

## Top jobs reserved for Saudi women

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Top jobs, especially in the ministries of education and higher education are to be reserved for women. The Education Ministry, which announced the plans two weeks ago, has already appointed more than 27 women in top positions.

Five posts for deans have been reserved for women as part of the government's efforts to place women in top positions and give them more autonomy concerning girls' education.

"This is in addition to women consultants, who were recently appointed to aid and advise the Shoura Council on women-related issues," said Dr. Fauzia Al-Bakr, a professor at the Riyadh-based King Saud University (KSU), here on Wednesday.

Dr. Fauzia said that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education have taken steps to provide employment to women.

The first five women deans, whose names were announced earlier, are already working with the Ministry of Education. This would help meet the research needs of 102 girls' colleges in the Kingdom and help promote their educational and social development, said a report released by the Education Ministry. Referring to the growing number of jobless women, Fauzia said that more efforts were required to meet women's expectations concerning employment.

The Labor Ministry, which is working to create more job opportunities for women in different sectors, estimates unemployment among women at 28 percent.

The ministry has already launched a campaign to provide employment to 200,000 women and appointed 30 women officials at its offices in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. The ministry's offices are currently receiving applications from women job seekers.

Women are being trained as cashiers and receptionists besides getting other training organized by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training (GOTEVOT). These training programs are being conducted in Jeddah, Dammam, Rass, Madinah, Ahsa, Buraidah, Onaiza and Bekaryia. The focus has been mainly on retail sales and reception, according to Sharif Jassem Al-Abdulwahab, GOTEVOT's director-general for joint training administration.

The women's training programs were organized for the first time following the Labor Ministry's decision to employ women in a wide variety of jobs. The program has attracted thousands of women job seekers. Currently there are more than 10,000 trainees and more have joined the growing list of applicants. Several companies and business houses have come forward with plans to employ women.

As part of this initiative, an SR82 million Silicon Valley project to be launched in February this year by Rakisa Holding, the lead developer of Prince Abdul Aziz ibn Musa'ed Economic City in Hail, is likely to create at least 600 jobs for women. The project, once operational, would supply a range of electronic products required by banks, telecom and publishing companies and e-government.