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By Eid Al-Harhi, Arif Al-Shehri and Abdul Majeed Al-Asmari

JEDDAH – Sources have said that “large amounts” of water have appeared at the surface of the construction waste material pit in Al-Asla Valley despite authorities pumping out 45,000 cubic meters of water a day from the nearby Misk sewage reservoir to address the water level and relieve the pressure on its embankments.

The contaminated water has, sources told Okaz, been flowing from the tons of waste material and construction refuse and flowing towards nearby residential districts after the northeastern area of the dump – located close to the Misk back-up dam - filled up with water.

The sources said that the water presence was due to an error on the part of the Mayor's Office which ordered the opening of the dam's lower pipeline to lower the water level, causing thereby a “considerable flood” of sewage.

The problem was met, the sources said, by using bulldozers to move earth at the construction waste pit to block the flow, leading in turn to water filling the periphery of the pit.

Ahmad Al-Ghamdi, Director of Public Relations and Information at the Mayor's Office in Jeddah, said that everything was being done to address the situation which he now described as “reassuring”, and denied reports that the backup dam had sustained a crack due to water pressure.

Local residents, however, remained skeptical after visiting the dam on Saturday to check the situation first-hand.

“The statements from the Mayoralty are just to keep us calm,” said Abdullah Al-Qahtani, a pupil at a local secondary school. “They said the same sort of things about the garbage dump fires. School colleagues Abdullah Al-Zahrani and Ahmad Al-Amri agreed.

“Lots of students didn't go to school on the first day back as we'd heard that the backup dam was close to collapse,” they said. “Everyone living east of the highway is worried about the lake bursting.”

Locals are also appealing to authorities such as the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment, the Mayor's Office and Civil Defense to put them at the top of their list of priorities and identify alternative locations for accommodation should the danger not abate.

“The television is showing even more rain falling on the region and particularly Jeddah, and there are sites on the internet warning that the backup sewage lake could collapse at any moment,” said local resident Saud Al-Muttairi. – Okaz/SG

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