

# Bahrain's elderly population set to double, says minister

By AHDEYA AHMED

**MANAMA:** Elderly people in Bahrain will nearly double in number by the year 2001, says a Government minister.

Statistics show that elderly people accounted for 3.7 per cent of the population in 1991, says Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala.

"The number of elderly people is expected to be 6pc of Bahrain's population in the year 2001," he said.

"In 1991, the number of elderly was 17,365 aged 60 and over, which is 3.7pc of the country's population."

Mr Al Sho'ala was speaking yesterday at the opening ceremony of a training workshop marking World Elderly Day, which falls today.

The one-day workshop, held at the Bahrain Conference Centre, Holiday Inn entitled Ways of Reaching to the Elderly, was attended by social workers from different homes and centres for the elderly.

"The small number of elderly people in Bahrain does not mean they are neglected and not provided for through medical care and other services," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

"Now we have started paying special attention to them as their number is expected to become 6pc of Bahrain's population in the year 2001.

"The National Committee for the Elderly is mainly responsible for planning special projects that serve the elderly which are part of the general international plan issued by the United Nations in 1982."

He said the ministry had proved successful in looking after the society's elderly.

"The National Bank of Bahrain Home for the Aged accommodates 48, Muharraq Social Centre accommodates 60. In addition we have the mobile unit, which visits elderly people at

their homes and provides them medical and social services," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

He said the ministry had also played a major role in providing economic and social security for the elderly.

"This is being done through social societies that work together with the ministry to provide different services to them.

"The private sector have also played an important role by financially supporting Government organisations in different projects that serve elderly people.

"These organisations, which have set a good example for others, include National Bank of Bahrain (NBB), which built the BD600,000 NBB Home for the Aged in Isa Town."

Mr Al Sho'ala said the bank also supported the home with BD20,000 a year.

"Another project which reflects the private

Turn to Page 4, Col 4



# family care'



■ At the opening ceremony are, from left, head of follow-up bureau at the GCC Labour and Social Affairs Ministers Council Kamel Al Saleh, Assistant Under-Secretary for Social Affairs Sadiq Al Shehabl, Assistant Under-Secretary for Planning and Training Abdul Rahman Al Zayani and director of manpower development Saeed Ahmed

"He might be a smoker and will not be allowed to smoke until he gets permission from the nurse. "He is treated as a weak person who cannot do what he wants to, but should take permission from others."

He said elderly people could feel confused in homes, especially if they did not know the people around them.

"They are not friends and the individual's confusion towards them is based on being or not

being allowed to talk to them," said Dr Alhaddad.

"He starts feeling more and more lonely when his family and friends neglect him and each day passes is similar to the previous one."

# double by year 2001



■ Dr Alhaddad ... family the key that serve the elderly," said Mr Al Sho'ala. "This also reflects the importance given to them.

"They are the people who served their country when they were able to do so. Taking care of them also reassures young people that they will be looked after when they grow old."

He said The National Committee for The Elderly has provided many services to elderly people in Bahrain.

"The committee has several successful achievements by basically providing special welfare programmes," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

"One of the major achievements was the mobile unit project in addition to providing social workers and training them continuously to be

able to serve the aged."

He said the committee organised exhibitions for elderly people's handicrafts products and honoured families who look after their elderly members at home.

"The committee has also organised pilgrimage trips for them and provided them with equipment, which helps them move from one place to another according to their needs," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

"It has also been successful in spreading public awareness and organising special campaigns that highlight the importance of looking after elderly people."

# Aged 'need

By AHDEYA AHMED

FAMILY care is the key to happiness for elderly people, says a Bahrain doctor.

Institutions can't give the individual love people get from being with their family, says Psychiatric Hospital chairman Dr Mohammed Khalil Alhaddad.

He said elderly people go through psychological changes that take them back in time.

"It is a time when they decide to close their books and become isolated from social activities," he told a training workshop yesterday.

The workshop is part of the country's participation in World Elderly Day, which takes place worldwide today.

"It is a period when they start recalling their past and memories and they feel regret on all the good times they have lost," said Dr Alhaddad.

"If an elderly person decides to look to the future all he finds is death, the bitter reality is the

## Centres 'unable to offer individual love'

weakness he faces."

These changes of feelings towards different things in life, he said, were based on the environment in which the individual lived.

Dr Alhaddad said elderly people could not be compared to children in their psychological stage of life.

"Elderly people sometimes feel they are a burden on their children and their children want to get rid of them," he said.

"This results in feeling lonely and isolated from people around them."

"They feel insecure, because they have lost their friends, are not financially independent and have no social life."

What adds to the misery, said Dr Alhaddad, was the feeling of being a victim of illness, because the bones become weak and are easily broken.

He said the elderly should be looked after at home and not at centre or homes for the aged.

"No matter how advanced the services at these institutions and how limited their own homes, the elderly feel more relaxed among their family members," said Dr Alhaddad.

"The first thing the aged person loses is his freedom and independence and is just a figure among 50 others, who are on a list of people to be given food and sleep according to the units or the home's regulations.

# Elderly population to

► From Back Page

organisations' support is the BD600,000 Muharraq Social Welfare Centre, which was built by Abdulla Alhamad Al Zamil and Sons," he said.

"UCO Parents Home was also built by UCO Group owned by Ali Mohammed Al Musalam, Hassan Abdulla Al Subah, Bader Ahmed Kaikso, who were also financially supported by other individuals."

This, said Mr Al Sho'ala, was a good occasion to call for support from the private sector to support such projects planned by the Government, which result in the general development and civilisation of Bahrain.

He said many countries concentrated in the past on social welfare programmes for children and youth and neglected the elderly.

"They used to believe that investing in such programmes has positive social and economic benefits and results," said Mr Al Sho'ala.

"This does support the industrial development of a nation.

"On the other hand, the social welfare programmes for the elderly were ignored.

"People used to believe that investment in such plans was a waste and had no benefits."

This attitude, he said, had changed and elderly people were



■ Mr Al Sho'ala ... nation caring for elderly

being given similar rights to those given to the young.

"There has also been an increase in investments in projects