

# MEC Dhlomo visits second family of SA medical student who drowned in Cuba

10 December 2017

KWAZULU-NATAL Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has visited and comforted the family of Cebo Makhaye, the other Cuba-based medical student who drowned in a swimming pool in Cuba last weekend.

Accompanied by Umhlabuyalingana mayor Nkululeko Mthethwa and religious leaders, an emotional MEC Dhlomo expressed his sadness and held prayers at the Makhaye family home at Manguzi, near the Mozambican border yesterday. Calling on the family to be strong and have faith in God during this time, MEC Dhlomo also revealed that the mortal remains of the two students who drowned will be repatriated to South Africa towards the end of next week, once the post mortems have been completed. They will be embalmed, and then transported to France, where they will be flown to Johannesburg, and ultimately to KwaZulu-Natal.

With no-one who is permanently employed, the large extended Makhaye family had pinned its hopes on Cebo, who was a fifth year student. He was due to come back to South Africa in July 2018; complete his 18 months' experiential training, and then graduate as a doctor.

Last Saturday night Cebo and his friend, fourth-year student Sibusiso Thanks Ngeleka attended a birthday party at a private house in Havana Cuba. It is alleged that at some point, they decided to go and "cool down" in the swimming pool. When they did not return, their friends started a frantic search for them.

After Cebo was discovered inside the pool, he was rushed to hospital, but demised on the way. The group, meanwhile, continued the search for Sibusiso, who was also found in the pool having already demised.

The incident has left the students shocked and has caused devastation back home.

MEC Dhlomo, who also visited the family of Sibusiso Thanks Ngeleka at KwaNzimakwe (Ugu District) on Wednesday, said: "When these children are recruited into this programme, we prioritise those who are academically bright, but who also come from poor homes that cannot afford to pay for their studies. When they get into the programme, we then expect them to complete their studies one day, graduate and come back to help the country to address the shortage of doctors. They are expected to come back and serve the communities that they come from. This area, KwaNgwanase, has lost out in a big way because of what has happened. We are therefore here to give words of comfort to the family, and assure them that they are not alone during this difficult time," MEC Dhlomo said.

Since its inception in 1996, the Nelson Mandela Fidel Castro Medical training programme has enabled South Africa to begin to address the shortage of doctors in the country by sending young aspirant doctors from poor communities for medical training in Cuban universities, while also recruiting some Cuban doctors to local shores. There are currently 2885 South African medical students in Cuba in various levels of study. No fewer than 590 doctors have already qualified from the training programme, while 98 students are doing their final year in South African medical schools.



*MEC Dhlomo with mourners at the Makhaye family*



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