

St Paul High School learner wins Polihali TBM Naming Competition

Grade 11 learner, 'Malira Chefa of St Paul High School in Butha-Buthe, has been announced as the winner of the Polihali Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) naming competition. Her proposed name, Leboborane -la -Manyokola -Thita, has been officially adopted for the TBM currently excavating the Polihali-Katse transfer tunnel, where it will ultimately connect with Khoiti-ea-Ngoaha-Kholo advancing from the opposite end.

'Malira received a first prize of M12,500, while her school was awarded M37,500. She was officially announced as the winner by the Minister of Natural Resources, Honourable Mohlomi Moleko, during the TBM launch and naming ceremony held at Polihali on 20 April 2026. The event was jointly officiated by Minister Moleko and South Africa's Minister of Water and Sanitation, Honourable Pemmy Majodina.

The ceremony attracted high-level attendance, including the Minister of Labour and Employment, Honourable Ts'eliso Mokhosi; former Minister of Natural Resources, Honourable Monyane Moleleki; the Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation; the Chinese Ambassador to Lesotho; the South African High Commissioner to Lesotho; Member of Parliament for Malingoaneng, Honourable Monethi Ramakalima; the District Administrator; local authorities; and project principals from the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC), the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), TCTA and South Africa's Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).



In his remarks, Honourable Ramakalima welcomed the tunnelling milestone as a significant step forward in project implementation. He emphasised the need for continued focus on improving livelihoods in affected communities, particularly through rangelands rehabilitation and enhanced access to water resources.

Delivering her address, Minister Pemmy Majodina expressed appreciation, on behalf of the people of South Africa, for the dedication and hard work of all those contributing to the project. She highlighted the enduring partnership between Lesotho and South Africa, describing the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) as one of the region's most successful transboundary collaborations—anchored in shared resources, mutual benefit, and sustained economic cooperation over four decades.

Minister Majodina further described the TBM launch as a defining milestone that brings the goal of improving water security to Gauteng and surrounding areas, closer. She underscored the importance of ensuring that communities in the project areas also benefit meaningfully from the water resource.





Reflecting on the broader significance of the project, Minister Moleko noted that while LHWP's contributions to employment, skills development, and enterprise growth are commendable, equal priority must be given to livelihood restoration and social development. He reiterated that this is a core obligation of both governments as outlined in the LHWP Treaty, stressing that "no one should be left behind."

The launch of the 423-metre-long Leboborane-la-Manyokola-Thita marked the culmination of a nationwide TBM naming competition involving Grade 11 learners. Following a rigorous adjudication process, ten shortlisted names were subjected to a public vote. Fikile Mpopo of St Catherine's High School secured second place, winning M7,500, with her school receiving M22,500. Third place was awarded to Karabo Selebalo of Holy Family High School, who received M5,000, while her school was awarded M15,000.

LHDA extends its congratulations to all the winners and expresses sincere appreciation to all participating learners and schools. Their contributions form part of the enduring legacy of the Project's 40th anniversary, reflecting the creativity and national pride of Lesotho's youth.