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General News

Exams officer accused of pocketing BECE registration fees

The Nzema East Municipal Examination officer, Enoch Asiamah, is under scrutiny for an alleged misappropriation of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) registration fees, involving private basic schools in Axim, Western Region.

He is accused of absconding with Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) registration fees collected from approximately eighteen schools for the 2022 exams.

Despite collecting the registration fees, he reportedly failed to submit them to the West African Examination Council (WAEC) while securing exam details for the candidates. The schools, including Manye Academy, were unaware until WAEC notified them

in November 2023, threatening sanctions if fees aren't paid.

In a letter dated November 14, 2023, WAEC warned Manye Academy of potential repercussions, indicating that failure to pay would impact the registration of BECE candidates for 2024. The letter also stated that the school owed GH¢ 9,600 for 48 candidates who sat for the 2022 exams.

Meanwhile, the Municipal Examination Officer allegedly vacated his post at the Municipal Education Directorate after the incident in late April. He has not been seen or heard from since then, and his whereabouts are unknown.

The proprietor of Manye Academy, Professor Kaku Sagari Nokoe,

suspects potential irregularities at WAEC, questioning how candidates were registered and allowed to write exams despite the examination body knowing they hadn't paid their fees.

He expressed concerns about potential illegality within WAEC and is anxiously awaiting the exam results.

He also appealed to the Ministry

of Education and the Ghana Education Service to intervene and resolve the issue, as it affects the future of the students and the reputation of the schools. He said that the schools were not to blame for the misconduct of the exams officer, and that they should not be punished for his actions.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Phoebe Martekie Doku



File Photo

NDC will bring back the joy of farming, join 24-hour economy programme - Mahama tells farmers

Former President John Dramani Mahama, in celebration of National Farmers' Day, has called on farmers nationwide to embrace the NDC's 24-hour economy initiative, aiming to transform the agricultural sector.

Mahama stressed the significance of integrating smart solutions within a 24-hour economy to ensure enduring food security for the nation.

Promising a robust agricultural plan for his prospective administration, Mahama announced the introduction of agro-processing units across all regions. These units will focus on a diverse range of crops, including palm, cashew, groundnuts, cotton, coffee, cocoa, soya, cassava, shea nuts, cereals, ginger, spices, cut flowers, fruits, and horticultural products. The objective is to add value to agricultural produce and create more opportunities for farmers.

Assuring farmers of the NDC's commitment to their well-being, Mahama pledged the allocation of necessary resources and support for their prosperity, recognizing

them as the backbone of the economy.

"Establishing agricultural processing plants will target crops such as palm, cashew, groundnuts, cotton, coffee, cocoa, soya, cassava, shea nuts, cereals, ginger, spices, cut flowers, fruits and horticultural products," he reiterated, emphasizing the centrality of farmers to the nation's

economic stability.

The 39th National Farmers' Day celebration unfolded at the University of Mines and Technology in Tarkwa, Western Region, on Saturday, December 1. The theme for this year's celebration was "Delivering Smart Solutions for Sustainable Food Security and Resilience."

The event was followed by an

elaborate dinner, graced by celebrants and awardees, with President Akufo-Addo serving as the esteemed Guest of Honour. The gathering marked a momentous occasion, reinforcing the commitment to agricultural advancement and resilience in the face of evolving challenges.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Phoebe Martekie Doku



John Dramani Mahama, NDC Flagbearer

General News

Affirmative Action Bill Coalition engages Parliament after Speaker declares Bill will not be passed under certificate of urgency

The Affirmative Action Bill Coalition has begun engaging parliament after Speaker Alban Bagbin publicly declared that the Affirmative Action Bill will not be passed under a certificate of urgency.

The Speaker had indicated pressure from the IMF to pass the Bill, insisting that the current state of the Bill requires broader consultation and until that is done, the Bill will not be passed.

Convenor of the Affirmative Action Bill Coalition, Sheila Minkah-Premo at a meeting of the Ghana Chapter of African Women Leaders Network admitted that the proposed legislation which is seeking to increase women's participation in decision-making positions, indeed has challenges which need to be addressed. She was hopeful the Bill will be passed mid next year.

The Affirmative Action Bill is proposing among other things that at least 40 percent of public offices are reserved for women. The Bill which has already been to parliament three times and has since 2011 seen various versions but none has yet been passed by Parliament.

Members of the African Women Leaders Network believe the

time is now to get the Bill passed to ensure gender parity. Briefing members on the status of the Bill, Convenor of the Affirmative Action Bill Coalition, Sheila Minkah-Premo, said following the Speaker's pronouncements, some meetings have been held with parliament.

