

[Report] Beijing Water Project Postponed

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Anchor:

China's largest water diversion project, which was scheduled to start supplying water to Beijing next year, has been rescheduled to begin in 2014. Water prices in Beijing are expected to rise in response to expected water shortages.

Zhang Wan has the details.

Reporter:

While Beijing residents anticipated receiving water from the Yangtze River by 2010, the Beijing Water Authority has announced China's largest water diversion project will be postponed until 2014. The worsening water shortage in the capital will see bigger challenges in the coming years.

Hu Huizhe is from 'Friends of Nature' - an environmental non-government organization committed to promoting environmental awareness and protection in China.

"Beijing has been facing serious water shortages, freshwater resources per capita lag far behind the nation's average. People should be aware of this and learn to cherish our water resources."

The Chinese capital has seen nine consecutive years of drought since 1999, when demand for water grew substantially due to economic expansion and population growth.

The water shortage in Beijing is set to reach a crisis point by 2010, when the population is expected to top 17 million, that's 3 million more than current resources can support.

To tackle this situation, Liu Hong, an official from Beijing Water Authority, says water price rises will be one of the measures taken.

"Water price adjustments are favourable to the sustainable utilization of our water resources. On one hand, the increased revenue brought by water price hikes will cover the costs of supplying water and the utilization of recycled water. On the other hand, it will drive some factories to adopt water saving measures, thus lowering the demand for water resources."

Since 2001, water prices in Beijing have risen to about five yuan from the previous three per ton. Liu says water prices will be adjusted taking into account several factors, including the cost of water control, water scarcity in the city as well as local people's income. In addition to water price rises, Liu also sees the increased use of recycled water as an option.

"We will increase the utilization of recycled water. Recycled water can be used in manufacturing, farmland irrigation as well as for watering green areas in the city. Moreover, we will dig more wells in areas where sufficient underground water exists."

Besides broadening water resources, as NGO member Hu Huizhe says, saving water is also important.

"Southern and Northern areas all face water shortage problems. Saving water and harnessing appropriate technology is more effective than simply broadening water resources and it costs less as well. For instance, we can save water by simply changing our daily habits and increasing awareness".

For China Drive, I am Zhang Wan.

<http://english.cri.cn/7146/2009/05/20/1241s486330.htm>