

# Tobacco, soft drink prices to double



HRH Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and HRH Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa during the Cabinet meeting held yesterday

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## Manama

**Tobacco products** and energy drink prices are set to double as the Cabinet yesterday approved a bill to join the GCC's unified agreement on selective taxation.

The bill was approved during the weekly session of the Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister HRH Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, in the presence of the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister

## HM's opinion piece lauded

**HRH Prime Minister** has lauded the noble values embedded in the opinion piece written by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa in the *Washington Times*. The opinion piece published in the paper highlighted the lofty values of co-existence and religious pluralism, and reflected the reality of the Bahraini society which is, by its very nature, a role model for co-existence and tolerance. While praising the wide-ranging echo of the royal stances expressed in the opinion piece, locally and internationally, HRH Premier stressed that the values called for by HM the King should always be a method that governs the daily actions of the government and community.

HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The bill was referred, in accordance with Article 87 of the Constitution, to the Legislative Authority (House of Representatives and Shura Council).

According to the bill, taxes will be imposed on select products that are harmful to health, including tobacco products (100 per cent), carbonated drinks (50 pc) and energy drinks (100 pc).

This was mentioned in a statement issued by Cabinet General Secretary Dr. Yasser Al Nasser following the

Cabinet session.

Dr. Al Nasser explained, "The bill regulates dealing with cases of tax evasion, criminal penalties, tax refunds, exemption cases, registration for tax purposes and licensing of the tax warehouse."

The announcement comes as the Kingdom prepares for the Value Added Tax (VAT) to be implemented here. Finance Minister Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa signed the unified GCC VAT agreement and the GCC's unified agreement on selective taxation last February.

## Terror bombing in Somalia condemned

**The cabinet** strongly condemned the blasts carried out by a terrorist group in Somalia, killing

and injuring hundreds of people. It extended deepest condolences and sympathy to the Somali government.

## Authorities asked to address citizens' needs

**HRH Prime Minister** has requested the authorities to identify the citizens' needs and respond to them promptly, stressing that the citizens' complaints and remarks that are related to services should

enjoy the necessary care at ministries and government departments. "Achieving the citizens' satisfaction, fulfilling their aspirations and solving their problems are among the government's top priorities," HRH Premier said.

## Directive to revamp heritage sites in Muharraq

**HRH Premier** gave directives to the service and executive authorities to expedite the revamp of heritage sites across the Muharraq Governorate, including the Muharraq heritage Souq and its facilities,

in addition to the development projects that serve the governorate's citizens, such as the "Saada" West seafront project, the Central Market, and other projects aimed at improving public services and developing infrastructure.

## Companies Law amendment endorsed

**A draft-law** on amending some provisions of the Commercial Companies Law promulgated by Decree-Law 21/2001, was endorsed and referred to the National Assembly in accordance with Article (87) of the Constitution. The amendment aims to preserve the rights of investors or

shareholders in joint stock companies, whether financial or administrative or the right to vote, especially minority shareholders who do not have voting power because they own less than 50 per cent of the shares and therefore do not have the necessary percentage to make or object to strategic decisions.

## Ministry of Health to be recast

**A plan** to restructure the Ministry of Health to reduce government departments and merge directorates has been endorsed. The post of assistant undersecretary and six directorates will be cancelled. As per the plan, Assistant Undersecretary for Primary Health, Assistant Undersecretary for Hospitals and Communications Directorate will report directly to the Health Minister.

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