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## BD55m boost for Bahrain jobs training

By SOMAN BABY

**MANAMA:** Bahrain spent BD50 million on training last year and the training budget is estimated to reach BD55m by end of the year, it was revealed yesterday.

Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala said more than 13,000 Bahraini nationals had benefited from various training schemes last year.

He also urged private training institutes in Bahrain to further upgrade their standards by forging links with international institutes of proven track record.

Addressing a meeting of private training institutes, Mr Al Sho'ala said Bahrain was now being recognised as the capital of human resources development and training in the region.

"Training has become a massive and profitable business and institutes in Bahrain should take advantage of the situation to expand their activities through joint ventures," he said.

Representatives from 23 training institutes in Bahrain attended the meeting held at the Ministry.

Talking about the huge training market in the region, Mr Al Sho'ala said GCC countries spent a total of \$3.9 billion (BD1.47bn) on training last year.

"Out of BD50m spent in Bahrain, the Government's share was BD9.5m," he said.

"Ten national companies which have been exempted from the payment of levies spent more than BD18m on training. Other companies paid to the Government BD1.8m towards the training levy.

"Private training centres

spent the remaining amount."

Mr Al Sho'ala said the main training providers in the public sector were the Bahrain Training Institute, the Gulf College of Hospitality and Training (formerly the Hotel and Catering Training Centre) and the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance.

"There has been a 10 per cent annual increase in the amount spent on training in Bahrain over the past three

years," he said.

"The budget is, therefore, expected to touch BD55m this year."

Mr Al Sho'ala said 3.7m training hours were monitored by the Ministry last year.

"This is the right time for businessmen to invest directly on training and tie up with international organisations to provide quality training, including the National Vocational Qualifications," he said.