

# Gosi centre 'a key investment'

By REEM ANTOON

THE largest commercial complex in Bahrain has been praised as a key investment for the country's future as well as being a beautiful landmark.

Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala said yesterday that the BD8.5 million General Organisation for Social Insurance (Gosi) complex on Exhibition Avenue was an achievement to be proud of.

"The design and architecture of this beautiful landmark has all been done by Bahraini hands," he said.

"So with this beginning and the future marketing and training programmes laid down by the Gosi administration, I think we are heading down the right path."

Internal work on the complex was supervised by Ahmed Abubaker Janahi Architects and contracting by Mohammed Jalal Contracting.

Mr Al Sho'ala was given a tour of the complex yesterday by Gosi director general Shaikh Isa bin Ibrahim bin Mohammed Al Khalifa and other Gosi officials and representatives.

The 8,200 square-metre complex, which expects to attract shoppers not only from Bahrain, but also from all the Gulf states, has attracted about 800 visitors a day since the opening of the Delmon Cinemas last Thursday.

With about 50 per cent occupancy rate, the complex is currently attracting one new tenant each week.

"Everything that starts new is slow to begin with," said Shaikh Isa.

"Al Rashid Centre in Saudi Arabia took two



■ Mr Al Sho'ala, left, tours the complex with other officials

years to get on its feet, now it's one of the most popular in the region.

"Bahrain's Sheraton Complex was once nicknamed the haunted complex and look at it today."

He said earlier that to have an 80pc occupancy in the first year is a success and Gosi was hoping and anticipating a 100pc occupancy.

Profits from the complex, which provides facilities for the handicapped and the disabled, such as special bathrooms, will be reinvested in new industries aimed at creating job opportunities for Bahrainis.

Gosi currently has a contract with its chartered surveyors and property consultants Cluttons to train Bahrainis.

The four-storey complex is the first in Bahrain to install ozone-friendly air-conditioning compressor units.

It houses an exclusive jewellery section, a children's amusement area and a separate food court which offers a range of Mediterranean, Oriental, Arabic and continental food.

About eight large ceramic art works of various Bahraini artists are displayed around the complex, which houses 155 stores.

Shaikh Isa said the decision to invest the public's money into a prestigious real estate project came after Gosi found that most of the projects, that were being built on Exhibition Avenue included apartments and flats.