

# Bahrain panel on pool safety



■ Mr Buhamood during the launch at the council's headquarters in Reef Mall, Malkiya. Right, Ms Al Bitar, centre, speaking during the launch

■ Children at a swimming pool

A NATIONAL committee to monitor swimming pools being rented out to the public was launched in Bahrain yesterday.

The National Committee for Drowning Prevention comprises representatives from ministries concerned, government bodies, municipal councillors, Capital Trustees Board members and the Royal Life Saving Bahrain (RLSB).

The Northern Municipal Council is spearheading the initiative with the committee starting work in the Northern Governorate which has the highest number of swimming pools in the country.

The committee's set-up and scope of work were completed over 18 months but changes are expected when new public representatives will be added from the Southern, Muharraq and Capital governorates following national elections on November 24.

The panel will raise awareness about safe swimming, assess pools and associated facilities, check the water and added chemicals, come up with joint inspections and programmes and take action against violators.

Boards with guidelines in Arabic and English will also be put up at licensed swimming pools.

A similar committee, under the Civil Defence Directorate, was disbanded years ago but the Interior Ministry has more representation in the new panel, with officials from the general direc-

By MOHAMMED AL A'ALI

torate, Public Security and community police. Incumbent council chairman and interim national committee president Mohammed Buhamood, who is running for parliament, said the committee's work has been defined through an outline but a comprehensive strategy was required.

"Awareness is not enough, all the pools need to be licensed."

There are 56 swimming pools in the Northern Governorate, 17 of which are licensed, 22 need renewals and 17 have never been licensed.

In 2016, there were 61 swimming pools with 28 being licensed and 43 operating without permission. There have been several swimming pool tragedies this year.

### Standards

Pakistani teenager Abrar Shubair, aged 15, drowned in a swimming pool in Malkiya on August 4.

Five-year-old Ali Jassim Al Hesabi drowned in a pool at an illegal construction site in Dar Kulaib on March 19, while 18-month-old Sayed Mahmood Sayed Ali died at Salmaniya Medical Complex after he fell into a fish tank at his uncle's house in Duraz on March 15.

On May 16, a 21-year-old Bahraini drowned in a swimming pool of a gym in Al Farafa area, and on May 7 a domestic worker drowned in a swimming pool of a house in Barbar.

RLSB skills development executive and former Olympic swimmer Samira Al Bitar said the society had classified swimming pools into six categories with each having different criteria and requirements.

"We have designed assessment forms for swimming pools in line with international standards but we can work with the committee to update the conditions," she told the GDN.

"After all, the committee has the executive power and we are here to provide the necessary consultancy and technical support."

The GDN reported in March that officials had called for a national strategy to curb drowning mortality, after a Health Ministry report for 2003-2015 revealed that an average of 16 people drowned annually in Bahrain.

The committee will hold its next meeting on November 15.

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**From 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.**

For more information, please call **39692500/66900482**



■ Bahraini artist Leena Al Ayoobi is showcasing her work at the German Orthopaedic Hospital, Salmaniya as part of the facility's efforts to encourage local talent and promote cultural and artistic ties between Bahrain and Germany under its "Artist of the Season" campaign. Ms Al Ayoobi is an artist, designer, founder and owner of Dar Alfann, and a member of the Bahrain Art Society. Above, Ms Al Ayoobi at the launch of her expo with hospital chief executive Dr Heiner Abel.