

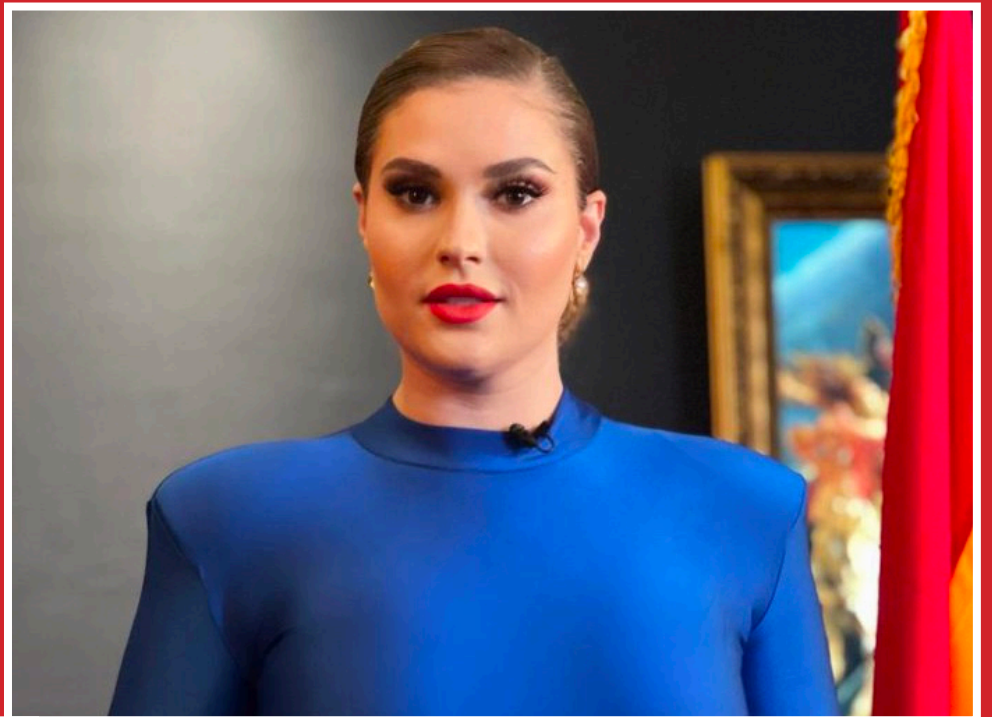


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General News

We've not obtained a \$75m loan from any bank - GRA responds to Adongo's claims

The Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) has strongly rejected assertions made by Isaac Adongo, the Member of Parliament for Bolgatanga Central Constituency, claiming that the revenue agency was in the process of acquiring a \$75 million loan without parliamentary approval.

In a statement, the GRA clarified that it has not secured a \$75 million loan from any bank. The revenue agency outlined that although it initially contemplated obtaining a loan for a substantial capital expenditure project in 2022, it ultimately abandoned the idea following consultations with the Ministry of Finance.

During a media briefing on November 30, 2023, Isaac Adongo raised concerns about what he deemed the unauthorised

borrowing of \$75 million by the GRA, characterising it as both illegal and a breach of parliamentary procedures.

Mr Adongo highlighted that the GRA, tasked with funding the government through generated revenues, is permitted to retain up to 3% of the collected revenue annually. However, this retention requires parliamentary approval and should not exceed 3%, typically included in "other government obligations" during the regular parliamentary approval process.

Adongo pointed out that his concern arose from the revelation in the 2022 annual Public Debt Management report, which indicated that the GRA had borrowed \$75 million. According to him, this act was illegal and

fell outside the appropriation process.

He underscored the seriousness of the offence, emphasising that the funds were not presented to Parliament or the Finance Committee, constituting a clear violation of established procedures.

"That is outside appropriation. And the fact that they held it away from Parliament and the Finance Committee is a very serious offence. And I want to serve one in that when they are coming, we don't want to ambush them," he added.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



Isaac Adongo, MP for Bolgatanga Central Constituency

Elon Musk's Starlink operations illegal in Ghana - NCA

The National Communications Authority (NCA) has officially declared the operations of Starlink, the satellite internet service provided by SpaceX, as illegal in Ghana.

