

Des van Rooyen decries poor state of water infrastructure

The poor state of the country's water infrastructure, water losses and a failure to implement strict water-saving measures has worsened the effects of the drought leading to a state of disaster being declared in eight provinces.



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Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Des van Rooyen confirmed this at an interministerial drought task team meeting on Thursday, 9 May.

"The drought situation is still gloomy. Disasters do not happen in a vacuum, but in communities where people stay," he said.

"Among the measures that should be considered in addressing the drought conditions are disaster management plans and other seasonal-related contingency plans. Our people do not have much information. There should be increased communication of drought-related information to all communities."

He said that drought conditions experienced in most parts of the country were a result of natural phenomenon, characterised by below normal rainfalls and increased temperatures and heatwaves.

But the situation had been compounded by the poor state of water-related infrastructure, water losses and the lack of implementation of stringent water conservation measures in affected areas.

"These conditions have resulted in eight provinces being declared states of disaster, with the exception being Gauteng. However, we have intervened in many parts of the country, with the assistance of state-owned entities, (the) private sector and nongovernmental organisations. This assistance included the drilling of boreholes and distribution of millions of litres of drinking water," he said.

He said that some affected provinces were not availing resources quickly enough to deal with the crisis and chose, instead, to rely on national government for help.

Department of Water and Sanitation figures show dams levels to be critically low. Western Cape dams were at about 30% capacity, Northern Cape at 57%, Limpopo at 59%, KwaZulu-Natal at 49% and Free State at 54%. Gauteng remains the exception, where dam levels this week were at 86% of capacity.

Source: The Times

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