

# Muharrag Heritage Project to Deliver 300 Homes by 2026

- 300 Bahraini families to benefit from new housing units
- Construction of model homes reaches 92% completion
- Restoration of heritage buildings exceeds 60% progress



Amna Al Rumaihi, Housing Minister

The first phase of the Muharrag Historic City Development Project is set for completion by the end of 2026, providing housing for 300 Bahraini families, according to Housing and Urban Planning Minister Amna Al Rumaihi.

In a written response to MP Hamad Al Doy, the minister revealed that construction of new model housing units has reached 92%, while restoration works have surpassed 60%. The visitor centre is also progressing steadily at 82% completion. The first phase is fully funded by the government.

The project includes developing 300 homes alongside restoring 16 heritage buildings located

along the Pearling Path. These buildings will be repurposed for tourism and cultural use, supporting Bahrain's broader efforts to preserve its historical identity.

Future phases aim to expand the project to approximately 2,000 housing units through partnerships with the private sector.

Beyond housing, the development features extensive urban enhancements, including 48 kilometres of movement corridors, parking facilities, and 72 green squares covering a total of 12,000 square metres. Around 100,000 trees will also be planted, while five major streets are undergoing upgrades involving infrastructure, façades, and

street furniture improvements. The 300 homes in the first phase have been divided into three construction packages. The first package is expected to be delivered in the first half of 2026, with full completion of all units scheduled by the end of the year.

The minister noted that the project began with developing a comprehensive guide for building in heritage areas, particularly tailored for Muharrag. This guide outlines architectural and planning standards, including design, materials, building heights, and landscaping, ensuring the preservation of the city's cultural and urban character.

A detailed social survey fol-



Hamad Al Doy, MP

**“The restoration of buildings along the Pearling Path will strengthen Muharrag’s position as a cultural and tourism destination.”**

lowed, involving consultations with residents, families, and community representatives. Their feedback played a key role in shaping the planning and execution of the project.

Further stages included neighbourhood planning, technical assessments, and property evaluations, allowing authorities to determine which buildings would be restored and which could be redeveloped—striking a balance between heritage conservation and modern urban renewal.

Approximately 250 properties were acquired in phases under existing laws, with owners receiving compensation following valuation and review procedures.

## WHAT'S NEXT ON PARLIAMENT'S AGENDA

By Mohammed Darwish



## Low Uptake for BD40,000 Housing Option in Muharrag

Only 15 applicants in Muharrag's Third Constituency have so far benefited from the ministry's BD40,000 land-and-finance option, even though 61 households with files dating to 2004 and earlier asked to move to it, according to a written reply from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to MP Mohammed Al Olaiwi.



Mohammed Al Olaiwi, MP

### 811

Housing applications are still pending in the constituency.

The reply also showed that 811 housing applications are still pending in the constituency. Of those, 746 are for housing units, 17 are for housing plots and 48 are for ownership flats.

The oldest pending files total 65 cases, all of them applications for housing units. They include 18 dating from

2002, 17 from 2003 and 30 from 2004.

The year-by-year figures in the reply show that housing-unit requests make up nearly the whole backlog across the constituency. The highest totals among later years were 58 unit applications from 2014, 48 from 2012, 45 from 2011 and 43 from 2013.

Plot requests appeared in far smaller numbers and only in later years. The reply listed two from 2013, three from 2014, one from 2016, one from 2017, one from 2019, one from 2020, three from 2021, one from 2022, two from 2023, one from 2024 and one from 2025.

## Outstanding Housing Requests Reach 29,000

Outstanding housing requests in Bahrain stood at 29,000 by the end of 2025, with 88pc falling in the first family category, 8pc in the second, 3pc in the third and 1pc in the fourth, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said in a written reply to MP Khalid Buanaq.

During the current parliamentary term, 17,190 housing services were allocated, while 2,520 applications were cancelled due to factors such as changes in social status, income limits, or property ownership.

Authorities noted that cancelled applicants can reapply within two years if they meet



Khalid Buanaq, MP

eligibility criteria.

The ministry added that efforts are ongoing to reduce waiting lists through expanded housing options, financing schemes, and partnerships with private developers.

