**MEC MANANA PAYS TRIBUTE TO THOMAS MADIGAGE**

Mpumalanga MEC for Culture, Sport and Recreation, Ms Sibongile Manana passes a message of condolence to the Madigage family, South African Football Association, SAFA, football supporters in the province and the country as a whole, after the sudden passing on of Bafana Bafana Assistant Coach, Thomas Madigage who died in a car accident last week.

Madigage was not only a good coach but he was a deeply religious person as he was a staunch member of the Zion Christian Church and practiced his religious beliefs with pride. As the custodian of matters of religion in the province, we continue to encourage all our people in the province to practice their religions without fear and respect other people’s rights to choose and practice their own religions.

We were all looking forward to Madigage to assist Gordon Igesund to turn Bafana Bafana into a team that will make all South Africans proud. We were very hopeful that Madigage will contribute to the success of Bafana Bafana as they were going to participate in the African Cup of Nations next year in our country. Our Mbombela stadium will also be hosting some of the games during AFCON and we urge all soccer loving supporters in the country to support Bafana Bafana and the entire tournament in large numbers in honour of Madigage. We also urge South African players that will be doing duty in this tournament to emulate the 1996 generation and lift the Afcon trophy as a tribute to Madigage.

In these difficult times, we urge the Madigage family to take comfort in the fact that it is indeed all South Africans that are mourning Thomas’ death as he was a national icon who served his country with pride and honesty. We need more people of Madigage’s calibre to take our football to new heights and we hope that those who worked closer to him will work towards realising his goals and plans that he had on developing football in disadvantaged areas.

**May his soul rest in peace.**