

Wastage blamed for the country's water shortage

Losses close to 50% in some municipalities

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THE AVERAGE South African used 26 percent more water than the global average, and water expert Dr Anthony Turton says the country wouldn't be suffering so much if it wasn't so wasteful.

One South African uses an average of 235 litres of water a day while others across the world use 173 litres a day.

In an analysis recently published in @Liberty, the policy bulletin of the Institute of Race Relations, Turton stated: "A key

part of the problem is that 37 percent of the water supplied by municipalities is 'non-revenue' water, which is either lost to leakages or is never billed or paid for. "In some of the worst-performing municipalities, distribution losses are estimated to be close on 50 percent."

These losses cost municipalities around R11 billion a year, but cannot easily be overcome with existing state capacity.

Another reason for the high level of water wastage is the lack of engineering skills in municipalities.



WATER CRISIS

Turton said the water shortages were predicted seven years ago by the South African Institute of Civil Engineers. He believes the "racialising" of the appointment of skilled workers led to the problem. "The shortage of engineering skills at third-tier level is an 'induced' deficit related to the ruling party's insistence on a rigid form of racial transformation.

"Were it not for this factor, the engineering skills available would suffice to meet present needs. If the government was willing to deracialise the appointment of technical skills, the shortage would be overcome."

Turton's report states that many poorly functioning municipal wastewater plants "spew close on 4 billion litres of untreated or partially treated sewage into the country's rivers every day."

"If current transformation policies continue to take precedence, we can anticipate a further deterioration in the operation of wastewater treatment plants.

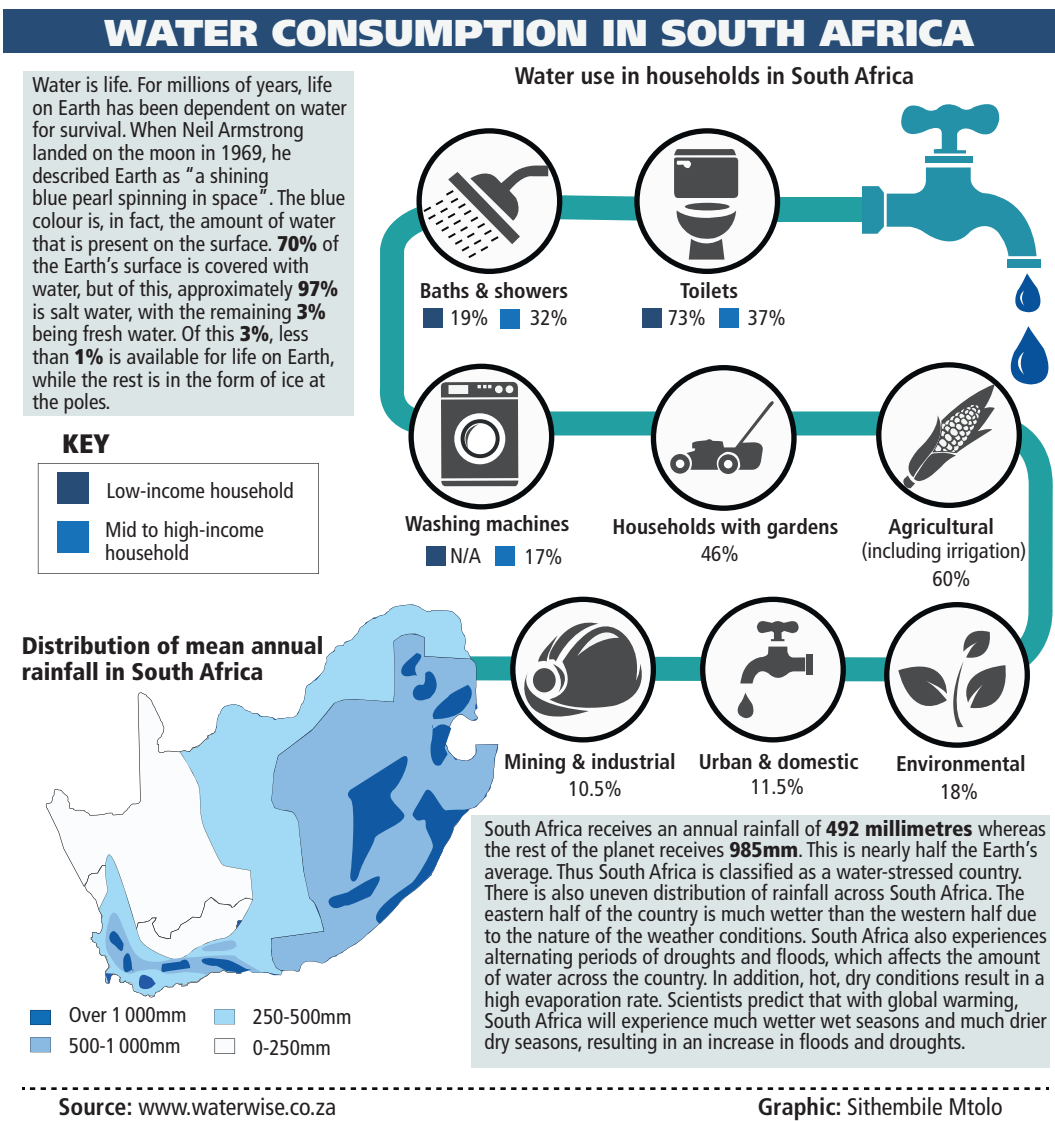
"This is likely to generate a growing burden of disease, especially in poor communities, and an escalating cost for the treatment of potable water from sources contaminated by sewage.

"The possibility of major public health crises in the short to medium term is also growing and can no longer be discounted."



TAPS RUN DRY: A resident of Caledon Court, Limpopo Estate, in Sophiatown, Joburg, sets off to seek water elsewhere. The estate has had no water since Sunday, and promised water tanks have not been forthcoming.

PICTURE: CHRIS COLLINGRIDGE



First death over scarcity of water

THAMI MAGUBANE

COMPETITION over scarce resources is bound to breed conflict and confrontations, says the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

"In any situation, where there is a scarcity of resources, there will be conflict. People will not want to go for too long without a basic commodity such as water," says Dr Johan Burger of the ISS.

Burger was speaking following the death of Qiniso Mhlongo, 15, from Nongoma in Zululand, this past weekend after a dispute over water.

Boys from a nearby area had allegedly got into a fight with Qiniso and killed him after a row erupted over water.

This is the first violent death related to a conflict over water that has been recorded since the crisis began.

Police spokesman Brigadier Jay Naicker confirmed the incident. He said two people, one 16 years old and another 25, had been arrested and were expected to appear in court soon.

Burger said the water woes would add fuel to the fires already blazing over service delivery failures in the country, as protests intensified.

"Over the years, there has been an increase year-on-year in protests.

"In 2004/5 there were 660 protests, and in 2014/5, the police statistics show there has been an increase to 2289, that

is a 247 percent increase in protests," said Burger.

He said that at the current rate, politicians should effectively deal with water shortage problems in the run-up to the local government elections.

"They would not want to be faced with these crises that might cost them the local government elections."

The Star's sister paper Isolezwe reported yesterday that Qiniso, from ward 11 in Nongoma, was attacked while trying to protect young girls, including his sister, who were being harassed by boys from ward 12.

The girls had been accused by the boys of polluting water.