



■ Gulf Disability Society (GDS) director Hasan Al Majid honoured Ebenezer Private School and Crystal International Trading for their support. He visited both institutions separately and presented school chairman Dr T T Thomas and company chairman Abdulrashid Rana with mementos. Above, Mr Al Majid, second from right, presents a memento to Dr Thomas, second from left, in the presence of GDS chief co-ordinator Cherian Mathews and school chief executive and executive director Jaan Thomas. Right, Mr Al Majid presents a souvenir to Mr Rana, second from right, in the presence of GDS marketing executive Abdulfattah Kamal, left, and Crystal International Trading general manager Regi Alex.

# Public must have a say in projects

By MOHAMMED AL A'ALI

COUNCILLORS have demanded that people have a greater say in projects and services earmarked for them.

Ministries and government bodies have now been urged to present their plans to Bahrain's three councils and the Capital Trustees Board before drawing up the required budget and referring them to the National Assembly.

The Northern Municipal Council, in a communiqué read out during a Press conference yesterday following its final meeting of the second municipal term, said decisions were being taken arbitrarily.

This has resulted in people losing out on services, projects and schemes with budgets being allocated on assumptions



■ Mr BuHamood, third from right, and council vice-chairman Ahmed Al Kooheji, second from right, with other councillors at the Press conference

rather than reality.

Calling for transparency, council chairman Mohammed BuHamood said the time for private meetings in government offices to get things moving

had to end.

"Matters need to be addressed through a system and not handshakes," he said.

In some cases, planned projects, services and schemes get

lost and the ministries concerned end up doing nothing for the people.

"When we follow procedures we go through a bureaucratic process. There are times when

we reach a point where we receive six or seven signatures on a proposal but the seventh or eighth official believes that the others are wrong and opts to throw out the proposal or put

it in a drawer," said Mr BuHamood.

"We can't go on visiting ministers or senior officials every month to convey good wishes and urge them to approve a proposal. These officials keep changing and with that vanishes any promise made earlier.

"Most of the decisions being taken now are based on the officials' understanding of what's beneficial and what's not; people have no say."

He said the process was complicated by individuals who just want to do their jobs "the easy way".

"Even if things are done the easy way, we would have somehow accepted something being done but when we have a situation where the highest percentage of achievement recorded over the year has been 36 per cent in the Northern Governorate and that too by the Housing Ministry, then things become alarming," said Mr BuHamood.

"Second is the Works, Municipalities and Urban Planning Affairs Ministry which has recorded 30pc while Health, Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments and Education ministries have recorded zero.

"It is not about austerity measures. The budgets have been allocated but work is extremely slow or not done on new schools, health centres, public parks and gardens, and mosques and worship places.

"The Housing Ministry is moving fast but lack of necessary infrastructure facilities are delaying the handing over of projects."

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■ The Bahrain Polytechnic students council held its annual ghabga at the institution's Isa Town campus. The event, held under the patronage of acting chief executive Dr Mohammed Al Aseeri, was attended by deputy chief executive of educational services Dr Hasan Almulla, deputy chief executive of resources and information affairs Shaikh Ali bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa, heads of departments, deans, students and graduates. Above, Dr Al Aseeri, third from left, Shakih Ali, fourth from left, and Dr Almulla, third from right, with guests at the event.