In a press release issued on December 7, 2023, the NCA stated that Starlink has not been licensed to operate in the country, and none of its equipment has been approved.

According to the NCA, any entity selling Starlink equipment or providing Starlink services is in direct violation of the Electronic Communications Act 2008.

The public has been warned against purchasing any equipment or services from Starlink, and individuals or companies involved in the sale or operation of Starlink services are directed to cease and desist immediately.

The NCA emphasizes its commitment to ensuring fair competition in the market and protecting licensees and

consumers. Starlink, on its website, had indicated plans to provide services in Ghana by the third quarter of 2024, subject to regulatory approval.

However, some middlemen in Ghana are already offering Starlink services, quoting installation prices ranging between GHS1,100 and GHS18,000 monthly. The implications of the NCA's

announcement for existing Starlink users in Ghana remain unclear, as no specific enforcement actions have been announced yet.

Possible outcomes could include sanctions for vendors or negotiations between the NCA and Starlink for obtaining a license to operate in Ghana.

Starlink, a constellation of Low

Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites launched by SpaceX, aims to provide high-speed internet access globally, even in hard-to-reach areas.

The NCA's move raises questions about the future of Starlink services in Ghana and the regulatory approval process.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Elon Musk, CEO, Starlink

General News

I will mention names of MPs working against anti-LGBTQ bill - Sam George

Member of Parliament (MP) Ningo-Prampram, Samuel Nartey George, has threatened to unveil the identities of his fellow parliamentarians obstructing the passage of the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, colloquially known as the anti-LGBTQI bill.

His threat comes following the House's failure to deliberate on the bill during its consideration stage, prompting dissatisfaction among proponents like Sam George.

Accusing the majority caucus of flouting Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin's directive to address proposed corrections and amendments, Sam George asserted that various tactics were being employed to hinder the bill's progress, thereby undermining the Speaker's commitment to passing it before the close of 2023.

Expressing the need for clarity on the majority's opposition to the bill, Sam George highlighted the alleged interference of certain leaders within the majority who were urging sponsors to withdraw the bill.

"We need to understand from the Majority side what their

issues with the bill are. We need to understand with those who take the chair when the speaker gives the instruction what their opposition to the bill is. We are very well aware of people in leadership on the Majority side who are reaching out to sponsors of the bill asking us to step down the bill," he said.

The Constitutional, Legal, and Parliamentary Affairs Committee's chairman, Kwame Anyimadu Antwi, was specifically accused of strategically staying absent to obstruct the bill's discussion.

In a bid to expose MPs influenced by those opposing the bill, the MP has vowed to disclose their names in the media, despite having refrained from doing so at the request of some co-sponsors.

"Those who have gone and gotten influenced by persons who have interest in the LGBTQ should return whatever influence they have collected because we will fight.

"And the next time we address the media, I will mention names. I have been pressed upon by my co-sponsors not to mention names. It is out of respect that I

have not mentioned names but if they continue this behaviour of frustrating the bill... How can this bill spend almost 3 years," he said.

He emphasised the importance of returning any influence gained from individuals with an interest in the LGBTQ cause.

Addressing a previous accusation against Ablekuma North MP Sheila Bartels, Sam George asserted her receipt of funds from pro-LGBT individuals.

"After taking money from LGBTQ, and you say I shouldn't mention her name as a pro-LGBTQ person? She went and sat on the media and said I had taken money from LGBTQ people. It took her father to come and apologise to me," he said.

Despite maintaining a respectful

stance initially, he warned of publicly naming MPs if the obstructionist behaviour persisted, pointing out the bill's extended timeline, spanning almost three years.

Sam George, who is a vocal advocate for the bill criminalising and imposing severe penalties on homosexuality, has faced counter-accusations, with Ghanaian musician Wanlov the Kubolor suggesting he is sponsored by an American organisation to champion anti-LGBTQ+ laws in Ghana.

The Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill was introduced to the House on March 30, 2023, by the Constitutional, Legal, and Parliamentary Affairs Committee.

Source: The Independent Ghana /Phoebe Martekie Doku



Samuel Nartey George, MP, Ningo-Prampram

Govt releases funds for payment of NSS allowance arrears from Jan. to May

The National Service Scheme (NSS) Management has confirmed the release of funds by the government for the settlement of arrears on the allowances of recently completed NSS personnel.

