

Plan to expand and train Bahraini workforce

THE Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has formulated a three-fold strategy to train and develop a productive and quality-oriented workforce, according to a ministry report.

Under the policy, the Bahraini workforce will be expanded, its quality will be improved and coordination between demand and supply will be increased.

So far as the supply side is concerned, the ministry's efforts are aimed at:

- Career guidance and counselling,
- Developing strong links between training and the labour market,
- Strengthening the skills of the workforce,
- Increasing the capacity of the training institutions,
- Encouraging the private sector to establish new training institutions,
- Setting up the Training Promotion Office as part of the strategy for consolidating Bahrain as a centre of excellence in training and human resource development,
- Quality assurance and continues evaluation of training programmes to ensure that they match the requirements of the labour market,
- Establishing a vocational accreditation standards system, and
- Organising a national skills testing system.

To improve the demand, the ministry has taken a number of steps including:

- Coordination with private sector companies and organisations as well as with Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry,
- Advisory support to employers involving them in arriving at solutions to current problems, and conveying their views about the advantages of employing Bahrainis,
- Offering incentives to employers to recruit and train nationals,
- Encouraging investment which leads to the creation of greater job opportunities,
- Initiating Bahrainisation policy. This policy has the potential to create 6,000 Bahrainisation opportunities every year. The chief features of the policy are:
 - Increasing the percentage of nationals by five per cent annually in companies having more than ten workers 50 per cent of whom are non Bahrainis,
 - Making it obligatory for companies with less than 10 workers to have at least one Bahraini besides the employer.
- Training and supporting Bahraini youth to start self-employment activities and establishing small enterprises.
- Preparing a strategic plan to enhance

the demand for Bahraini workforce.

- Applying strict quality control standards to the recruitment of non-Bahraini workers.

- The third dimension of the ministry's strategy is to match the demand with supply and improve their coordination. To achieve this aim, the ministry has taken the following steps:

- Setting up of the Employment Service Bureau, which not only assists job seekers but also offers a reliable employment service to employers,
- Developing career guidance and consulting services for job seekers, workers and employers,
- Developing an integrated information system providing comprehensive informa-



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tion about the national workforce,

- Coordination with other ministries to facilitate employment regulations,
- Linking training to the real needs of the labour market, and
- Encouraging the private sector to establish recruitment services for Bahrainis.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs accords the highest priority to the training and development of the Bahraini workforce. Its mission is to develop the competitiveness, productivity and flexibility of the Bahraini workforce. It will continue to support the cause of job-seeker programmes for young people entering the workforce, with emphasis on programmes which aim to provide skills relevant to the needs of the market and the national economy.

The strategy of training and developing the national workforce has two main objectives as follows:

Training and developing the existing workforce

The ministry has adopted measures to enhance the productivity of the existing

workforce. It encourages employers to train and develop workers in their companies. It also provided several staff development programmes to develop a work ethic, attitudes, values, skills and knowledge.

Training and developing citizens entering the workforce

This programmes addresses two different types of workers:

- People entering the workforce for the first time.
- Returnee workforce, i.e. those who have left earlier jobs or wish to change their career plans.

The ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is taking steps to implement its strategy for training and developing Bahraini workforce.

Considerable emphasis is begin placed on career guidance at all levels. A special unit has been formed in the ministry to advise job seekers about employment opportunities. Steps are afoot to establish guidance and counseling services in major training organisations. The ministry is committed to the task of emphasising training and development. To this end, it is taking the following steps:

New types of training programmes

The ministry has initiated a new type of training programme called Employment and Training Programme. The employer gives employment and on-the-job training in addition to basic skills training. The government's role in this programme is supervisory and financial. The government pays the employer for giving employment and on-the-job training.

The ministry is innovating new fields of training in order to meet the large developing demand of the labour market and to reinforce the policy of market driven training. New standards of training are being evolved to meet the needs of the market as well as of skill seekers.

The ministry is also developing and expanding the capacity of the present training providers. The principles underlying this strategy are:

- A clear vision regarding changes in the economy and the increasing number of job seekers.
- Flexibility to meet market demands.
- Quality assurance and control.
- Making training economically viable.
- Emphasis on training as a lifelong process.
- Coordinating between training and education providers.

Public utilities and large establishments such as Batelco, Bapco, Alba and others operated their own in-house training centres for many years. The ministry will

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work to utilise these training centres for training and developing Bahraini workforce.

The ministry has initiated a strategy to consolidate Bahrain as a centre of excellence in training and human resource development. Private sector is encouraged by the minister to invest in training. Investors are urged to actively assist the establishment of new training centres through joint overseas ventures and other means.

Self-employment and small enterprises

The ministry has developed an entrepreneurship development programme that is predicated on the needs of the small-scale manufacturing sector and local young people who have the will, innovative ideas, and desire for self employment. The support of the ministry ranges from providing training on feasibility studies, business planning, and international marketing to the technical service and coordinating with the Industrial Development Bank for financing the projects.

A comprehensive national skill testing system will be set up to support achievement of Bahrainisation targets. Some elements already exist, and many of them are being strengthened to achieve a fully comprehensive system. A national certification system based on skill testing by a body accredited in internationally and respected by the employers will be set up.

Joint committees have been formed with representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and other ministries, the Chamber and Commerce and Industry and other professional societies to improve coordination.

A comprehensive information system including information about the labour market, the training market, skill standards, skill seekers, job seekers, job description, accreditation standards and others will also be developed.

The ministry is working to provide training and employment opportunities to citizens with special needs.

The ministry pays particular attention to means of increasing the participation of women in the private sector. It also works to raise the status of economically active women. A garment industry training centre has been established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in collaboration the Ministry of Oil and Industry, the UNIDO, and the UNDP.

The ministry has started reviewing all the laws that develop, coordinate, oversee and monitor all the aspects of training and developing Bahraini workforce. The aim is to ensure the improvement of the skills of people who can contribute towards improving the national economic growth.

The ministry will cooperate with international organisations that are interested in training and developing workforce.