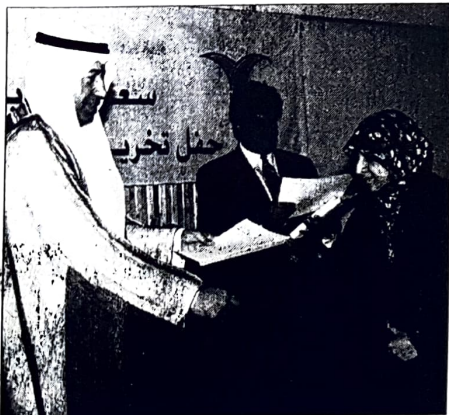
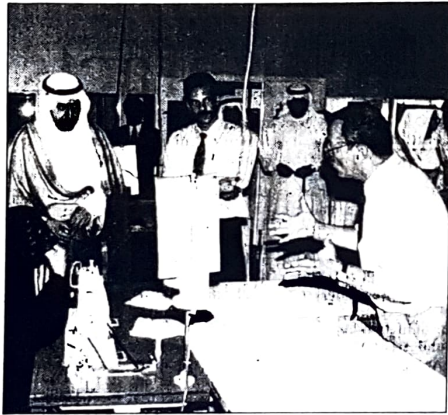


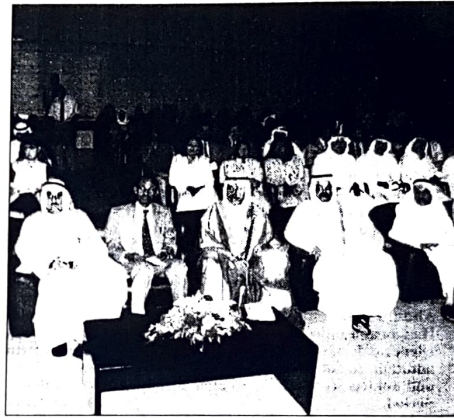
Besides helping to establish a strong workforce, their entry also enhances women's career opportunities



Labour Minister Sho'ala honours a graduate



The Minister is shown around the Centre.



Officials watch the ceremony.



The Minister honours another graduate.

Fresh graduates boosting garments sector

Nirmala Venkatesh
Staff Reporter

THE ADDITION of freshly-trained graduates into the garments industry is seen as yet another significant step towards establishing a strong national workforce in Bahrain and at the same time, enhancing career opportunities for women.

The Bahrain Training Institute (BTI) held a graduation ceremony for the first batch of 39 students of the Garments Training Centre, in which all the graduates are women. Joint efforts

and cooperation between the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and Oil and Industry, UNDP, UNIDO, Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the various factory employers, culminated in the graduation.

Dr Naji Al Mahdi, the BTI Director, thanked Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala for his continued support. He also thanked the Ministry of Oil and Industry for funding machines and some consumables, and for supporting a number of trainees.

Sho'ala reaffirmed his

Ministry's support for the programmes undertaken by BTI.

"The objective of the centre is to develop skills and we shall constantly support its initiatives towards all training projects, especially those supporting the participation of women in our development strategy," he said.

The successful completion of the training will now lead to greater cooperation between the various sectors involved in the garments industry. Some students are already employed in factories, and while their present job may be in an unskilled field,

the eight-weeks training at BTI has given them skills in set target areas.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has plans to provide guidance and counselling to employers, urging them to provide necessary opportunities to local labourers, especially those undergoing training and acquiring quality skills.

"We hope to have closer interaction with employers and explain the extent of training that is imparted to those taking our courses," said Dr Naji. "With some interest shown by

the industry and a positive reaction to accepting these newly-trained graduates as part of their workforce, a lot can be achieved towards enhancing the national economy," said Eva Nordberg, chief technical advisor at the Garment Training Facility, BTI-UNIDO.

Hamad Abel of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the graduation was an outstanding example of the cooperation between providers of employment on one hand and providers of training on the other. "We hope these graduates

will be a good example of quality production and work ethics in order to enhance the steps taken towards Bahrainisation," he added.

"The objective of UNDP in sharing the training programme with the BTI is to help the country develop the skills of the national workforce in the garment industry, in order to cope with the progress and development made by Bahrain in this area. The significant issue here is the possibility of integrating women into the mainstream of the economy. This is a positive

move and calls for encouragement and support from all the related sectors," said Dr Faisal Abdel Gadir, the UNDP Resident Representative.

Said Nordberg: "I have helped to establish a training facility for women in the garments sector in an effort to improve their skills and thus, their standing in the work environment. The aim of this project is to train the workers to a level where their skills can put them in a position where they can gradually replace the expatriate workforce." Many of those who

graduated yesterday are presently employed in unskilled or semi skilled positions in the factories. Some are working as helpers, packers or cutters. "The training given to them in this programme concentrated on the skilled use of the sewing machine. At the end of this course, they can sew straight and fast, produce a certain number of pockets or cuffs meeting a certain required standard," explained Eva.

She also said the training programme is tailor-made for developing fundamental skills required in the industry.