The payments are intended to cover arrears from January 2023 to May 2023. The announcement was made through a press release signed by Osei Assibey Antwi, the Executive Director of the NSS.

"The arrears would therefore be paid by the close of Friday, December 8, 2023," the statement noted.

The payments will cover arrears

accrued from January 2023 to May 2023. However, arrears for June 2023 and allowances for October 2023 will be paid subsequently.

"Management wishes to commend service personnel for their patience regarding the delayed payment of these allowances and wishes to assure them that everything possible is being done to have the rest of their allowances duly paid to them," NSS stated.

Months ago, the National Service Scheme (NSS) management successfully obtained government approval for an increase in the monthly allowances for national service personnel, raising it from

GH¢599.04 to GH¢715.57.

The announcement, dated July 18, 2023, and endorsed by the Deputy Minister for Finance, Abena Osei Opare, clarified that the approval and adjustment followed extensive discussions between the National Service Scheme, Fair Wages and Salary Commission, and the Ministry of Finance.

The release further instructed

the Controller and Accountant-General to implement the updated levels of personnel allowances.

It also stated that "In effect, all National Service Personnel who are currently are entitled to arrears for the difference in the upward adjustment from January 2023, and would be paid accordingly."

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



General News

School Placement: We have resolved over 60% of challenges – Free SHS Secretariat

The Free Senior High School Secretariat says it has resolved 60 to 70 percent of placement issues for first-year students across the country.

The Secretariat through its resolution centers received over 6,000 issues, mainly for students who were not placed in any school and those who wanted to change schools due to location.

Nana Afrah Sika Mensah, the Deputy Coordinator of the Free Senior High School Secretariat said this in an interview with the Ghana News Agency in Accra.

The Deputy Coordinator said students with a single aggregate were to select schools under category "A", while students with aggregate 10 to 14 are to select from category "B."

Students with aggregate 15 and above are to choose schools from category "C" and select the programme for their courses.

She said the Secretariat staff were working on the issues, and within 24 hours, the challenges would be addressed.

According to her, the exercise had been successful and urged parents to exercise patience while the Secretariat addressed the challenges.

She said even though admission had started on December 4, the Secretariat was optimistic about addressing their issues as early as possible, adding that the first and second weeks were for orientation.

Nana Mensah said schools selected on the Self-Placement Portal could

be changed as many times as the candidate wished on the portal until they enrolled.

She assured the public, guardians and students, especially those who could not be matched with their choices during the automatic placement, that all schools with vacancies had been uploaded on the portal for students to select from during self-placement without hitches.

Nana Mensah cautioned parents

not to pay money to anybody since the exercise was free.

The GNA observation revealed that the solution centers are collecting contacts and other relevant details from parents and guardians to address their issues.

A statement from the Ministry of Education said that out of the total number of 598,839 results received from WAEC, 585,797 candidates qualified to be placed.

Source: GNA



File Photo

Parliament approves 2024 budget

Parliament has finally approved the 2024 budget statement and economic policy presented by Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta, in parliament on Wednesday 15th November, 2023.

Speaker Alban Bagbin made this known while speaking on the floor of the House on December 7, 2023, after a headcount vote was held.

At the end of the headcount, the Majority, calling for the approval of the budget, secured 138 votes, whereas the Minority, the opposition, got 136 votes. The Minority was short of one legislator, the Assin North MP, Gyakye Quayson, who is currently outside the country due to health reasons.

Prior to the voting process on Thursday, the Majority opposed the channel in which the headcount would have taken place and threatened to leave the chamber once again.

This is prevented by the Speaker, who entreated the MPs to have

their seat and participate by acknowledging their presence when their respective names are mentioned. The Majority reluctantly obliged and participated in the voting process.

It took Parliament over a week to finally decide whether to approve the budget or not.

Last Wednesday, the Members of Parliament on the Majority side staged a walkout as the House voted on the 2024 economic and budget statement presented by Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta.

The House was scheduled to approve or reject the budget statement. Speaker Alban Bagbin held a voice vote, which caused tension between the two sides in the House.

Per the Majority Leader, Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu's remarks on the floor of Parliament, the "Yes" had it on the approval of the budget.