## BD800m Housing Plan to Deliver 50,000 Units

Bahrain launched an 800 million BD social housing plan aimed at delivering 50,000 housing units and services.

In a reply to MP Abdulwahid Qarata, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said a 2025 royal directive had been turned into an executive plan prepared with Eskan Bank and cleared by the Cabinet. It stated the plan aimed to speed up housing access through several paths.

These include traditional housing services, expanded financing options such as Tas'heel and Mazaya, and partnerships with private developers to increase supply.

The ministry said 7,000 housing services are set for delivery



Abdulwahid Qarata, MP

by December 2025, with major projects already underway across the Kingdom. Among them is Madinat Khalifa, expected to provide over 3,000 units.

Officials added that the plan is designed to reduce waiting times, expand choices for citizens, and ensure quality through strict oversight and coordination with relevant authorities.

## Limited Access for Foreign Lawyers

Another important debate on parliament's agenda is a 68-article draft law that would overhaul the regulation of the legal profession and, for the first time, allow foreign lawyers to appear in Bahraini courts in limited cases.

The government-backed bill, issued under Decree No. 16 of 2025, replaces the existing framework with updated rules covering registration, training, legal offices, fees, disciplinary action and professional conduct.

A key provision would permit the licensing of non-Bahraini lawyers to work alongside local

lawyers in specific specialised cases, particularly commercial disputes, while excluding criminal, administrative and Sharia matters. Foreign legal consultancy offices may also participate in cases governed by foreign law under strict conditions.

The draft also introduces tighter professional standards, requiring lawyers returning after five years out of practice to retake entry exams, and allowing inactive lawyers to move to a non-practising register if they fail to prove active work.

It further strengthens training requirements: trainee lawyers

must complete structured practice, pass exams, and work under supervision before qualifying.

Other provisions include mandatory annual registration renewal, new insurance requirements for lawyers, expanded oversight powers for inspections related to financial compliance, and stricter penalties for impersonating lawyers or practising without a licence.

Client confidentiality rules remain in place, but the bill introduces exceptions linked to serious crimes and legal obligations such as anti-money laundering laws.



Mahmood Fardan, Chairman of Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee

The Services Committee recommended approval in principle, while making several amendments, including changes to disciplinary timelines and fee assessments. The Supreme Judicial Council said it had no objections to the draft.

## GCC Customs Law Changes Under Review

The government referred amendments to the GCC Unified Customs Law to Parliament under Decree No. 23 of 2026, aiming to streamline procedures and boost trade efficiency.

The proposed changes would simplify the transfer of goods between customs points by reducing documentation requirements and allow duty exemptions for imports by the armed forces and security agencies, including equipment and vehicles, subject to approval.

The bill also aligns with decisions by the GCC Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee and will take effect once approved and published in the Official Gazette.

Under the proposed new wording of Article 72, people moving goods from one customs office to another could be spared from filing a full cus-



Hassan BuKhammas, Chairman of Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee

toms declaration at the point of entry. The transfer would instead be handled under documents and conditions set by the Director-General.

## Club and Association Penalties Bill

A bill introducing new penalties for board members of associations, clubs, and sports bodies will be on parliament's agenda, including fines up to BD50 and possible court-ordered removal in serious cases.

The draft law, linked to Decree No. 110 of 2024, replaces parts of the 1989 legislation and introduces a stepped system of enforcement starting with warnings, followed by fines and, if violations continue, referral to court for removal.

Under the proposed rules, fines would be capped at BD50, doubled for repeat violations, and collected funds would support associations and institutions. Offenders would also have the right to challenge penalties through a grievance process and then in court.

The Services Committee backed the bill in principle but



Ahmed Al Musallam, Parliament Speaker

amended it so that removal from office would only be carried out through a court ruling, not administrative decision, to ensure legal safeguards.

The Ministry of Social Development and youth and sports authorities supported the reforms, saying they improve governance while maintaining transparency. However, some civil society groups and the Bahrain Bar Society warned the changes could place additional burdens on voluntary organisations.

The bill also repeals Article 91 of the existing law and updates the penalties framework to improve clarity and enforcement.