

Beijing hikes water price to ease shortage

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Beijing will raise water price by 8 percent starting Tuesday to encourage saving in the Chinese capital, local authorities said Monday.

The price of water for residential use will be hiked by 0.3 yuan to 4 yuan (0.6 U.S. dollars) per cubic meter, the municipal development and reform commission said.

The hike includes 0.16 yuan increase in water resources fee and 0.14 yuan rise in sewage treatment charge, it said.

The price rise came days after 22 out of 25 representatives voted for a government-proposed water price hike by 0.9 yuan, or 24.3 percent, in three years at a public hearing.

Most of the 22 representatives said authorities should take into consideration the impact on residents and raise the price gradually over three years.

The hike aims to "boost water-use efficiency, increase sewage water use, and encourage water-saving", the agency said in a statement.

The commission also stated the government is working on a pilot "tier pricing system", in which the price increases with each higher level of consumption.

Beijing will pilot the tier pricing system in some residential communities in 2010, it said.

The city last raised the price of water for residential use by 0.8 yuan to 3.7 yuan in August 2004.

Beijing, a city of 17 million, has been plagued by droughts for nine consecutive years in the past decade.

Government data shows per capita water availability is only 300 cubic meters, far below the internationally recognized warning level of 1,000 cubic meters.

Over the past five years, Beijing has invested more than 4 billion yuan in water conservation and water supply projects.

Last month, the city raised the price of water for non-residential use by up to 48.6 percent.

Other Chinese cities are also planning or have agreed to raise water prices, including Shanghai, Tianjin, Shenyang, Guangzhou, Nanjing and Chongqing.

Source:Xinhuanet

http://en.ce.cn/National/Local/200912/22/t20091222_20663399.shtml