"You are saying that you said you think the 'yes' have it and left it at

that. Which you normally do. But you went further to indicate firmly that the 'yes' have it."

But the Speaker noted that he expressed his opinion about the "yes" likely having it.

"Honourable members, I did not proceed to say the 'yes' have it," the Speaker said.

The Deputy Minority Leader then challenged the Speaker's opinion and called for a headcount. The Speaker then called for a headcount vote.

Following the Speaker's comment, there was disarray in Parliament after a Minority MP called for the removal of John Kumah, Ken

Agyapong, and two others, as they were not present at the time the motion for a headcount vote was posed.

The Majority MPs continued to express dissatisfaction, and an agitated Deputy Majority Leader, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, announced the withdrawal of the Majority MPs from the chamber.

"We are leaving the chamber for them. Now, do the head count and see if you have the numbers to over turn Mr Speaker's ruling," he said before the NPP MPs left the chamber.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



Parliament of Ghana



General News

Commercial vehicles to feature speed limit devices - GPRTU

The Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) is set to implement a comprehensive initiative aimed at enhancing road safety across the country.

At the heart of this campaign is the mandatory installation of speed limiters in all commercial vehicles, a strategic move to address concerns related to over-speeding and promote compliance with the stipulated speed limits set by the National Road Safety Authority (NRSA).

General Secretary of the GPRTU, Godfred Abulbire, unveiled this impactful decision during the launch of the 2023 Road Safety Christmas Campaign themed "Stop Speeding, Stay Alive" in the bustling city of Accra.

Despite persistent efforts in driver education to instigate behavioural changes, it has become apparent that additional measures are needed to enforce speed regulations and ensure responsible driving practices.

Mr. Abulbire emphasised that behavioural change among drivers has proven challenging, even in the face of educational initiatives.

Consequently, the GPRTU is taking a proactive step by making it compulsory for speed limiters to be installed in all vehicles operating within a 50-kilometre radius.

This move is expected to play a pivotal role in curbing over-speeding and enhancing overall road safety.

Scheduled for implementation in the coming week, the mandatory installation of speed limiters is considered a proactive and effective approach by the GPRTU leadership.

The organisation believes that this measure will significantly contribute to improving compliance with road safety regulations and mitigating the risks associated with speeding, particularly during the festive season.

Director-general of the National Road Safety Authority, Ing. David Osafo Adonteng, shared noteworthy insights into the current state of road safety in Ghana.

According to provisional data from the Ghana Police Service, there has been a commendable 7% reduction in road crashes, a 3.36% decrease in injuries, and a notable 7.4% decline in fatalities from January to October 2023 compared to the same period in

the previous year, 2022.

Despite this positive trend, Ing. Adonteng stressed the importance of maintaining vigilance on the roads.

He called upon drivers and all road users to exercise circumspection to further minimise road crashes and mortalities, especially during the upcoming holiday season.

Source: The Independent Ghana /Phoebe Martekie Doku



File Photo

The New Force's spokesperson arrested, detained for over 96 hours by NIB

The National Investigations Bureau has arrested one of the spokespersons of the political movement, The New Force, Ms. Shalimar Abbiusi.

Shalimar Abbiusi was reportedly apprehended on Monday, December 4, 2023 due to her affiliation with The New Force and the lack of immigration documents and work permit to support her stay in the country for about 3 years.

Shalimar Abbiusi remains in custody to aid investigations and according to The New Force, no formal charges have been levelled against her.

The New Force in a statement dated December 7, noted that the arbitrary detention of Ms. Abbiusi "raises serious concerns about the abuse of power, persecution of perceived political opponents and several human rights

violations."

The New Force has therefore called for her immediate release and a stop to the attacks against the movement such as the destruction of its billboards, among other things, by the government.

"We have witnessed rising attacks against the New Force including the taking down and targeted destruction of several billboards of the New Force. We consider that these actions reflect the approach of cowards and persons who have lost the moral plot of leadership," the movement said.

The movement believes that the government is using Ms Abbiusi's immigration status to blackmail her.

"We consider that no person should be discriminated against on account of their political opinions or country of origin, as guaranteed by our Constitution. These actions

are morally and legally wrong and undermine faith in our democracy as well as the independence

and fairness of our political institutions," the statement added.

