

# 8,000 jobs for Bahrainis

**MANAMA:** Nearly 8,000 people were found work last year as a result of the government's determination to find young people gainful employment, it was revealed yesterday.

Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala said the figure of 7,978 who had been found work excluded those who had obtained employment through their own efforts or in government offices.

He said the total strength of the Bahrain workforce at the end of 1995 was 240,917 and the total number of people listed as unemployed was

3,344, representing 1.4 per cent. The figure showed a favourable decline from 1.8pc as recorded at the end of August, he added.

Mr Al Sho'ala added that experts and observers considered these developments as positive, attributing them to the dedicated efforts of the authorities on the one hand and the support of the private sector on the other.

He added that the experts believed that the fact that unemployment figures were now available for the first time should end speculation

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and help put the issue in its proper perspective.

Mr Al Sho'ala said it was also apparent that the problem was not one of unemployment but "unemployability" of fresh graduates in certain vocations. Because of this, training had assumed greater importance than ever before.

The minister said the experts had also stressed that the move towards maximising employment opportunities for nationals was not aimed at "driving away expatriates".

"The contribution of expatriates to the economic growth and industrial development is not only recognised but will continue to be required in several areas," he said. "The approach is therefore one of economic expansion, with job opportunities available to all."