

Bahrain

Short-term work permits planned

● **New step to safeguard productivity**

By **SOMAN BABY**

PLANS to issue short-term work permits for expatriates are under study by the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry, it was revealed yesterday.

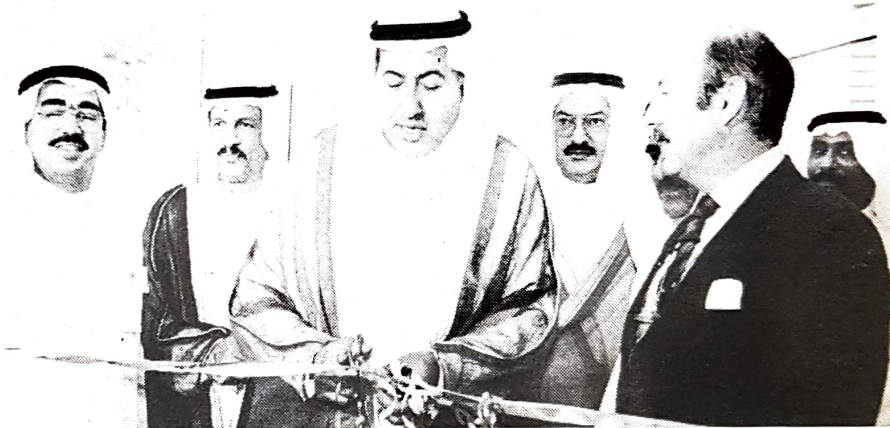
Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala said such permits would be for specific jobs of short duration and would help ensure that the productivity of the companies was not affected, because of the lack of qualified workers.

The Minister was speaking at the opening of the BMMI (Bahrain Maritime Mercantile International) Training Centre in Manama.

Mr Al Sho'ala said the programme of Bahrainisation, pursued by his Ministry, would not be at the cost of the private sector's competitiveness and performance.

"We are keen to ensure that no company's activities are interrupted due to the Bahrainisation programme," he said.

"We are considering ways to



■ **OPENING ... Mr Al Sho'ala cuts a ribbon marking the opening of the BMMI training centre, watched by, from left, Mr Ebrahim, Assistant Under-Secretary for Social Affairs Sadiq Shehabi, Assistant Under-Secretary for Labour Shaikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulla Al Khalifa and Mr James**

issue short-term work permits for specific jobs in some companies. It will include permits for training instructors for certain short-term courses."

Mr Al Sho'ala said the ministry would be flexible in granting such permits for the smooth functioning of the private sector.

"According to a decision of the Cabinet, work permits will not be stopped for companies which have achieved a minimum of 50 per cent Bahrainisation," he said.

"Bahrainisation in the private sector has increased from 29pc last year to 32pc this year.

"We anticipate a 5pc annual

growth in labour market. We hope the share of Bahrainis in the labour market would also increase by 5pc every year."

Mr Al Sho'ala congratulated BMMI's 128 years of commitment to the development of Bahrain's trade and free market.

"The new BMMI Training Centre is the latest in the chain of activities of the company and it reflects the group's commitment and desire to upgrade the skills of Bahrainis towards the growth of our economy," he said.

Mr Al Sho'ala said the ongoing training programme at BMMI had enabled to increase the level of Bahrainisation in the company to more than 50pc.

Mr Al Sho'ala said his visit to BMMI was in line with the Labour Ministry's policy of maintaining regular contacts and interactions with the private sector. BMMI general manager Rodney James said the company employed a total of 410 people, of whom 53pc were Bahrainis.

"Three years ago, Bahrainis constituted only 30pc of our total workforce and our target is to increase it to 55pc by the end of the year," he said. Mr James said the company was training 50 Bahrainis at any given time.

"This year's training budget is BD200,000. The new training centre, which includes four classrooms, a library and the trainer's office, has been set up at a cost of BD32,000.

"The running cost is expected to be BD41,000 a year."

BMMI human resources manager Jalal Ali Ebrahim said the company strongly believed that there was no Bahrainisation without training.

"We have teamed up with the best training institutes, the Bahrain Training Institute, the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance, CareerCraft, Gulf Academy, Aptech and Pitman," he said.