

**Hamilton welcomes Verstappen title fight**

Hamilton is hoping for a title tussle with Verstappen as Red Bull rise to the challenge | P 08

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**Lebanon government resigns**

AP | Beirut

Lebanon's government resigned yesterday amid widespread public fury at the country's ruling elite over last week's devastating explosion in Beirut.

The move risks opening the way to dragged-out negotiations over a new Cabinet amid urgent calls for reform, AP reported.

Lebanese prime minister Hassan Diab headed to the presidential palace to submit the Cabinet's group resignation, said Health Minister Dr Hamad Hassan. It follows a weekend of anti-government protests in the wake of last week's explosion in Beirut's port, while there have been mass demonstrations since October demanding the departure of the entire sectarian-based leadership.

The ruling oligarchy has held onto power from the end of the civil war in 1990.

Although Diab's resignation had appeared inevitable after the blast, he seemed unwilling to leave and only a few days ago made a televised speech in which he offered to stay on for two months to allow for various factions to agree on a roadmap for reforms. But the pressure from within his own Cabinet proved to be too much.

Diab's government was formed after his predecessor, Saad Hariri, stepped down in October in response to the demonstrations. It took months of bickering among the leadership factions before they settled on Diab.

Now the process must start again, with Diab's government in a caretaker role, as the same factions debate a new one.

**BAHRAIN COVID-19**

- TOTAL CASES: 44,397
- ACTIVE CASES: 3,025
- DEATHS: 163
- DISCHARGED: 41,209
- NEW CASES: 386
- CRITICAL: 38

210 fils (includes VAT)



**Virus, oil impact revenues**

HRH the Crown Prince chairs Cabinet meeting, Bahrain's biannual financial report for first half of 2020 reviewed

● Oil revenue drops by 35 per cent and non-oil revenue by 13 per cent YoY

● Economic contraction also driven by COVID-19 and waiving of government service fees

● BD798 million deficit for the first half of 2020 is an increase of 98 per cent compared to last year

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's total revenues collected have decreased by 29 per cent year-on-year (YoY) due to falling oil prices, according to the biannual financial report for 2020 for the period ending June 30.

The report was reviewed yesterday during the weekly Cabinet meeting, chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince,



HRH the Crown Prince chairing the Cabinet meeting

Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, held remotely.

Oil revenue decreased by 35 per cent and non-oil revenue fell by 13 per cent YoY as a result of economic contraction driven by the coronavirus (COVID-19), and the waiving of government service fees.

The results showed discipline in total expenditures according to the budget and a decrease in recurrent expenditures compared to 2019. As a result, the BD798 million deficit indicated in the biannual financial report for the first half of 2020 was an increase of 98 per cent, in

comparison to 2019.

The Cabinet also reviewed Bahrain's final annual accounts report for 2019. Bahrain has recorded a favourable variance of 3.1 per cent, with BD2,902.4 million in revenue collected, exceeding the budget target of BD2,815.7 million, while expenditure amounted to BD3,586.1 million, only 0.82 per cent above the budgeted BD3,556.8 million.

In line with the Fiscal Balance Programme, the Kingdom recorded a budget deficit of BD683.7 million in 2019—BD574 million or 7.7 per cent below the forecasted deficit of BD741.1 million, which

**1.8%**  
 is the rate at which Bahrain's real GDP grew in 2019, in parallel with the implementation of the government's Fiscal Balance Programme

reflects the programme's success. Furthermore, Bahrain's real GDP grew by 1.8 per cent, in parallel with the programme's implementation.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet reviewed a report presented by the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministerial Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs and Financial Balance chairman on the committee's work carried out throughout the first half of 2020.

The Deputy Premier confirmed a total of 22 meetings were held, during which 67 topics were discussed, including the committee's 2019-2022 priorities, Bahrain's BD4.5 billion initial and subsequent economic stimulus packages, reducing ministerial operation expenses by 30 per cent, and the implementation of the Fiscal Bal-

ance Programme.

Also during the meeting, the Cabinet expressed its admiration of the speech given by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa for Eid Al Adha, and praised HM the King's support for the government's response to COVID-19, which has successfully minimised the human and economic impact of the pandemic.

