

SPEECH BY THE FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR DAN KGOHULE, AT THE LAUNCH OF LOCAL TALENT DEVELOPMENT CENTRE AND OPENING CEREMONY OF 32 SCHOOLS MINI 2010 WORLD CUP, QWAQWA

5 February 2010

Programme director
Honourable mayors and councillors
Phakisa board members
Representatives of sport federations
Officials in the Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation
Officials in the Department of Education
Ladies and gentlemen
Comrades

Today marks yet another important day in the advancement of sport and recreation in our province. We meet today with two objectives in mind: to launch the Local Talent Development Centre as well as to conduct the official opening ceremony of the 32 Schools Mini 2010 World Cup tournament. As a consequence of the fact that the launch of the Local Talent Development Centre and the official opening ceremony will be followed by two kick off matches, I will not be long in my deliberation.

We launch the Local Talent Development Centre against the background of two challenges that are confronting us with regard to sport and recreation as a province. Firstly, we face a challenge of an inability to systematically identify, develop and retain the raw young talent that must eventually represent not only the school or sport club but also the Free State province and eventually, the country. Secondly, another challenge is with regards to making sport science and injury rehabilitation services more accessible to the broader sport communities in the Free State.

I am sure all of us can relate to these challenges. For example, more often than not our talented athletes tend to get glory and attention only after they have been identified by other provinces. We can count a number of athletes who are from this province but are shining stars for other provinces. Through the Local Talent Development Centre we aim to address this very factor.

With regards to sport science and injury rehabilitation, we have for years only had this service at the Free State Sport Science Institute in Bloemfontein. As such hundreds of athletes who needed these services could not access it. We have now moved towards localising these services across the province. This centre that we are launching today we ensure that those athletes who sustain injuries in the sporting and training fields are able to have those injuries treated immediately and embark on a rehabilitation programme instead of living with those injuries for the rest of their lives.

Through the Local Talent Development Centre we have therefore developed a system where talented athletes are identified, developed and nurtured in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. We have also embarked on the establishment of district high performance satellites as an integral part of the Local Talent Development Centre with the support of these stakeholders. These stakeholders include: the Free State Sport Academy, district and local municipalities, provincial sport federations, district and local sport councils, corporate partners, national as well as international partners.

The Local Talent Development Centre will be guided by a talent development strategy which is informed by a talent development continuum. According to the talent development continuum an athlete will move from a particular lower level to a higher level of development which will include the Free State Sport Science Institute.

An athlete will be able to benefit from a wide range of training programmes within the centre and these include: sport specific skill coaching, sport conditioning and strength training, athlete development and support, capacity building programme as well as team preparation programme. The centre is constituted by a fully equipped sport gymnasium and a multi-purpose training facility.

The district high performance satellite is constituted by the following services which an athlete considered to be level two on the talent development continuum will benefit from: sport specific testing and fitness evaluation, exercise prescription and recommendation, sport conditioning and strength programmes injury rehabilitation, advice on nutritional plans and supplements as well as team preparation programme.

I have no doubt that if we are to follow this kind of an approach and do sport and recreation the right way this time around, the Free State will not lag behind in terms of medal tallies at various sporting tournaments.

Programme director, at the official Schools Mini 2010 World Cup draw held at Phakisa on 22 January 2010, I somehow posed a challenge to ourselves that we need to move with military precision to ensure that this specific programme is implemented before the actual main event of 2010 FIFA World Cup. Because this 32 Schools Mini 2010 World Cup tournament is the precursor to the 2010 FIFA World Cup we had to move with precision to ensure that it realises the goals we have set for it to achieve.

We meet today to officially mark the outcomes of the preparatory work that has been done since the launch of this programme on 17 October 2009 in Welkom. Today's official opening ceremony is the culmination of the programme that we had adopted since the launch of this tournament the programme which entailed the following elements:

- soccer legends in our province deployment to all the 32 participating schools to conduct training
- a roadshow of the tournament replica trophy to all participating schools
- distribution of attire to be used by participating schools to all these schools.
- the staging of the first match with the opening ceremony by early February at Charles Mopeli stadium in QwaQwa.

Honoured guests, today we are here at Charles Mopeli stadium in line with our resolve to stage the first matches and conduct the opening ceremony of this tournament. We will continue to implement and monitor this programme until the finals of the games are staged in April at Vodacom park in Bloemfontein, Mangaung, where the closing ceremony of the tournament will also be held.

As we reach this final stage of the tournament, we should look back with pleasure and say to ourselves we have indeed done our part as the Free State to bring more hype to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Let me take this opportunity to wish all the teams participating in this tournament well. May the best team win and let the games begin.

I thank you.