She said the coalition has started the process of engaging Parliament adding that they have already met the majority leader and are about securing an appointment with the Speaker, Alban Bagbin. Lawyer Sheila Minkah-Premo admitted that part of the bill does have problems, which need to be smoothed.

"Particularly the part to do with political parties and elections. Section 24 is very weak. It's not imperative. It's been said that political parties are voluntary organizations, so they should willingly ensure gender inclusion in their manifestoes," she noted.

The convenor however said the sanctions for failing to adhere to this provision are laughable. According to her, "the sanctions are that if they comply and the state is giving resources to political parties, then they will benefit. And then secondly, they also benefit from state protocol services. Those are not strong enough

incentive". Madam Minkah-Premo said the Affirmative Action Bill Coalition will continue engaging with Parliament to ensure that the bill is processed and is passed. Hopefully, by the first quarter of next year.

A court of Appeal Judge, Justice Olivia Anku-Tsede called for implementation of laws that protect women. "We have a lot of laws derived from a lot of conventions, proclamations that came out of a number of international conferences and workshops. So we have all the laws. We have a number of policies that a number of public institutions have also developed.

Even in the private sector, we have that and yet we still have challenges. So what really is the problem? Why do we have all the laws sitting on our shelves, sitting in the books." The Appeals Court judge the problem is implementation, compliance and enforcement. She highlighted the need to ensure that laws are implemented and complied with and sanctions imposed when they are breached.

Chairperson, Interim Steering Committee, African Women Leaders Network, Ghana Chapter, Dr Charity Binka, asked women to speak up. She explained

that most of the violence women experience happens in the home and community. However, the President, who is a gender champion does not live in homes or communities. He can only act and support women through state institutions and agencies mandated to do so.

She said "our president does not live with us in the home or communities or house to find out why your husband beat you last night or refused to provide money for the house. The problem with violence against women is that most time we are not able to name the experiences we are having. If you cannot define it or name it, how can you seek help", Dr Binka noted.

African Women Leadership Network is a joint initiative of the African Union and the United Nations with the priority areas of ensuring women's participation in Governance and Leadership, financial inclusion, young women's leadership and women's peace and security.

Source: GBC



File Photo

You gave him "special" powers - Inusah Fuseini defends Special Prosecutor on press conference

Former Tamale-Central MP, Inusah Fuseini, has staunchly defended the Office of Special Prosecutor's (OSP) strategies in tackling corruption, asserting its unique authority.

Fuseini clarified that the OSP, designed for anti-corruption efforts, operates distinctively, requiring no fiat from the Attorney General.

During an appearance on JoyNews' Newsfile on Saturday, November 2, Fuseini responded to questions about the Special Prosecutor's recent press conference, highlighting the "special" powers granted for such events.

"We did not say prosecutor; we said Special Prosecutor, and we gave him operational independence so he does not need approval from the Attorney General for a press conference," he explained.

The defence comes in light of the OSP Special Prosecutor, Kissi Agyebeng, addressing challenges faced by the office in the fight against corruption. Agyebeng cited legal, logistical, and financial constraints affecting operational effectiveness.

Critically, the OSP called out the judiciary for undermining its authority, citing injunctions and interlocutory reliefs granted

without due consideration of merit and public interest. Notably, former Minister's Cecilia Abena Dapaah and Charles Bissie sought legal measures against the OSP.

In response, the Ghana Bar Association suggested Agyebeng follow legal processes as the Attorney General did in the Dr Opuni case. Fuseini countered, asserting the necessity of shedding light on corruption obstacles.

"In corruption, you don't fight corruption in darkness. You fight corruption by throwing light on what you believe are obstacles to your fight against corruption," emphasised Fuseini, urging

Agyebeng to carry the public along while critiquing court decisions.

As the OSP navigates legal challenges, Inusah Fuseini advocates for transparency in the fight against corruption, underscoring the importance of public engagement.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Inusah Fuseini, Former Tamale-Central MP

General News

We cannot in good conscience support principles of 2024 budget - NDC Minority

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) Parliamentary Minority said it cannot in good conscience support the principles of the 2024 Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government.

A statement issued by Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson, the Minority Leader, copied to the Ghana News Agency said the New Patriotic Party (NPP) Majority Caucus on Wednesday, November 29, runaway from the Government's 2024 Budget Statement and Economic Policy; sensing defeat over its failure to rally its numbers for Parliamentary Business.

It said the Speaker of Parliament had earlier stated that his voice vote had been challenged under order 113 (2) of the Standing

Orders of Parliament.

It noted that the Speaker put the question for a voice vote twice and stated that in his opinion "the ayes have it".

