

Drink water from Yangtze or 'cocktail'

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Updated: 2010-03-24 07:50

Residents in Beijing may be drinking a cocktail of water in 2014 if they don't get used to the taste of water from southern China.

The Beijing Water Authority initiated a program on Monday to determine whether residents in Beijing can accept the taste of water from the Yangtze River.

"If residents cannot become accustomed to surface water from southern China, we are considering changing the taste with food additives or local tap water," said Zheng Qiuli, a press officer for the Beijing Water Authority.

Zheng said they had just started to research the possibility and declined to reveal any more details.

"The taste difference is because of the different microbes in surface water and underground water," said Wang Jian, a water specialist with Green SOS, an NGO based in Beijing.

The water, which will be provided by the South-to-North Water Diversion, comes from the Yangtze River and contains more microbes than underground water, which is the tap water drunk by residents in Beijing at present, he said.

"The water from southern China will be safe for health and even better than local water, although there will be a difference, in taste" Wang said.

The best way to change the taste would be to use local tap water, which is underground water, Wang said. But he added that he had never heard of adding food additives to water.

"After all, water is different from food," Wang said.

However, he said the surface water would need to be filtered to achieve the standard of drinking water.

Another difference between water from the south and local water was the acidity, said Wang.

"The water in Beijing is alkaline while water from the south is acidic. The water from south is better to drink and use," said Wang.

He said the local alkaline water could cause kidney stones in residents who drank it over a long period.

In addition, local water is hard because of the amount of calcium and magnesium it contained and this reduced the amount of foam when residents used the water to wash clothes, Wang said.

The first phase of the middle line of the South-to-North Water Diversion will be completed in 2013 and the southern water will be transferred in 2014.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-03/24/content_9632002.htm