legacy of academic excellence, leadership and service will endure. Though she will not wear the white coat she worked so hard to earn, the dream that inspired her must continue to live in all of us.

Rest in perfect peace, Mathaba Petra Tsebe. You were loved, you were cherished and you will never be forgotten.

I thank you.