

Climate change means behavioural change is critical

THE Department of Water and Sanitation persists in encouraging the public to carry out a tight balancing act of utilising water with caution.

Granted, washing of hands regularly is one of the most important measures to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. To do this, one requires a reasonable amount of water. However, we cannot be oblivious to the fact that we are a water-scarce country and that climate change is upon us.

Climate change has an unfavourable impact on both water resources and security as a whole. The recent droughts experienced in some parts of the country – such as Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Northern Cape – which led to water scarcity, emanate from climatic variation. The change in climate caused the heat waves, resulting in massive evaporation of water resources such as dams and

rivers.

The water crisis that the country is faced with is as a result of recurrent droughts driven by climatic variation. This crisis is already having a significant negative impact on economic growth and on the well-being of the people in South Africa, more especially now that we are faced with the pandemic.

The effect of climate change is felt in a number of important economic sectors such as agriculture, food security and water resources. It is therefore hugely significant to protect and conserve our water resources. These negative impacts will be exacerbated if we do not utilise the available water with caution and utmost respect.

In South Africa, water resources are already under pressure from the ever-growing water demand due to population growth. We will be under even greater pressure in the future as a result of climate change.

In mid-2017 to Mid-2018, the City of Cape Town endured severe water shortages due to a three-year drought. The City's water supply ran dry and almost reached the dreaded Day Zero.

By then, dam levels fluctuated between 15 and 30%. The City had to implement significant water restrictions in a bid to curb water usage.

This meant that municipal water supplier had to be switched off and residents had to queue for their daily fixed amount of water.

Climate change is upon us, therefore behavioural change is critical. We need to always be mindful of the fact that we are not immune to what transpired in Cape Town. If we do not protect the limited water that is in our possession, we could possibly go through the same fate.

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