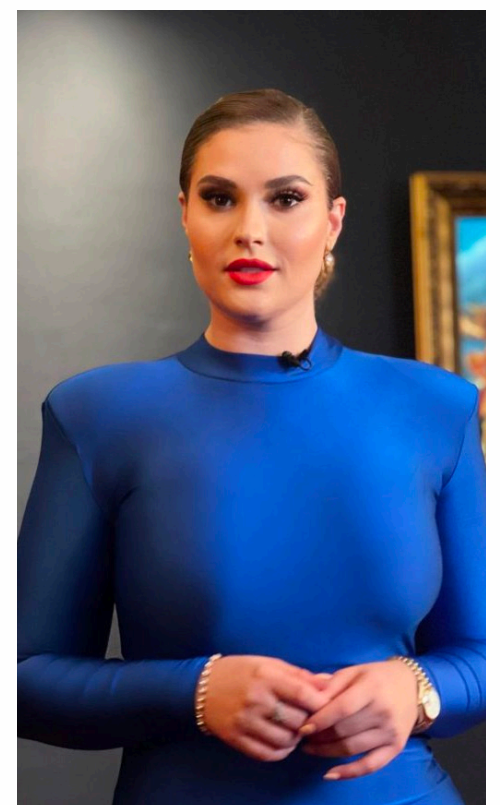
It further quizzed, "Is this really the Ghana we want? A Ghana where the abuse of power to intimidate and blackmail perceived political opponents and nationals of our partners? How much lower can we sink as a people?"

The New Force insists that Ghana is losing its pride and identity.

"We need a new direction; a new vision; and a New Ghana we can be proud of. We encourage Ghanaians to be vigilant and engaged in preserving the integrity of our democracy. We ask you to demand for a different kind of politics. That is the promise of the New Force. The international community is closely monitoring

these developments, emphasizing the need for a swift and just resolution," they added.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Ms. Shalimar Abbiusi, Spokesperson, The New Force

General News

Import Restriction L.I. will lead to monopoly over sale of products - Minority

Minority Leader, Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, has expressed his opposition to the proposed import restriction Legislative Instrument (L.I), highlighting concerns about the possibility of creating a monopolistic cartel with control over the import and sale of various products.

Speaking at the 'Moment of Truth' event organized by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in Accra, Dr. Ato Forson raised apprehensions about the economic implications and heightened corruption risks associated with the L.I. He argued that granting unchecked authority to the Minister of Trade could result in favoritism and the establishment of a powerful import and sales cartel.

"With this LI, the Minister of Trade will be handed a blank cheque to deny those who are not in his good book and create a powerful cartel who will monopolize the

import and sale of those products," he stated during the 'Moment of Truth' event on Wednesday, December 6.

Additionally, Dr. Ato Forson contended that the L.I, aiming to prohibit the importation of 22 specific items, would violate the terms of Ghana's International Monetary Fund (IMF) program. According to him, the government, under the IMF agreement, is restricted from endorsing policies that restrict trade.

He also emphasized Ghana's lack of capacity to locally produce many items targeted by the L.I, including sugar, and questioned the government's commitment to promoting local production.

Deputy Minority Leader, Mr. Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah, expressed concerns about potential corruption resulting from the L.I. He criticized reverting to an outdated licensing system and stressed the need for honest

solutions to address the import bill and trade-related challenges.

In contrast, the Trade and Industry Minister, K.T Hammond, defended the import restrictions, citing the considerable expenditure on certain imported items like animal stomachs, bladders, and intestines. He clarified that the goal was not to create food shortages but to promote self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on imports. The Minister highlighted the inclusion of items such as diapers among the 22 on the restriction list.

The full list of 22 items considered

for import restriction includes Rice, Guts, bladders and stomach of animals, Poultry, Animal and Vegetable Oil, Margarine, Fruit Juices, Soft Drink, Mineral Water, Noodles and Pasta, Ceramic Tiles. The others include: Corrugated Paper and Paper Board, Mosquito Coil and Insecticides, Soaps and Detergents, Motor Cars, Iron and Steel, Cement, Polymers (Plastics and Plastic Products), Fish, Sugar, Clothing and Apparel, Biscuits, Canned Tomatoes.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, Minority Leader

Dismissed Jasikan Judge drags CJ, Judicial Service, others to court over his removal

Former Jasikan Circuit Court Judge, Alfred Kwabena Asiedu, who was dismissed over misconduct, has taken legal action against the Judicial Service, Chief Justice Her Ladyship Justice Gertrude Torkornoo, and the Attorney General.

