



Hundreds of people turned up last night for the fashion show which was held as part of the First Arab Exhibition for Productive Families and Rehabilitation Centres. The show, which was held at the Diplomat Hotel, was attended by Minister of Labour And Social Affairs Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala and Secretary General of the Arab League Dr Esmat Abdulmajeed. The show highlighted traditional Bahraini fashion (left) and fashion from the UAE (right), Egypt, Yemen, Oman and Palestine.

Pictures: Abdulla Al Khal

Bahrain pioneers new unity of Arab States

PRODUCTIVE families and rehabilitation centres exhibitions could be organised at international levels, the Arab League Secretary-General Dr Esmat Abdulmajeed said yesterday.

He was speaking at the opening of the First Arab Productive Families and Rehabilitation Centres Exhibition in Bahrain.

Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa deputised Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala to open the exhibition at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre. The opening was attended by Arab States' Ministers of social affairs and social development.

He said: "Bahrain has entered history for hosting this

event for the first time and for being a pioneer in organising such activities. It has also opened a door to the international community to host and organise such events on an international level.

"These events do not just promote services offered to needy and disabled people but also promote Arab States' culture and traditions through exhibits and other programmes organised in line with the event."

Seventeen countries, including Bahrain, are taking part in the event, which runs until Friday.

The Ministers who attended

Ahdeya Ahmed
Chief Reporter

the opening said: "Bahrain should be proud of hosting such a prestigious exhibition which has brought Arab states together."

Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala said needy families have proved successful in producing high quality products. Although they face different challenges, they have proved successful in producing good products. "We are proud of all the exhibitors for the products they exhibited. It has shown needy families' high taste and creativity," he said.

"We can also say that the event has been successful when

we count the number of countries which are taking part. We never expected countries such as Libya, Algeria and Yemen, who have a lot of difficulties, to take part. They have shown their support not just to an exhibition which will end in a few days but have shown support to Arab unity."

Live coverage on the event will be broadcast on Bahrain Television Satellite Channel, BTV daily. There were also reports on London-based Middle East Broadcasting MBC, and Rome-based Arab Radio and Television, ART, and CNN.

There will also be daily reports on Arab local channels so millions of people will see or hear of the event.

Crusade against mobiles

MOBILE phones don't just interrupt conversations. They can also ruin your hearing.

As the number of people suffering some form of hearing difficulty increases, the miracle of modern communications, the mobile phone, gets the blame.

"The use of mobile phones is causing a lot of damage these days," said Dr Mohammed Hassan Khalaf, from the Professional Hearing Aid Centre, at the exhibition yesterday.

A survey revealed that between 25 to 35 per cent of Bahrainis suffers some type of hearing difficulty, said Dr Khalaf.

"It's an increasing problem today. Noisy crowds, electric appliances, loud machinery and the different types of telephones do a lot of damage."

He is trying to make people aware of the need for regular aural check-ups. "It's better if people have regular check-ups — even children. You have to be very careful."

It has been estimated that 20 million Americans suffer some form of hearing impairment, according to American hearing aid manufacturers. Starkey Laboratories.

Hearing impairment can be very subtle. Many people do not realise that they are having difficulties.

"That is why we must make people aware that they might have a problem," said Dr Khalaf.

25-year record of helping

THE Jordanian voluntary sector has come a long way in 25 years.

Many of the products on display at the Jordanian stall at the first exhibition are from the Rouseifa Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, which was founded in 1973 for disabled people between 14 and 40.

The centre has grown considerably over the past few years. There were only four workshops when the centre was founded 25 years ago.

Today there are 14, which have vocational training courses that include anything from tailoring to bush making, carpentry to book binding.

The centre recently introduced five new trade courses that offer training in the automotive industry. Special education programmes for the handicapped were introduced in Jordan in 1973.

They have provided a number of vocational training courses for the physically and mentally handicapped. These have helped many people

to find work. "Our philosophy is that the handicapped are still capable of working. Our delegation displays items of clothing, shoes and equipment that the handicapped have made," said Omar Hussein, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development of Jordan, at the exhibition yesterday.

Exhibitions of this kind help to promote the capabilities of the handicapped. "It helps the handicapped because we can support their efforts by selling their work," he said.

There are more than 700 voluntary organisations in Jordan and about 100 of them participate in the productive family programmes, said Ghanem Al Bustami, spokesperson from the Jordanian voluntary sector. A variety of local clothes, handicrafts and jewellery were on display.

"It's important to give people the chance to prove that they are still capable of working. We hope this exhibition will show people from other countries what the disabled are capable of," said Al Bustami.

Centres show caring attitude

Claire High
Staff Reporter

THE Minister for Labour and Social Affairs praised the commitment of the government to the social welfare of the Bahraini people at the inauguration of two new centres for deaf and disabled children yesterday.

Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala spoke to the *Bahrain Tribune* at the opening of the Shaikhan Al Faresi Centre for the Deaf and the inauguration of the new premises of the National Bank of Bahrain Home for Disabled Children in Isa Town.

