

CONSTRUCTION NEWS

For those of you who may have missed the Green Truth during your holidays, Water and Electricity Minister Abdullah Al-Hussayen has reportedly promised to end Jeddah's sewage water problem within four years.

Speaking to reporters after inspecting the sewage pipeline project in Jeddah the minister said works on the project are now in progress in the northern part of the city.

The Minister also disclosed plans to expand the city's sewage water treatment plants, adding that their capacity would be increased to more than one million cubic meters. Water from these plants will be used for agricultural and other purposes.

The government has allocated SR7 billion for sewage water projects and SR2 billion for sewage water treatment plants. The general plan for the Jeddah sewage network is ready at the Ministry, which has invited tenders for 20 sewage projects.

According to previous estimates made by experts, Jeddah required more than SR20 billion in investments for water and sewage projects.

The capacity of Al-Khamra sewage water treatment plant has been raised to 500,000 cubic meters while that of the plant at King Abdul Aziz Airport to 250,000 cubic meters.

The airport plant, which will use the latest sewage treatment technology, will treat sewage water from north Jeddah in the first phase.

In other construction news the Newspaper reported on what is being called the Venice Island Project Scam in Jeddah, where a developer advertised and sold shares in a project after it received a permit from the Ministry of Commerce to establish a company but without getting a permit and licence from the Municipality to implement the project. Apparently the result was that "hundreds of millions of riyals" were lost by investors who bought shares in a non-existent project.

The Ministry of Commerce has suspended all permits for real estate investment projects until it reviews the regulations and announces new ones that will protect the rights of both developers and investors. A higher committee has been formed to study the issue and will need a few more months to come up with recommendations, according to sources at the Ministry.

At about the same time, Al-Eqtisadiyah newspaper reported that investment in building apartment buildings, villas and commercial centres increased in Jeddah despite the increase in cement prices. In a recent field study, it showed that currently Jeddah needs 45 thousand housing units to face the large increase in population forecast for the next seven years. It is estimated that the cost will be SR202 bn.

HOW DID I MISS THIS ONE?

The BBC apparently ran this piece back in November 2003. Type the headline into Google and over 9000 pages appear including "Bargain Sand at eBay"!

Saudi Arabia has reportedly imposed strict border checks to enforce a ban on the export of sand.

There are fears that the growing demands of the construction industry could lead to a shortage in the desert kingdom. The Arab News newspaper reports that neighbouring Bahrain needs to import large quantities of sand for reclaiming land from the sea.

Demand is also expected to grow as the process of reconstruction in Iraq gathers pace. Although sand remains plentiful in Saudi Arabia, construction experts say the high costs of bagging and transporting make exploiting it difficult. Experts have told the newspaper that if a mechanism could be devised to move sand from the vast desert region known as the Empty Quarter, it could be a very profitable proposition.

As the paper points out, there is more sand in the Kingdom than oil. Cement is also in high demand, the report says, with many cement factories having to expand their production capabilities to meet domestic demand.