The statement said this opinion was subsequently challenged by Mr Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah, the Deputy Minority Leader, citing order 113 (2) of the Standing Orders.

It said Order 113(2) calls for a head count of all Members of Parliament present and voting.

It said the Speaker then ruled on the motion that the application was in order and that head count should commence.

The statement said it was at this point that Majority Members, sensing defeat, started packing

fled the Chamber and abandoned their own budget, leaving only the NDC Minority Caucus to carry on with Parliamentary Business.

Adding that but the Speaker suspended the House and immediately upon its resumption, he adjourned proceedings until Thursday, 30th November.

The statement said as it stands now, the 2024 budget had not been approved.

It said throughout the budget debate, the NDC Minority Group insisted that it could not support the Government's new taxes because the poverty level in the country is just too high, and this would put an extra burden on already suffocating businesses.

"We, the NDC Minority, cannot in good conscience support the principles of this budget at this time," it said.

Source: GNA



Ato Cassiel Forson, Minority Leader

Reopening date remains the same; Parents and guardians should have been prepared by now - GES

The Ministry of Education has reaffirmed its decision to maintain the reopening date for incoming Senior High School students on December 4, 2023.

Despite appeals, including those from Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin, urging a postponement to the first week of January, the Ministry remains resolute.

Spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, Kwasi Kwarteng, emphasised that the resumption date for Senior High School students, both on single and double tracks, stands firm on Monday, December 4, 2023. Kwarteng clarified that although the expectation is for students to report on the first day, first-year students failing to do so will not automatically forfeit their slots.

"Students can report the following day or even the following week, as we have always witnessed," Kwarteng stated. He highlighted that the academic calendar had been in the public domain for some time, and it was anticipated that parents, guardians, and students would have adequately prepared

ahead of time.

The House of Parliament had called on the Minister of Education to reconsider the directive for the resumption of academic work on December 4.

However, the Ministry of Education

has maintained that the reopening date remains the same and that parents and guardians should have been prepared by now.

The ministry said that the reopening date was in line with the academic calendar and that any delay would affect the smooth

running of the SHS system. The ministry also assured that all the necessary measures have been put in place to ensure the safety and welfare of the students and staff.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



File Photo

General News

We'll promote research, technology in transforming agriculture – Dr Bawumia

The Government will continue to assist universities and researchers to proffer smart solutions for sustainable agricultural development and growth.

Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia gave the assurance at an awards ceremony to climax the 39th Celebration of the National Farmers Day, at the University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, Western Region.

The world, he said, was moving towards smart solutions to bring predictability and precision along the agricultural value chain.

“This is where we are going,” he emphasised, adding that it was imperative for the nation to explore avenues in applying all the tools of the fourth industrial revolution.

Thus, digital tools, Artificial Intelligence, satellite sensors, among others would be deployed to enhance agricultural productivity, he explained.

“Our academics and researchers have the brains to take us into the smart world of the 21st Century,” he stated.

He commended the universities and research institutions for some of the work already done to support the agricultural sector over the years.

Some of these technologies are development and dissemination of improved climate-smart crop varieties, design and application of efficient irrigation systems with solar technology and adoption of conservational agriculture.

Others bother on the application of precision agriculture with the use of drones, improved market information and use of digital platforms for training, improved storage systems and technologies to reduce post-harvest losses.

While espousing the government's determination to foster food security and resilience, Vice President Bawumia said the second phase of the Planting for Food and Jobs (Pffj) had been designed to achieve the nation's agricultural objectives.

The new phase, in its early stages of implementation following the launch in August, this year, held a lot of promise for the food and agricultural sectors, he stated.

It was modelled on the valuable lessons learnt from the past, he noted.

Tetrete Okuamoah Sekyim, President of the Western Regional House of Chiefs, and also Omanhene of Wassa Amenfi, lauded the government for the many incentive packages and support for farmers.

He urged the youth to embrace farming to enhance their living conditions.

Dr. Bryan Acheampong, Minister of Agriculture, said the second phase of the Planting for Food and Jobs programme was a ‘game-changer’.

It would help reduce the challenges militating against the attainment of a resilient food system.

The programme focuses on 11 selected commodity value chains, which when developed can contribute to the transformation of the sector – improving cereals, grains and such as maize, rice, soybean and sorghum, and vegetables.

The 39th National Farmers' Day Celebration was held on the theme:

“Delivering Smart Solutions for Food Security and Resilience”.

Charity Akortia, 57, of Agona West in the Central Region, emerged the Overall National Best Farmer, and was given one million Ghana Cedis as her prize.

She is into vegetable seed production, processing, aquaculture, livestock, among others.