"I think today is a demonstration to the people of Bahrain of the extent of the commitment of the government of Bahrain to the social welfare of the people," said Al Sho'ala.

The opening of the new centres was also attended by Arab League Secretary-General Dr Esmat Abdulmajeed, who was in Bahrain for the opening of the first Productive Families Exhibition at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre.

Mr Al Sho'ala, who had earlier opened the exhibition, said: "The exhibition today has shown two sides of this commitment to the welfare programme.

"The Productive Families programme attempts to move needy families into the position of being productive, while these new centres show the determination to rehabilitate and integrate the disabled and help them face the challenges of life.

"The people involved with these projects have the right to be extremely proud of what they have achieved. The Prime Minister, His Highness the Amir and the Crown Prince all have a keen interest and equal commitment to such programmes and activities."

Kuwaiti dignitary Shaikhan Ahmed Al Faresi has financed the Centre for the Deaf, and Bader Shaikhan Al Faresi, who received the key to the new centre yesterday, provided the funding for the furnishings.

The new centres, worth BD1.3million, will provide care for up to 480 children. The Centre for the Deaf in Riffa will be operational immediately, while the Home for the Disabled will open in September.

The centre would help children be rehabilitated and face up to their handicap, while the other centre for the deaf would help these young people communicate with the rest of the world, said Al Sho'ala.

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Show that reflects concern for . . .

Kuwaitis give up government jobs . . . and earn more

Ahdeya Ahmed
Chief Reporter

Photographs by
Abdulla Al Khal

MANY people in Kuwait have given up government jobs to produce and sell their own products, said Kuwait's Social Affairs and Labour Minister Ahmed Khalid Alklaib yesterday.

Mr Alklaib spoke at the opening of the Arab Productive Families and Rehabilitation Centres Exhibition.

"No one can ever imagine how much these people produce and make money. They sometimes give up their jobs to produce their own works and sell them. This has helped many to make more money," he said.

"This shows that encouraging needy people to be productive and helping them improve the quality of their works supports them financially. They can now earn money independently with their own talents and this is an experience we are proud of," he added.

Mr Alklaib said his country also started a special programme last month to further encourage them.

"Last month we decided to allocate special areas in co-operative societies for these products. This means that they are now guaranteed a market for their production."

Mr Alklaib said he was impressed with the exhibition's standard of organisation.

"Bahrain has made life difficult for whoever will host the exhibition next. We wonder whether anyone could organise a better exhibition than this one. Although it was its first experience, Bahrain has proved successful and we are proud of this country."

The minister said the event also reflected the strong ties between Arab states in different fields.

"It will further strengthen these distinguished ties and bring the Arab world together to discuss important issues that serve an important sector of the society which are the needy families and disabled people."

Egypt hopes to open centre in Bahrain

EGYPT hopes to open a centre in Bahrain to market its needy families' products, said Egyptian Minister of Social Affairs Dr Amaal Othman yesterday.

She gave an exclusive interview to the *Bahrain Tribune* during the opening of the First Arab Productive Families and Rehabilitation Centres Exhibition.

"We currently have a centre in London to market needy families' products and will soon have centres in Austria and China. However, we hope to have one in Bahrain because this country is a good business centre in the region," Dr Othman said.

"I have also been impressed with the well organised exhibition and proud that Bahrain took the initiative in organising this event. This shows this

country's concern towards such programmes and that encourages us to set up such a centre in Bahrain."

Dr Othman said more than one million families in Egypt benefit from the government's productive families scheme.

"We give them loans to start their own projects which are based on different skills. When they run their business they start paying the government back and this money goes to people on the waiting list."

"We have more than two million on the list and we expect to meet their financial needs in the next few years."

"Those who benefited from the scheme were very poor and can now afford their own basic necessities."

Dr Othman said more 3,500 centres for women were opened in Egypt.

Bahrain to join Jordan camp for disabled youth

BAHRAIN will take part in joint camps with Jordan for disabled children, Jordanian Minister of Social Development Dr Mohammed Khayr Mamsar said yesterday.

The minister was speaking at the opening of the Arab Productive Families and Rehabilitation Centres Exhibition.

Mr Mamsar, who has taken over the position as minister of social development for one week, said his country's participation in the exhibition was a unique opportunity.

"We are also looking for-

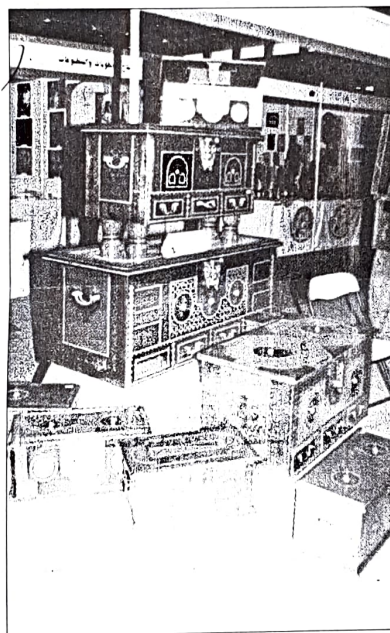
bring together disabled and needy people but will also bring smiles to the faces of orphans in both countries because special activities would also involve them."