His dismissal was a result of accusations of abusing his power and engaging in sexual exploitation of a client seeking legal redress in his court.

Initially denying the allegations as products of the petitioner's imagination, Mr. Asiedu has now filed a petition with the court, seeking a declaration that his removal from office was 'unlawful.'

Among the reliefs he is seeking, Mr. Asiedu is requesting a declaration that his removal from office, as stated in the letter dated November 13, 2023, signed by the 2nd Respondent (Chief Justice), is

unlawful.

Furthermore, he is seeking declarations asserting that both the Disciplinary Committee and the Judicial Council exceeded their authority in finding him guilty of malicious prosecution.

Mr. Asiedu argues that these findings constitute a patent error of law on the record and should be quashed through the supervisory powers of the court.

Background

The controversy surrounding Judge Alfred Kwabena Asiedu initiated when Singari Diana Sadia filed a petition with the Chief Justice on January 16. The petition accused Judge Asiedu of various offenses, including abuse of power, sexual exploitation, malicious prosecution, and impropriety in a divorce case.

Following the submission of the petition, it was transferred to the

disciplinary committee of the Judiciary Service. The committee conducted an investigation and subsequently recommended the dismissal of Judge Asiedu.

In response to the disciplinary findings, a letter from Chief Justice Torkornoo was issued, instructing

Judge Asiedu to surrender all official properties. This included his official vehicle, dockets, and record books, to the Judicial Secretary.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Her Ladyship Justice Gertrude Torkornoo, Chief Justice, Ghana



General News

Lithium mining lease will be laid before Parliament for ratification - Lands Minister

Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Samuel Abu Jinapor, has indicated that his ministry will present Ghana's lithium mining lease with Barari DV Ghana Limited to Parliament for ratification.

He announced this initiative while addressing the press on Thursday, November 12, over the lithium mining lease signed on October 20, 2023.

According to Mr Jinapor, the mining lease itself compels ratification by Parliament, as failure of that will lead to the annulment of the lease.

"There has been an issue of ratification of the lease. It has been raised by several people. This has never been lost on us as this is expressly provided for the mining lease granted to Barari DV Ghana Limited. Specifically, Clause 1E of the lease states 'the mining lease is subject to ratification by Parliament in accordance with Article 2681 of the constitution and section 54 of Act 703'. 'Upon execution of this mining lease, the Minister shall cause the mining lease to be laid in Parliament for ratification.'"

By the very term of the lease,

therefore, ratification by Parliament is a condition precedent, he said, "as unratified mining lease confers no enforceable right, and the government has always been mindful of this decision."

"The mining lease in question will be laid before Parliament for ratification," he added.

Prior to this, former Chief Justice of Ghana, Sophia Akuffo, has stated that the recently signed lithium lease by the government is incomplete without parliamentary ratification.

From her legal perspective, this specific transaction should have been submitted to Parliament for approval.

"My legal view is that it is a transaction that requires ratification, it is not complete. This is a document, it is signed and sealed and delivered but it is a deal that has to be ratified by a named authority, that is the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana," she said while speaking as a Distinguished Scholar of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in Accra on Tuesday, November 28.

The Minerals Commission has reacted to criticism by some individuals over the lithium deal

between the government of Ghana and Barari DV Ghana Limited.

In a press statement on Monday, December 4, the Minerals Commission noted that such statements have been made because the "commentators have not read the agreement in its entirety."

The statement added that "as a result, many of concerns are based on assumptions that are inaccurate and assertions that are not supported by facts or any data."

The Minerals Commission asserts that the lithium deal between the government of Ghana and Barari DV Ghana Limited is in the best interest of the nation.

The mining lease, granted for 15 years to Barari, a subsidiary of Atlantic Lithium Limited, an Australian company listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) and the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) of the London Stock Exchange, covers an area of 42.63 km² in and around Ewoyaa in the Mfantseman Municipality of the Central Region.

