

scheme for 4,500 graduates

ideal jobs according to their graduate degrees. "Efforts will be exerted to ensure that the private sector will be the preferred choice for university graduates in Bahrain," he said.

"In turn, this project will also look to ensure that these graduates will be the preferred choice for private sector companies looking to recruit from the jobs pool.

"It is our belief that with the help of specialised training, rehabilitation and generous financing, we will turn these job-seekers into valuable commodities, capable of integrating easily into the country's labour market.

"Specifically, we will look at specialised and technical jobs that are already widely on offer in Bahrain."

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Tamkeen chairman Dr Nazar Al Baharna said that over the last year Tamkeen had conducted a

thorough investigation of graduate jobseekers in the country and the findings had been taken into consideration when formulating this project.

"In October last year, Tamkeen began to conduct a comprehensive study of the social conditions, academic specialities and specific age groups of graduates currently seeking jobs in Bahrain," he said.

"The aim of this was to identify the necessary rehabilitation and employment projects that would best aid these Bahrainis in finding jobs.

"We found that the majority of these graduates were female, with specialities centred around the human and social sciences, education and arts disciplines."

Dr Al Baharna added that of the 1,912 job-seekers interviewed during the study; 1,117 were human or social science graduates, 1,776 were female and 1,596 aged 35-62.



● The Crown Prince, officials and guests at the launch ceremony



● Tamkeen funds training in every field



● Creating a skilled workforce

plan, which it believes will help achieve its goals.

"They involve supporting strategic overseeing and co-ordination of private sector development and supporting foreign direct investments," he said.

"They also encourage indigenous entrepreneurship and growth and ensure adequate and appropriate financial support."

"The plan aims at delivering accessible business support services and developing human capital.

"It will also support the development of a vibrant private sector."

One thousand projects have been launched to aid small and medium size businesses in Bahrain, with BD12.3 million already been allocated for the venture, said Mr Al Qassimi.

He said it would be the first step toward helping Bahraini entrepreneurs to improve their businesses and the economy.

The announcement was made during the opening of the Tamkeen Growth Management Forum at the Gulf Hotel.

It was held to highlight its programmes specifically designed to support the private sector as part of economic development.

"Bahrain's entrepreneurs and business community have been instrumental in the success of Tamkeen's programmes and these businesses attending the forum are a big boost for budding businessmen," said Mr Al Qassimi.

"These programmes, like all of Tamkeen's other initiatives, are aimed to provide an open platform for them to learn about the programmes being offered."

The announcement of the project came as officials revealed that 5,800 people had already benefited from all of Tamkeen's programmes.

Mr Al Qassimi said Tamkeen was committed to supporting the private sector by providing enterprises with the programmes and solutions they need to realise their objectives and increase their productivity.

It is part of a plan to make the private sector the main driving force of the economy.

Tamkeen's Enterprise Development Support Programme aims to stimulate the growth of the private sector through support of the business community, said the organisation's private sector support department senior manager, Mohammed Ali Bucheeri

"The ambitious programme offers an integrated support package that includes co-financing, consultation services, and technical assistance, ultimately helping enterprises improve their productivity and efficiency, increase growth opportunities and encourage competitiveness," said Mr Bucheeri.

Some 914 enterprise owners benefited from the programme during its first two years in operation.

The Enterprise Development Support

Agency, which has been set up to manage the new wave of enterprises.

It will be responsible for facilitating the application process as well as ensuring smooth implementation and management of the overall programme.

Meanwhile, 75 per cent of graduates who were listed as unemployed with Tamkeen were in work by last month.

Tamkeen managed to find 1,448 of them government and private sector jobs since October last year, leaving only 464 still seeking employment.

Last year the Cabinet directed Tamkeen to help find jobs for the graduates after an urgent parliamentary proposal was submitted demanding solutions.

It managed to find jobs for 1,102 of them in the first phase of the project, with wages of BD400 and above.

Another 275 graduates who had agreed to work but could not be found suitable jobs were later employed during the scheme's second phase.

Tamkeen had to establish a company (Atheer) to have the graduates enrolled, from which they are then redirected to the private sector.

Those who are enrolled through Atheer are considered as on job trainees and are paid a monthly wage of BD300 by Atheer," said Dr Al Baharna.

"They are covered by the General

Organisation for Social Insurance (Gosi), to get a laptop, a credit card and are helped to get loans from any bank the same as any other employee."

In October, out of 535 who refused jobs, 71 changed their minds and it was agreed to treat them as those who were enrolled in the second batch.

"We could have easily told the Cabinet that our job is over and that all those on the list have been dealt with, considering that the remainder had refused two or more jobs, but I believe that since 71 changed their minds there is a possibility the rest will do the same," said Dr Al Baharna.

Dr Al Baharna, who is also the Tender Board chairman, said that having the list cleared proved a huge challenge.

"We had three problems, most of the graduates on the list (1,776) were females, 1,117 were graduates of humanitarian sciences and arts, and the age range was between 26 and 35, which meant they were looking for reasonable wages to meet their expenses," he said.

"Then we had to look into the problems of 275 who agreed to join, but were not suitable for the jobs on offer and we found other places matching their capabilities and expectations through Atheer."

Dr Al Baharna predicted the remaining people on the list would be in work by the third quarter of next year at the latest.