

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF TLOKWE MUNICIPALITY, CLR MAPHETLE AT GALA DINNER EVENT IN HONOUR OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE IPF 8TH AND THE 26TH JUNIORS WORLD MEN'S AND WOMEN'S 2008 POWERLIFTING CHAMPIONSHIPS HELD AT THE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, POTCHEFSTROOM

September 01, 2008

- Programme Director
- All protocol observed
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is of course another great honour and privilege for me to be accorded the opportunity to address you tonight. I am sure the IPF 8TH and the 26th Juniors World Men's and Women's 2008 Powerlifting Championships have been a resounding success. Congratulations to all winners, and to the losers, try again harder next time around.

These championships have offered a rare opportunity to read and find some interesting aspects about the sport, and I must say I find it indeed colourful and interesting.

Like weightlifting at the Olympics, power lifting has somewhat of a chequered history. In fact it was initially called 'the bench press competition or widely known as 'weightlifting', one of the original paralympic sports dating back to the 2nd paralympic Games in 1964. Then, it was offered exclusively to Spinal Cord Injured lifters.

At the 1992 Paralympic Games in Barcelona, 25 countries participated in power lifting competitions. That number doubled in 1996 at the Atlanta Paralympic Games with 58 countries taking part. The number has since increased to 109 countries from five continents.

It is clear therefore that on paper, power lifting is one of the most equal of sports, allowing athletes with cerebral palsy, spinal injuries, lower limb amputees and Les Autres to compete against each other in selected weight categories.

Power lifting is also the world's fastest growing paralympic sports. Today, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Powerlifting Committee which governs the sport since 1989 encompasses a multi-disability register of athletes competing in 10 weight-classes for both men and women. Women had competed in power lifting competitions for the first time at the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

At the 2006 9th FESPIC Games in Kuala Lumpur, three IPC power lifting records were broken in the 82.5kg. (China), up to 67.5kg (China) and over 100kg (Iran) categories.

So there are two interesting facts here. One, disabled women finally earned their "barbells", and two, China is a powerhouse in power lifting. Ladies and gentlemen, I am highlighting the above facts especially for Malaysians, that doors are opened for women in this field. And secondly, South Africans must train hard to compete against such powerhouses as China. We can learn from them how they train and discipline themselves to be at their peak and emerge as champions.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I for many of you who have been here have had indeed some time to discover and appreciate the beauty of our city; i.e: the serenity of our Mooi River, the expanse of its banks, the alluring experience of its shopping mall, the unique world class stellar heritage at the Vredefort dome, the variety of its bird species, and the warmth, friendship and hospitality of its people. Tell your country men of these experiences and bid them to experience this for themselves.

Thank you for coming. I hope you will enjoy your dinner and before we adjourn, I would like to wish you bon voyage.

Thank you.