In all, 16 farmers received awards, ranging from cash prizes, tractors, plaques to double cabin trucks.

The other award categories include National Best Shea Nut Picker, National Best Cocoa Farmer, National Best Fisheries Extension Officer, National Best Inland Fisher, National Best Aquaculture Farmer and National Best Most Promising Young Cocoa Farmer.

Source: GNA



Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, NPP Flagbearer

New batch of prison officers graduate after 11-month training

The Prison Officers Training School (POTS) in Accra has graduated a total of 239 recruits after an extensive 11-month training program.

This marks the conclusion of Recruit Course 124, which was designed to equip them physically and mentally for a successful career in the prison service.

These recruits, constituting the final batch of trainees for the year 2022, will bolster the personnel of the Prisons Service, enhancing its overall operational capacity. They bring diverse professional and vocational backgrounds to their roles, ranging from general duties personnel to various artisans, such as carpenters, masons, plumbers, and mechanics. Additionally, some recruits hold Diplomas and Higher

National Diplomas (HND) from different technical and vocational institutions.

The Minister for the Interior, Ambrose Dery, presided over the graduating parade, underscoring the significance of this occasion in strengthening the capabilities of the Prisons Service. He urged individuals and Civil Society organisations (CSOs) to collaborate and support the service in fulfilling its mandate to contribute to the reduction of crime in the country.

“Indeed, these organisations often have treasured experience in prison reforms that could provide some insights and support to the work of the service,” he added.

The minister also emphasised the government's dedication

to backing the training and development of prison personnel, recognising their pivotal role in ensuring the effective functioning of the prison system.

“We urge management of the service to continue to equip staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to handle the unique challenges of the profession.

“It is high time we implemented digital record-keeping, biometric identification and security

surveillance systems to enhance the general management and security of our prisons,” Mr Dery added.

“It is high time we implemented digital record-keeping, biometric identification and security surveillance systems to enhance the general management and security of our prisons,” Mr Dery added.

Source: The Independent Ghana



File Photo

General News

Road crashes claim 399 lives in Greater Accra in 10 months - Report

The Greater Accra Regional Branch of the National Road Safety Authority (NRSA) has released a concerning report, revealing a total of 4,876 road crash incidents and 399 fatalities within the period of January to October 2023.

Mr Ezra Quansah, Assistant Planning Manager of NRSA in the Greater Accra Region, disclosed these distressing statistics in an interview with the Ghana News Agency in Tema. The reported accidents involved 8,804 vehicles and were primarily attributed to human errors.

Out of the recorded cases, 2,776 individuals sustained injuries, and 866 were involved in pedestrian knockdowns, resulting in 206 fatalities.

Speaking during a road safety workshop for drivers in Tema, Mr Quansah highlighted that commercial vehicles experienced 2,294 crashes, leading to 928

injuries and 94 deaths. Private vehicle incidents numbered 5,122, with 843 injuries and 134 fatalities. Motorcycle crashes accounted for 1,388, causing 1,005 injuries and 166 deaths.

Mr. Ezra Quansah further detailed that among all recorded road crashes, there were 70 female deaths and 329 male deaths.

As the Christmas season approaches, he urged drivers to prioritise safe driving practices to prevent road accidents. Mr. Quansah also stressed the importance of avoiding the use of unapproved lights on vehicles to prevent legal repercussions from the police MTTD. Additionally, he appealed to long-distance drivers to have two individuals in a vehicle for four-hour driving intervals to minimize the risk of road crashes.

Tema's Regional Operations Officer and Safety Officer of the Ghana National Fire Service,

D03, emphasized the mandatory requirement for every driver to carry a fire extinguisher in their vehicle. He noted that overheating or electrical faults could lead to a fire outbreak, and the extinguisher should be changed every six months or a year. Furthermore, he specified that a dry powder-type fire extinguisher is suitable for use in a car.

To enhance road safety and emergency response, he advised the general public to be quick to call 192/112.

In collective efforts to ensure road safety during the upcoming holiday season, he issued a stern warning against drinking alcohol before driving. The Chief Executive Officer of Finance Company Limited, Alhaji Nasiru Abachem, emphasized the impact of road safety lessons on drivers and motorcyclists, urging them to drive carefully for their safety ahead of the holiday season.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



File Photo

Woman accused of witchcraft strangled to death in Yonyoo

The Yonyoo community in the Sagban area, North East Region, is engulfed in tension following the mysterious demise of a woman accused of witchcraft. While it was initially reported as a natural death during sleep, subsequent investigations have revealed a more sinister truth – she was strangled.