The Cabinet also praised the royal directives enacted to provide urgent relief aid to Lebanon, expressing Bahrain's full solidarity and support for the country's people following the explosions in Beirut.

The Cabinet extended its congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and the Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister of Defence Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud on the success of this year's Hajj and for taking exemplary health measures during these unprecedented times.

The Cabinet also congratulated the UAE president, the government and people for the successful operation of the Barakah nuclear power plant.

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**Vaccine trials in Kingdom begin**

TDT | Manama

Phase three clinical trials in Bahrain for a coronavirus (COVID-19) inactivated vaccine has been initiated, the Ministry of Health announced yesterday.

The ministry's public health assistant undersecretary Dr Mariam Al Hajri said that, in collaboration with UAE-based artificial intelligence company G42 Healthcare, the clinical trial will involve an estimated 6,000 citizen and resident volunteers from across the Kingdom.

Dr Al Hajri highlighted that the potential vaccine, enlisted by the World Health Organisation, will be tested on the volunteers who meet the required medical criteria, and that the clinical trials are to be conducted by G42 using a vaccine developed by Sinopharm CNBG, the world's sixth largest producer of vaccines in the world.

Dr Al Hajri further highlighted that the phase three clinical trials, which will be conducted over 12 months, has been approved by the National Health Regulatory Authority (NHRA), and they follow the success of its phase one and phase two clinical trials held across China.

Dr Al Hajri noted that the phase three trials will be open to volunteers above the age of 18, who do not suffer from



The SCH chief is accompanied by other officials during his inspection visit



**Bahrain's phase three clinical trial follows one in the UAE that has seen nearly 10,000 vaccinated volunteers from 100 countries participate since July**

chronic or underlying conditions.

Dr Al Hajri outlined that the clinical trials are divided into three phases: the first ensures

the efficiency of the vaccine; the second will see the study expanded to ensure an immune response is triggered; and the third will see the vaccine administered to individuals with certain characteristics, such as age and physical health, similar to those for whom the new vaccine is being developed.

In preparation for the start of the vaccine trials, Supreme Council of Health chairman and National Taskforce for Combating COVID-19 head Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa made an inspection visit to the clinical trials center at Bahrain International Exhibition and Convention Centre, to check on its general readiness to receive volunteers.

**Beirut blast wounded to be flown to Bahrain for treatment**

TDT | Manama

A number of Lebanese people wounded in the devastating blast that rocked Beirut last week will be flown to Bahrain to receive treatment.

This was revealed yesterday by Royal Humanitarian Foundation (RHF) secretary-general Dr Mustafa Al Sayed, who said that this initiative was welcomed by Lebanese Minister of Public Health Dr Hamad Hassan in his talks with Bahrain's Charge d'Affaires to Syria Ali Al Mahmoud.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa had assigned the RHF, led by HM the King's Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs representative His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, to dispatch urgent humanitarian relief aid to the

people of Lebanon in the aftermath of the Beirut blast.

The Lebanese minister welcomed this initiative and added that he would send Al Mahmoud a list featuring the names and details of the wounded.

The two sides also discussed a plan to dispatch a Bahraini medical team to Beirut to join in treatment efforts of those who sustained injuries in the blast. Dr Hassan commended Bahrain's initiatives and efforts to support the people of Lebanon, adding that his country's medical teams are capable, for now, of delivering all required treatment.

Dr Hassan suggested that Al Mahmoud takes part in overseeing the distribution of respiratory ventilators to health centres, which are in dire need of these advanced medical equipment.

**COVID-19 takes another life; active cases back over 3,000**

TDT | Manama

The coronavirus (COVID-19) took the life of a 38-year-old Bahraini man yesterday, bringing the Kingdom's virus-related death toll to 163, the Ministry of Health announced.

The ministry also said that out of 10,052 COVID-19 tests conducted yesterday, 386 new cases were detected from 153 expatriate workers and 233 contacts of active cases; with 242 new recoveries.

The total tests conducted in Bahrain increased to 912,111.