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Water Supplies Department

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The Editor
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Dear Chief Editor,

Water Supplies Department's Total Water Management Plan

I refer to the articles “Ideas to tap” by Ms Su Liu and “HK needs a fresh policy on water before the taps run dry” by Mr Tom Holland on January 9.

Water resources in different places are subject to different challenges and require tailor-made management plans/strategies that need to take into account climate change challenge and local environment and conditions. Singapore, for example, imports water from its neighbour Malaysia while Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region of China, imports water from its motherland. Both share similarities in many ways. Yet, they are exposed to different unique circumstances which set them apart.

To ensure water security and sustainability, we promulgated the Total Water Management strategy in 2008 that emphasises containing the growth of water demand and strengthening water supply management. According to the “Asian Water Development Outlook 2013” jointly prepared by the Asian Development Bank and the Asia-Pacific Water Forum, Hong Kong has achieved the “capable” national water security stage.

In regard to water demand management, we have implemented various initiatives including the launching of the Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme in 2009 and subsequent public education and publicity to promote water conservation, replacement and rehabilitation of 3000 km aged water mains for completion by end of 2015 to reduce water leakage from 25 % in 2001 to 15% and expanding the seawater supply system for flushing that currently covers 80% of the population. We will also kick off the ‘Let’s Save 10L Water’ Campaign this year to solicit public support in reducing the daily per capita domestic fresh water consumption (excluding flushing water) from 130 litres to 120 litres.

In terms of water supply management, apart from designating one-third of Hong Kong's land as water gathering grounds, we have actively explored new water sources that are less sensitive to the impact of climate change. In 2012, we commenced a study for constructing a desalination plant in Tseung Kwan O by 2020 to cater for 5% (expandable to 10%) of total fresh water supply. We will also commence detailed studies this year on converting the tertiary treated effluent from the Shek Wu Hui Sewage Treatment Works to reclaimed water for non-potable applications after further expansion of the plant. For grey water reuse and rainwater harvesting, we have developed technical and water quality standards for their non-potable applications and will consider the implementation of these systems in suitable government projects.

We are now preparing for a comprehensive review of the Total Water Management Strategy with an aim to timely introducing new initiatives to strengthen our resilience and preparedness for the sustainable development of Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

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Water Supplies Department