According to reports, intruders entered her room and committed the heinous act by strangling her with a rope. The family, hailing from a different community, is now seeking justice and demanding the identification of the perpetrators.

Simultaneously, Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia has intervened in another simmering conflict between the Mo and Wangara tribes in the Kintampo North Municipality, appealing for peace and unity.

The conflict arose when the Mo tribe declared their intention to perform rituals in November and December, coinciding with the

Wangara's annual Klubi Festival. Dr. Bawumia, after engaging with traditional leaders and community members, stressed the urgent need to restore peace in the region.

During his interaction with the community, he highlighted the importance of resolving conflicts at an early stage to prevent escalation. Emphasizing the need for resolution at various levels – individual, familial, and communal – he urged adherence to principles of social justice.

“With a shared common destiny under the umbrella of this year's festival, let us try to ensure that conflicts are resolved between individuals, families, and communities as a whole along the principles of social justice,” he stated.

“Let us use cultural diplomacy as a veritable tool for the promotion of harmonious relationships with our neighbours both far and near. Let us not entertain people who try to divide us along tribal or religious lines.”

Meanwhile, in response to the escalating tension, Speaker of Parliament Rt Hon Alban Bagbin has directed the Minister for National Security and the Minister for the Interior to appear before the Parliament committee of

Defence and Interior for a briefing. The committee will subsequently submit its report to the House for adoption and further directives.

Source: The Independent Ghana /Phoebe Martekie Doku



File Photo

General News

Pusu Namogo chief threatens to take back land from Gov't due to 'No Show' on Housing Project

Government is under pressure to release the piece of land it received from farmers to put up a housing project in the Upper East Region. The project situated at Pusu Namogo in the Talensi District should have been completed and underuse by now but GBC News' visit to the site revealed an empty vast land with just two semi-detached apartments out of the of the 120 houses government promised to build.

President Akuffo Addo and Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia cut sod for the Rock Estates Affordable Housing Project in November 2019. It was expected to create more than 3,000 job opportunities in the Bolgatanga enclave. But not a single unit of the houses has since been completed.

The project when completed would help address the accommodation challenge in the region, boost economic activities and raise the development standard in the area. However, Assembly Member for Gorogo Electoral Area Roland Basahmah feels disappointed and shortchanged for government's failure to redeem its image after a beautiful fun fair they had during the sod cutting.

"The people of the Talensi District are very worried, and it's very painful. So I don't understand whether we the people of Pusu Namogo do not deserve the good thing. If we deserve it, then they should complete the project," Mr. Basahmah expressed worry.

Other residents of the Pusu Namogo community are calling on the government to release

their piece of land back to them in the next farming season if there are no plans for its development. The chief of Pusu Namogo, Naab Saheng Kumbelimsaah, is sad that the project remains unfinished.

"Those two houses they built are not completed. No doors, no windows, nothing. No matter where you go, they ask who your president is; it is Nana Akuffo Addo. So I'm just appealing to him: if there is no money, they should

get the land to us. We can manage with it." Naab Kumbelimsaah appealed.

The leadership of the National Democratic Congress in the region earlier issued a statement describing the delay of the project as a betrayal of the people's conscience while jeopardising access to their farmlands, which serve as the source of their livelihoods.

Source: GBC



Naab Saheng Kumbelimsaah Pusu Namogo Chief

NPP Election: Ida Adwoa Asiedu thumps Okraku-Mantey in race for Ayensuano constituency seat

Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, Mark Okraku-Mantey, has experienced defeat in his bid to secure the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) parliamentary candidacy in the Ayensuano constituency of the Eastern Region.

During the parliamentary elections in orphan constituencies on Saturday, December 2, Okraku-Mantey garnered 136 votes, while Ida Adwoa Asiedu, his opponent, emerged victorious with 410 votes.

Additional contenders, Ernest Addo and Kingsley Boateng Adomah, secured 4 and 3 votes, respectively.

Meanwhile, in the Adentan Constituency, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana National Youth Authority, Akosua Manu (Kozie), clinched the parliamentary candidacy.

She secured an impressive 814 votes, surpassing her closest competitor, Kwasi Obeng Fosu, who garnered 638 votes. Winfred Nartey trailed with 18 votes.

Meanwhile, in Odododiodio, two-time contender Nii Lante Bannerman faced defeat in his quest to secure the NPP's parliamentary candidacy for the 2024 elections. The victory went to first-time contender Manaf Sowah.

Manaf Sowah garnered 349 votes, surpassing Mr. Bannerman's count of 203.

The incumbent Member of

Parliament (MP), Nii Lante Vanderpuye of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), had withdrawn from the race earlier this year.

