

# Retailers hoarding cigarettes ahead of duty hike

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Retailers are hoarding cigarettes in anticipation of a duty hike, leading to a sudden drought of the product in the local market.

According to officials, shops are storing but refraining from selling cigarettes to the public as the country is bracing for imposing taxes on tobacco products as well as energy and carbonated drinks.

Once imposed, the taxes will double cigarette prices in the market with an average of BD2 per pack, according to a recent study by the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives.

As the implementation of the new duty nears, cigarette stock has been decreasing in local shops, with some brands actually disappearing from markets' shelves.

It was officially confirmed yesterday that some vendors are refraining from selling the cigarettes, with the aim to make a few quick bucks once the duty is imposed, cashing in on the lower prices they bought their stocks (average of BD1).

Consumer Protection Directorate in Industry, Commerce and Tourism Ministry yesterday announced that it has seized "21 stores that have been



An empty cigarette shelf in a local shop

proven to store and refrain from selling cigarettes to the public" and took the required legal and administrative procedures against, and referred their owners to the Public Prosecution.

"This action comes in the context of the directorate's legal obligation to prevent monopoly and collusion in accordance with the Consumer Protection Law 35 of 2012 and in particular Chapter 4 concerning competition and monopoly controls and violations," a statement issued yesterday by the directorate mentioned.

"Storing any product or refraining from selling it, attempting to exploit any emergency or exceptional circumstances will be legally addressed, in order to

prevent such practices that may extend to any strategic commodity. Such behaviours will not be tolerated," the directorate has stressed in its statement.

DT News reported last week that the country is one step away from imposing its first taxes, as both branches of the Legislative Authority approved a bill to join the unified GCC agreement on selective taxation.

The bill introduces 100 percent taxes on tobacco products and energy drinks, and a 50 percent tax on soft drinks.

It was passed on October 12 to the Government, which is expected to refer it to His Majesty the King for final ratification as a new law in the next few weeks.

## Court rejects appeal of man who assaulted his ex-wife

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The Second High Criminal Court (court of appeals) yesterday rejected the appeal of a Bahraini man who was sentenced last month to one year of imprisonment for physically attacking his ex-wife.

As reported by DT News last September, the 52-year-old brutally attacked his 32-year-old Syrian ex-wife and mother of his five children at their home in Jebelat Habshi.

He reportedly punched her in the face several times, banged her head on the wall and beat her with a piece of tile on her head.

The woman was kept under medical observation for a couple of weeks, while her children were taken to Dar Al Aman shelter for Domestic Violence Victims.

She was diagnosed with concussion, hemorrhage and severe bruises and inflammations on the face and other parts of her body.



The social media grab of the woman who was assaulted by his ex-husband (File Photo)

According to the victim, she was attacked by her ex-husband following 10 years of marriage because "he wanted to marry a younger Bahraini woman who is an employee and will spend on him".

The case made a huge impact on the Bahraini society, raising more concerns over domestic violence in the Kingdom and the means to combat it.

Several authorities,

including Interior Ministry, Health Ministry, Labour and Social Development Ministry, the Supreme Council for Women and several NGOs, made immediate response and adopted the woman's case.

Northern Governorate Prosecution Head Mohammed Salah yesterday confirmed that the court rejected the man's appeal and upheld the previously issued verdict.

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