"The exhibitions gives us the opportunity to strengthen our relations with Bahrain in the social field. We hope there will be more joint social projects which serve the less fortunate people in both countries," he said.

Mr Mamsar said the exhibition gave him the chance to see the high quality of products produced by needy families.



A Bahraini girl in a traditional wedding dress with henna painting



Traditional hand-made Bahraini boxes



A girl in a dress in the colours of Bahrain's flag



... defending the rights of families



Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala and Arab League Secretary-General Dr Esmat Abdulmajeed visit the Palestinian stall



Mr Al Sho'ala at the Sudanese pavilion



Cabinet Affairs and Information Minister Mohammed Al Mutawa, right, Works and Agriculture Minister Majid Al Jishi and Justice and Islamic Affairs Minister Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalifa at the Palestinian stall.



Electricity and Water Minister Abdulla Juma, Education Minister Abdul Aziz Al Fadhel and Defence Minister Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa visit a stall.



Products made of palm trees on display.

Stalls with stunning array of products

Egypt has helped million families

ANTHONY and Cleopatra would feel at home in the Egyptian section of the First Arab Exhibition of the Products of the Productive Families and Rehabilitation Centres.

Alabaster ornaments sit beside gleaming golden statues and pyramids fashioned from soapstone. Smaller versions of the Mask of Tutankhamun, the sphinx and a sarcophagus — with a lid that lifts off to reveal a neatly-wrapped mummy — decorate a collection of hand-made furniture in-laid with mother of pearl designs.

Anwar Sherif, Under Secretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs of Egypt, said at the exhibition yesterday: "All the products you see here are made by people who are part of the Productive Families Project. They are trained step by step, first to make things for the national market and then for export."

"Everything you see here is the result of the final stages of training."

Egypt has been one of the most successful countries in helping low-income families in rural and urban communities.

The Productive Families Project, managed by the Foundation for the Development of Productive Families, a non governmental organisation, has helped a million families since it was set up in 1964.

"We hope to help a further two million families over the next five years. And in 10 years we hope to be helping five million people who fall below the poverty line," said Mr Sherif.

Emirates' women in focus

WOMEN were the main focus of the UAE delegation at the exhibition.

Many of the handicrafts on display were made by women who have educated themselves through the work of the UAE Women's Federation.

Founded in 1975, it has been helping women to help themselves. It has improved women's social and educational conditions dramatically over the past few years.

The federation was founded to co-ordinate various women's groups and increase the vocational training and education available to them.

Today there are a number of handicraft and regional industrial centres in the UAE specifically devoted to the maintenance of women's traditional skills and activities.

The Women's Handicraft Centre in Abu Dhabi has become one of the most prominent centres of its kind.

Women are trained by highly-qualified female trainers. But as well as providing handicraft training, the centre offers advice on a variety of topics, including health, social problems and child care.

Women are encouraged to discuss their families, their rights and their problems.

Preserving traditional female handicrafts has been of special interest to the Department of Social Services, according to Ahmed Al Mehairi, manager at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the UAE.

Every dress has a story

EVERY dress tells a story, says Maha Rumman Saca, director of the Palestinian Heritage Centre.

Indeed, Palestine's post World War II history is colourfully chronicled in the cut of a sleeve, the pattern around a neckline, woven stitches around a collar. "The pattern of a dress reveals the history of a town or a village," she said at the exhibition.

A number of traditional Palestinian dresses are on show at the Palestine stand.

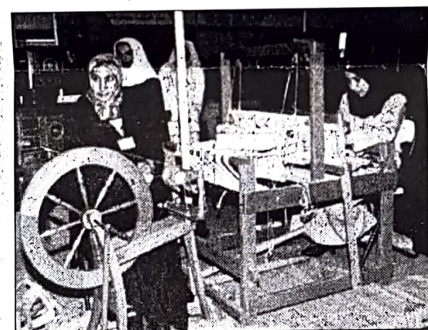
Wearing a delicate, hand-embroidered dress, Maha Rumman Saca explains that she is trying to preserve Palestine's history by maintaining the traditional costumes and jewellery of her country.

"You can tell which village the dress comes from, or even which village, just from the design of the patterns," she said.

Many of the dresses on show are elaborately woven and brightly coloured, with intricate stitching.

Neglecting the traditions of the past is a mistake that Saca is keen to avoid. She recently set up the Palestinian Heritage Centre to preserve "over 5,000 years of history".

The centre is described as an open museum that allows visitors to actively participate in the past. Visitors are invited to feel at home in lavishly re-created of traditionally-decorated rooms.



A Bahraini woman busy weaving.



Mr Al Sho'ala visits the Omani stall.



Jordanian Minister Mohammed Khayr Mamsar with Jordan's Ambassador Dr Shaker Arabiat and the Jordanian delegation at their country's stall.