The incumbent Member of Parliament (MP), Nii Lante Vanderpuye of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), withdrew from the race earlier this year.

The parliamentary primaries which were held on Saturday was

to select candidates for the 2024 general election in constituencies without current members of parliament (MPs).

Across 111 constituencies in all 16 regions, a total of 321 aspirants contested for the singular slot available in each of the constituencies where elections were conducted.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Phoebe Martekie Doku



Ida Adwoa Asiedu, NPP Newly elect, MP for Ayensuano constituency

General News

La General Hospital reconstruction on track, Finance Minister inspects site

The reconstruction of La General Hospital has officially kicked off, capturing the attention of the Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta, who conducted a site tour on November 29, 2023.

Encouraging contractors to expedite the project, the Finance Minister aimed for its completion within a year.

During the inspection, Mr. Ofori-Atta stressed the importance of the early completion to provide timely access to high-quality healthcare for residents of La.

Addressing contractors and workers, he assured them of the government's commitment to releasing funds promptly, ensuring smooth project execution within the specified timeframe.

The ongoing work primarily focuses on the substructures of the project. The Finance Minister revealed that the government

had successfully renegotiated the contract terms, maintaining the initially planned 160-bed capacity with appropriate designs.

Notably, the cost of the project was revised from €57 million to €50 million, reflecting the government's cost-cutting measures in response to the current economic challenges facing the country.

"So the purpose of today's visit is to ensure that you are genuinely on-site and that work is progressing. This is crucial to instill confidence in the public that, as promised, the hospital will indeed be operational within the specified year," Mr. Ofori-Atta explained.

A representative from the Ministry of Health confirmed that work on the hospital project, stalled due to "some challenges," would continue as expected. Designs for the main hospital are being finalized, with work set to commence on Monday, December 7, this year. The

contractor assured the minister of delivering quality work within the agreed timeframe.

Background

La General Hospital faced demolition in July 2020 due to significant structural issues. Despite the inauguration of the La General Hospital Redevelopment Project in August 2020, actual construction did not commence, leading to frustration among residents, the minority in parliament, and other stakeholders. The government initially attributed the delay to

project sponsors.

However, recent revelations by Health Minister Kwaku Agyemang-Manu indicated that the Finance Ministry had successfully secured €50 million in local funding for the hospital's reconstruction. This financial commitment marks a significant step towards addressing structural challenges and fulfilling the community's long-awaited need for a revamped healthcare facility.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Ken Ofori-Atta, Finance Minister and his team

Govt registers over 600 delegates for COP 28 in Dubai

Ghana has officially registered a robust delegation of 618 participants for the 28th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28) in Dubai.

During COP 27, Ghana's delegation comprised 350 individuals, including both state and non-state actors, some of whom received funding from development partners.

This year, as reported by the UNFCCC, Ghana's delegation has grown to 618 members, with 95 listed as official "parties" and an additional 523 on the "party overflow" list.

It is crucial to acknowledge that certain countries allocate party badges to NGOs, a factor that may contribute to an apparent inflation of the official delegation size.

These figures are provisional and based on registered participants; the final count, accounting for those collecting physical badges at the venue, will be disclosed by the

UNFCCC post-summit.

COP 28, scheduled from November 30 to December 12, is poised to make history with a record-breaking number of delegates.

The provisional total indicates that 97,372 individuals have registered to attend in person, nearly double the attendance at COP 27 in Egypt.

Notably, this year marks the first instance in COP history where all

delegates, including "host country guests" from the UAE and 3,000 "virtual-only" participants, have been named in the participant lists.

As expected, the host country, the UAE, leads with the largest-ever registered delegation of 4,409 badges. Brazil follows closely with 3,081, while China and Nigeria share the third spot with 1,411 badges each.

The presentation of participant

lists in spreadsheet format by the UNFCCC underscores the escalating trend of growing participation in climate COPs.

With nearly 50,000 delegates in attendance at COP 27 in Egypt last year, there is a clear trajectory of increased engagement since the landmark COP 21 in Paris in 2015.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



File Photo



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Business

IMF, World Bank funds in limbo should external debt restructuring talks be stalled - Seth Terkper

Former Finance Minister Seth Terkper has expressed concern over the potential disruption of Ghana's international cash flows should discussions on external debt restructuring hit a roadblock. Despite this apprehension, Terkper remains cautiously optimistic about securing an agreement by the end of the upcoming week.

"I hope we can avert not reaching a deal with the creditors; otherwise, flows from the IMF and World Bank will be in jeopardy, and we will still be locked out of the international capital market," remarked Terkper in a statement quoted by Norvan Reports. "I hope the Government will rally and meet the required conditions so that we can overcome these current economic challenges."

