

Nation called to conserve water amid protracted drought

With a national state of disaster having been declared in three provinces, newly elected President Cyril Ramaphosa has appealed to the nation to continue to intensify efforts to use water wisely.



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Ramaphosa made the appeal during his inaugural State of the Nation Address (SONA) as president of the republic on Friday, 16 February, in Parliament.

“The country remains gripped by one of the most devastating droughts in a century, which has severely impacted our economy, social services and agricultural production.

“The drought situation in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape has been elevated to a national state of disaster. This gives national government the authority to manage and coordinate our response nationally with support from all provinces.

“This will ensure that we also heighten integrated measures to support the provinces that are hardest hit. We are looking at activating the necessary extraordinary measures permitted under the legislation,” said Ramaphosa.

Latest data

With SONA being held in Cape Town due to the location of Parliament, the new president used the platform to commend the people of Cape Town and the rest of the Western Cape for diligently observing water saving measures. Level 6b water restrictions have been in effect from 1 February, which require all residents to drop their daily use to 50 litres per person per day or less.

The latest data from the City of Cape Town indicates that dam storage level is at 24.9%, reflecting a weekly decrease of - 0.6%.

Earlier this month, water and sanitation minister Nomvula Mokonyane said interventions such as the bulk infrastructure projects and daily monitoring of dam levels could see Day Zero pushed back this year. These efforts have borne fruit, as the predicted Day Zero date has now been extended to 4 June from 11 May 2018.

The delay in Day Zero - the day that taps will run dry for residents - has been attributed to the continued decline in agricultural usage and Capetonians reducing their water usage.

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