

Yangtze River water to supply water-scarce Beijing in 2014

Source: Xinhua | 01-13-2009 08:43

The Yangtze River in South China is expected to provide 1 billion cubic meters of water every year to Beijing starting 2014, according to the municipal water authority.

"The water volume from the Yangtze River accounts for about a quarter of Beijing's annual water demand in total," said Cheng Jing, head of the water resources of the capital at a government meeting on Sunday.

"The River water supplied by the South-to-North Water Diversion Project will help tackle the city's water shortage problem," Cheng said.

Last year, Beijing was gripped by a drought and an emergency diversion of 300 million cubic meters of water from neighboring Hebei Province started in September.

"The water from Hebei will last till May," Cheng said.

Beijing has had water shortages partly because of its geography, with nine years of consecutive drought starting 1999. It has received only 75 percent of its expected precipitation over that period.

The shortage in Beijing is set to reach a crisis point in 2010, when the population is expected to top 17 million, or 3 million more than its resources can support.

The South-to-North Water Diversion Project, consisting of eastern, middle and western routes, is designed to divert water from the water-rich south of the country, mainly the Yangtze River, the country's longest, to the dry north.

The eastern and middle routes are already under construction while the western route is still at blueprint stage.

The water price will also be increased in the first half of this year because the current price fails to cover the cost of water plants, Cheng said.

"A hearing will be held for the water price adjustment and the plan will be implemented after the approval of the city government," Cheng said.

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