In alignment with Terkper's sentiments, the current Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta, has conveyed confidence in the

government's potential to finalize an agreement by the end of the coming week.

Ofori-Atta addressed the issue, stating, "My hope is that by the end of next week, we'll have what we need. One of the key issues is the cut-off date and ensuring that there is comparability of treatment."

In December 2022, Ghana faced a default on a significant portion of its external debts, leading to exclusion from international capital markets and a subsequent surge in debt costs. This crisis intensified an economic downturn characterized by a depreciating currency and soaring inflation rates.

To address its financial predicament, Ghana is required to negotiate a restructuring deal with its official creditors, a crucial step for obtaining the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board's approval for the next disbursement of \$600

million from a \$3 billion rescue loan.

The official creditors, holding approximately \$5.4 billion of Ghana's total external debt amounting to \$20 billion undergoing restructuring, were considering two possible cut-off dates: March 2020 and December 2022, as reported by Reuters in September.

While December 31, 2022, aligns closely with Ghana's default timeline, March 24, 2020, was also under consideration as a cut-off date. This date holds significance as it marks the introduction of the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), designed to assist the world's poorest countries in coping with the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis. Notably, Ghana did not participate in the DSSI.

In response to the deliberations on cut-off dates, Ghana's Finance Minister, Ofori-Atta, emphasized the country's adaptability to

either scenario. When queried about a preferred date, he commented, "We can manage either way. So the issue is (for) the membership of the OCC to get comfortable with how it impacts them."

Ofori-Atta further highlighted the importance of ensuring comparability of treatment, with China and France serving as co-chairs of the official creditor committee and exerting significant influence on the decision-making process.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Seth Terkper, Former Finance Minister

Zeepay and BoG begin discussions over the former's forex licence suspension

Zeepay Ghana Limited is currently in discussions with the Bank of Ghana to address the recent suspension of its forex licence.

The Central Bank took this action, stating that Zeepay failed to use the average interbank exchange rate published by the Ghana Association of Banks and the Bank of Ghana for converting settlement funds into the local currency.

The ongoing discussions aim to find a resolution to this matter. Zeepay was also fined for breaching sections 3(1) and 15 (3) of the Foreign Exchange Act, 2006 (Act 723).

In response, Zeepay released a statement, confirming that talks are ongoing to address the issue. While assuring the public of strict compliance with regulatory guidelines, Zeepay emphasized that its general operational licence remains intact, allowing it to continue its business operations.

The statement reads, "With reference to the recent Bank of Ghana Notice (Notice No. BG/GOV/SEC/2023/20) dated November 20, 2023, and titled 'Fine and Suspension of Forex Licence of Zeepay Ghana Limited,' we write to inform the general public that we are currently in discussions with the Bank of Ghana to resolve the issues raised in the Notice.

However, please note that our general operating licence was not expressly impacted by the bank's recent decision. We will ensure strict compliance with all regulations and guidelines."

The Bank of Ghana, in its announcement, emphasized that the sanction serves as a strong warning to all participants in the forex market, including banks, forex bureaus, forex brokers, Dedicated Electronic Money Issuers (DEMIs), enhanced Payment Service Providers (EPSPs), and Money Transfer Operators (MTOs), urging them

to adhere strictly to applicable forex market regulations and guidelines.

Established in 2014, Zeepay Ghana Ltd. operates as a significant provider of digital remittance termination and ancillary mobile financial services across Africa and the Caribbean. With a presence in over 20 countries globally, Zeepay has formed partnerships with key

players in the remittance sector. Notably, Zeepay, being wholly Ghanaian-owned, operates under the regulatory oversight of the Bank of Ghana, holding licence #00001, reflecting its commitment to operating within established financial guidelines and standards.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



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International

Guinea-Bissau: Attempted coup was foiled, says President Embaló

Guinea-Bissau's president says the heavy gunfire that broke out in the capital on Friday was an attempted coup.

He had been out of the country at the time, attending the UN's COP28 climate conference in Dubai.

Speaking on Saturday, President Umaro Sissoco Embaló promised "serious consequences" for the perpetrators.

This is the second foiled coup against his leadership in under two years. The unrest began late on Thursday evening and continued into Friday mid-morning.

A man described as the leader of a group of soldiers who tried to free a detained minister and a senior state official in Guinea-Bissau has been caught, the military says.

Members of the National Guard had taken the officials before seeking refuge in barracks south of the city.

Special forces then intervened after attempts to negotiate failed, resulting in an exchange of gunfire.

Calm is said to have been restored

later.

