



MEDIA STATEMENT

Last week's heavy rainfall increases water storage in the country's reservoirs

30 April 2019

For the first time in as many months, last week's heavy rains that engulfed many parts of the country have increased dam levels from 68,6% to 73% , an unprecedented increase of 5% at a go.

However, the figure falls short of 8% to match 81% in the same period last year. Hydrologists have expressed their doubt if the current figure will ever reach last year's percentage as the recent downpours are considered to be the last before South Africa enters the dry winter season.

Last week's heavy storms will be remembered for the havoc and destruction they caused in the coastal part of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal and in Port St John's where an estimated 80 people lost their lives during flash floods. In Eastern Cape 10 people died and thousands others were displaced from places like Port Elizabeth and much of the former Transkei region. Subsequently, members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) were deployed to assist with relief efforts in Port St Johns, where as many as 300 residents were successfully evacuated from their homes.

Many of the victims of the flood succumbed to the water after attempting to traverse rivers in areas like eNgqeleni, eMbizana, Lusikisiki and KwaBhaca.

A total 77 people died in and around Durban alone, prompting Premier Willies Mchunu to declare Thursday (2 May 2019) a day of mourning for the flood victims.

Elsewhere, Gauteng continued to retain the highest dam levels at 97,5%, followed by Free State and Northern Cape at 86,7% and 75% respectively. Gauteng falls short of 3% to reach its 100% capacity in the same period last year. At 74,9% Mpumalanga fell short of a tiny fraction to match Northern Cape.

Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal on the border of Mozambique escaped the fury of Cyclone Kenneth that claimed 38 lives in Pemba and Cabo Del Gado provinces at the beginning of





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this week. The furious rains in the neighboring country also caused a trail of destruction of infrastructure weeks after Cyclone Idai caused mayhem in Beira province.

Recent torrential rains in South Africa have increased the average water storage to 23 591,5 cubic metres. The amount of water in reservoirs is considered sufficient enough to sustain the country through the dry winter season provided consumers use water wisely and sparingly.

Despite heavy rains in KwaZulu-Natal, dam levels increased by a mere 2% as much of the rain water ended up in the Indian Ocean. Western Cape retains the lowest dam levels at 34,9%. Limpopo dropped from 66,1% to 65,9% this week while North West rose from 63,6% 64,2%. However, boast of six dams that have reached their capacity while Dap Naude Dam that is supplied by Broederstroom River is almost empty at 7,4%.

Despite increasing its levels from 62,8% to 63,2%, the situation remains dire in Makanda, Eastern Cape, where locals depend on tankered water and groundwater from boreholes for basic use. However the Department of Water and Sanitation in the province is part of a task team that strives to find solutions for the beleaguered region.

Despite the improved water situation in major parts of the country, DWS would like to renew all South Africans to be circumspect in their water use and report leaking infrastructure such as pipes and taps

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Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

For more information contact Sputnik Ratau, Spokesperson for the Department of Water and Sanitation on 082 874 2942

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