

25 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY HAS BROUGHT FREE EDUCATION & MORE

MOKOPANE: Residents from all the walks of Limpopo Province celebrated the Freedom Day in the Bakenberg Stadium with Limpopo Premier, Chupu Mathabatha, Sport, Arts and Culture MEC, Thandi Moraka, Waterberg District Acting Executive Mayor Cllr Rosinah Boloka and the host Mayor of Mogalakwena Municipality Cllr Andrina Matsemela.

Addressing thousands of audience at the packed Bakenberg Stadium, Premier Mathabatha said 25 years of democracy have brought free education, free house, access to health care and free basic services such as water, electricity and more.

“On this day we commemorate the first democratic elections in this country which were held on the 27 April in 1994 and these were the elections which abolished apartheid and ushered in a new hope, a new dawn, our democracy. On this day we remember that apartheid was a very evil and brutal system which did not recognise Black people as equal citizens.”

“Apartheid government introduced many laws which made the life of a Black person painful and difficult to live. We black children were only given the education which prepared us to work as servants of our White counterparts. This type of education was known as Bantu education,” said Mathabatha.

“When young people protested and rejected Bantu education, the apartheid government responded by sending the police to shoot and kill them. One of the youngest victims who was killed by apartheid police for rejecting Bantu education was the 11 year old Hector Peterson,” added Mathabatha.

Mathabatha said Bantu education was designed to ensure that Black children do not get the opportunities to be trained as medical specialists, scientists, accountants and other important professions. The apartheid government wanted us and our kids to go to school only to be trained how to become a good garden boy or an effective kitchen girl.

“After 1994, the African National Congress under the late President Nelson Mandela promised to create an equal education which would be accessible for all, they said it was impossible. Today as we speak there is no longer education for the White people and education for the Black people; we have one single education system,” said Mathabatha.

In the past, only those who came from rich families were able to go to universities and colleges. Today that is a thing of the past; the government has ensured that each child who is working hard is able to access university or college education.

Mathabatha said even those who come from the poorest families are able to go to the university because we have a government that cares. In this Province, the government has opened TVET Colleges in every region. Those who come from poor families receive free education in these colleges.

“Our School Nutrition Programme, Scholar Transport and the No-Fee School policies remain amongst the best interventions by this ANC government. To date, the Feeding Scheme

programme in our schools feeds thousands of learners in almost 4 000 public schools. Through this feeding scheme, we have ensured that children do not miss school days simply because they do not have anything to eat at school. This can only be done by a caring ANC led government,” continued Mathabatha.

Mathabatha said, “Because of this freedom and democracy we are able to introduce the Scholar Transport Programme in our schools. This programme benefits learners in almost 380 schools. These are indeed the fruits of the freedom we are celebrating today. It does not end there, this democratic government has introduced a No-Fee School Policy to ensure that children from poor families don’t have to pay school fees. Today in Limpopo, over 1.6 Million children do not pay school fees. This is what democracy has brought to the people of Limpopo.”

In the last five years alone, provincial economy was able to create over 317 000 permanent jobs for the people of Limpopo.

“We are looking forward to creating even more jobs for the people of this Province. In this Waterberg region, there are a number of job creation investments which are in the pipelines. I can tell you that we are also excited about the new investments in the Ivanhoe Mine in Mokopane. The current investment in this mine is at R4.5 billion. We are looking forward to the mine going into full operation by 2024. This mine is expected to create well over 25 000 jobs. These are the jobs which will benefit most of you.

“For many of our people, the struggle for freedom and democracy was also a struggle for access to basic services. In the past, piped water, electricity and tarred roads were things of the cities. Black people in rural villages were not considered for these basic services. In 1994 there were only about 30% of houses which had electricity. Today as we speak, almost 95% of houses in this province are connected to electricity. This is a massive development which should be celebrated,” concluded Mathabatha.

The huge crowd was entertained by various artists such as King Munada, Winnie Mashaba, Master KG,

Mathabatha says the achievement should be celebrated.

“In fact I will say about 90% of schools in this province are no fee schools which says even a child coming from a poor background can still become a doctor. If that’s not reason enough to celebrate what else can we celebrate? At least you’ll get free primary health care everybody including these people who don’t even have money they’ll still get attention when they go there.”