Finance Minister Souleiman Seidi and António Monteiro, the secretary of state for the Treasury, had been detained amid investigations into the alleged irregular withdrawal of \$10 million (£8 million) of state funds.

They were questioned on Thursday afternoon by an anti-corruption inquiry to clarify the payments to 11 companies.

In a parliamentary session on Monday, the leader of the country's main opposition party alleged that the owners of the companies were close to the leaders of the country's governing coalition.

Mr. Seidi defended the payments as legal.

On Thursday, after the questioning, Mr. Seidi and Mr. Monteiro were arrested and detained so as not to jeopardise the investigations, local media said.

Later in the evening, National Guard soldiers invaded the police cells, located near Bandim Market, "with AK-47 weapons

and bazookas" and extricated the detained officials, the privately owned O Democrata news outlet reported.

It said the National Guard took them to an unknown location.

On Friday morning, regional stabilisation forces deployed by the regional West African bloc, Ecowas, were seen patrolling the streets, the AFP news agency reported.

Guinea-Bissau has suffered a series of coups and attempted coups since gaining independence from Portugal in 1974.

In February last year, President Embaló said he survived a coup attempt after being under heavy gunfire for five hours—an incident in which 11 people died.

Without providing details, he said the attack was linked to drug trafficking in the country.

Some, however, doubted the official version of the events amid questions including who was really behind the attempt, how many people were involved, and

who was in command.

Speaking to the BBC's Newshour programme, Alberto Dabo, a journalist in Bissau, directly linked the recent events to what happened last year.

"After the coup attempt, many high-ranking officials of the army who were held responsible for that are in jail without any judgement. And some high-ranking members of the army are demanding their liberation," he said.

Source: BBC



Umaro Embaló, President of Guinea Bissau

Philippines: Blast at Catholic Mass kills several

An explosion during a Catholic Mass in Marawi City killed four people and injured dozens more. Authorities believe it could be the work of militants affiliated with the "Islamic State" (IS) group.

An explosion at a Catholic Mass in a university gymnasium in Marawi City, Philippines, killed four people and injured dozens more on Sunday.

What do we know so far?

The explosion occurred at Mindanao State University in Lanao del Sur province, in the southern part of the country.

The blast happened during a regular service at Mindanao State University's gymnasium in Marawi, the country's largest Muslim city, regional police chief Allan Nobleza said.

"We're investigating if it's an IED

(improvised explosive device) or grenade throwing," he said.

Fragments of a 16-mm mortar were recovered at the scene, senior police official Emmanuel Peralta told a news conference later.

"It was really sudden and everyone ran. When I looked behind me, people were lying on the floor. We didn't know what happened because everything happened so fast," university student Chris Jurado told AFP news agency.

He said the incident happened during the first Bible reading of the morning mass at 7:00 a.m. (2300 GMT Saturday).

Classes were suspended and more forces were deployed across the university.

Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said later Sunday there were "strong indications of a foreign element" in the bombing.

Local officials 'stand in solidarity' with the Christian community.

"I condemn the violent bombing incident that transpired this morning. Terroristic attacks on educational institutions must also be condemned because these are places that promote the culture of peace," Lanao del Sur Governor Mamintal Adiong, Jr., said in a statement.

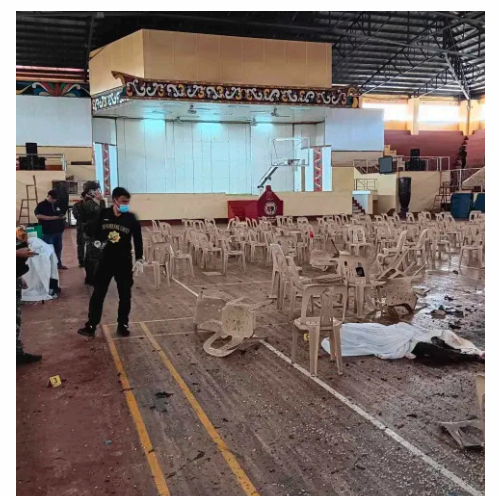
The Lanao del Sur provincial government's Facebook page showed him visiting "wounded victims of the bombing" at a medical facility.

"We unequivocally condemn in the strongest possible terms this senseless and horrific act," Mindanao State University said in a statement on Facebook. "We stand in solidarity with our Christian community and all those affected by this tragedy," it said.

Marawi is the country's largest Muslim city and was besieged by Islamist militants for five months in 2017.

The Philippine military said on Saturday they had killed 11 militants, including members of the Dawlah Islamiyah-Philippines, a pro-IS group, in a military operation the day before in Maguindanao del Sur province.

Source: DW.com



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