

Tamar Talk's interview on Dongjiang Water (28 July 2021)

(English translation of the Chinese text version)

Mr Gary YIP
(Chief Engineer/
Development,
Water Supplies Department)

: Rapid population growth and urban development coupled with limited land resources in Hong Kong rendered water resources insufficient in meeting the increasing demand for fresh water. As early as in the 1960s, the Hong Kong Government was well aware that the increasing fresh water demand in Hong Kong could no longer be satisfied solely by rainfall. In 1963, Hong Kong was struck by a once-in-a-century severe drought, and had to go through a period of water rationing when water was supplied for only four hours in every four days. To help Hong Kong solve water shortage problem, Zhou Enlai, the then Premier of the State Council, approved a fiscal fund of RMB38 million for the implementation of the Dongjiang-Shenzhen Water Supply Scheme to facilitate the distribution of Dongjiang (DJ) water to Hong Kong.

Based on actual needs, Hong Kong may request the Guangdong authorities to raise the annual ceiling of guaranteed DJ water supply from 820 million cubic metres (mcm) to 1 100 mcm. Hong Kong is assured of an adequate fresh water supply.

In respect of water price, Guangdong Provincial Government agreed that the actual water price for 2021 is to be frozen at the 2020 level amid the severe challenges brought by the COVID-19 epidemic to ease the financial burden of Hong Kong. As a result, Hong Kong saved about \$64 million in purchasing DJ water.

Mr LEE Chi-kin : All raw water, i.e. untreated water, including DJ
(Chemist/ Treatment, water, has to go through a series of rigorous
Water Supplies Department) treatment and disinfection at water treatment works
of the Water Supplies Department to ensure that the
drinking water quality complies with the Hong Kong
Drinking Water Standards.

Over the years, the routine water quality monitoring
mechanism of WSD shows that the quality of DJ
water supplied to Hong Kong is of good quality
consistently. All water quality monitoring data are
in compliance with the national standard for Type II
waters in the “Environmental Quality Standards for
Surface Water, GB 3838-2002” (applicable for the
abstraction for human consumption in first class
protection area).

Mr Gary YIP : In respect of long-term planning, the existing cost
(Chief Engineer/ of seawater desalination is about 30% more than the
Development, purchase price of DJ water. The electricity
Water Supplies Department) consumption and carbon emissions of desalination
are much higher than that of delivering and treating
DJ water, thus the environmental impact of seawater
desalination will be higher. As such, we still rely
on DJ water as the main source of potable water
under the current circumstances.

Super : The Dongjiang River, originating from Jiangxi
Province, is one of the three tributaries of the Pearl
River and flows to the Guangdong Province. It
serves as a major source of fresh water supply for
about 40 million people in the region, including
Hong Kong.