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NTU designs device to prevent drowning in swimming pools

By Rita Zahara, Channel NewsAsia

SINGAPORE : Drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death in Singapore. Between 1992 and 2001, there were 52 swimming pool drowning victims in Singapore.

And researchers say that many more are victims of near drowning, and end up with permanent injuries.

Nanyang Technological University has come up with a new device which they feel can help stem this trend.

The next time you go swimming in a public pool, you may find extra eyes on you.

Beside professional lifeguards, an automated camera-based surveillance system will be looking out for you!

It captures real-time images - the software is designed to tell when someone is in distress in the pool.

When something is wrong - like when there are irregular movements - a ring around each swimmer will turn yellow and then red - even in a packed pool.

The proposed system uses video processing technology to develop a surveillance system which can detect and decide if a swimmer is in danger of drowning and send an alert, all in five seconds or less.

And this is when the lifeguard will be alerted.

Associate Professor Tan Yap Peng, Principal Investigator, said: "There are generally two types of drowning incidents. One is called passive drowning. For that case, the swimmer suddenly lose consciousness and sinks down to the bottom and without much motion.

"And the other case is considered as active drowning and the swimmer will try to struggle first before they actually give up and sink down to the bottom of the pool."



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Inventor, Tan Yap Peng from NTU says, they hope to install the system in all public pools within the next 2 years.

The cameras can be mounted high above the water to track swimmers and six are needed for each Olympic size swimming pool.

While there are existing underwater cameras to scan the bottom of pools to identify motionless bodies, the inventors said this was not a solution at all as it could be too late.

NTU said the innovation could also be modified for elderly healthcare or even enhancing security in banks. - CNA

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