The \$250-million project, located in Ewoyaa, Mfantseman

Municipality in the Central Region, is set to commence production by 2025.

The deal includes a 10% royalty and 13% free carried interest by the state, surpassing the existing 5% and 10%, respectively, for other mining agreements.

Barari DV Ghana Limited is also required to contribute 1% of its revenue to a community development fund for the upliftment of the mining area.

The Lands Minister notes that the lease demands the construction of a mining refinery in Ghana for the processing of lithium by the Australian company.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Samuel Abu Jinapor, Minister for Lands and Natural Resources

Akufo-Addo must be sued for failing to assent to 'Witchcraft' bill - Sam George tells Parliament

Member of Parliament for Ningo-Prampram, Samuel Nartey George, has proposed that Parliament take legal action against President Akufo-Addo for his refusal to sign the contentious Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023 into law.

President Akufo-Addo recently declined to give his assent to both the Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023 and the Wildlife Resources Management Bill 2023.

The Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, criticized the President on November 27, 2023, for not communicating his stance on the

Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023, which aims to criminalize attacks on suspected witches.

In response, the Presidency asserted that it did not receive the bills passed by Parliament until November 27, 2023, and dismissed any claims that it had decided against assenting to the Bills. But in a letter to Parliament on Monday, December 4, President Akufo-Addo communicated to the House that he was unable to assent to the bills until their associated constitutional matters were resolved.

Despite this explanation, Samuel Nartey George has suggested

pursuing legal action against the President for his refusal to sign the Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023 into law.

During an interaction with

the media on Wednesday, Sam George strongly asserted that the President is overstepping the authority of the Speaker of

Continued on page 8



Samuel Nartey George, MP for Ningo-Prampram

General News

Akufo-Addo must be sued for failing to assent to 'Witchcraft' bill - Sam George tells Parliament

Continued from page 7

Parliament, Alban Bagbin. The MP emphasized that the President possesses 'absolutely no powers' to obstruct the passage of the bill.

Expressing dissatisfaction, the MP criticized the President for disregarding the provisions of the 1992 constitution. He strongly recommended taking legal action against the President if he does not reverse his decision to withhold assent to the bill.

"Parliament must go to the Supreme Court to seek interpretations of Article 108. The president is not the ultimate in

this country when it comes to the law. The speaker has served notice that the president's actions are unconstitutional and are a breach of the Constitution."

He added, "I hold the view that the actions of the President are unconstitutional and even constitute grounds for impeachment. Because the President is flouting the Constitution in such a blatant manner. How can a witchcraft bill be interpreted by the President to be financial matters? And for those reasons, the President arrogates to himself powers that

he doesn't have. He's usurping the constitutional powers of the Speaker. We can't sit down and allow that. I believe that if the President does not rescind his decisions, Parliament must take him to court. We should take him to the Supreme Court for the court to rule. The President has absolutely no powers under Article 108."

The amended Criminal Offences Act 1960, Act 29, when passed into law will "prohibit the practice by any person as a witch doctor or a witchfinder, to proscribe the declaration, accusation, naming or labelling of another person as a

witch and for related matters."

In 2020, a tragic incident occurred in the Savannah region where 90-year-old Madam Akua Denteh was brutally lynched after being falsely accused of witchcraft.

The horrifying incident, during which she was slapped, kicked, and caned, was captured in a viral video.

The incident took place in Kafaba near Salaga, situated in the East Gonja Municipality of the Savannah Region.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Eastern Region: 12,600 slabs of compressed cannabis intercepted at Dodi

The Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC) successfully intercepted a truck laden with Twelve Thousand Six Hundred slabs of compressed cannabis at Dodi, near Akosombo in the Eastern Region on Saturday, December 2, 2023.

Acting on intelligence, the truck was discovered abandoned in a bush during an operation.

Upon searching the truck, One Hundred and Eighty (180) sacks of cannabis were found cleverly concealed in poultry feed.

Further examination of the 180 sacks led to the recovery of a total of 12,600 slabs of compressed cannabis. The seized truck, along with the drug exhibits, is currently under the custody of NACOC for ongoing investigations.

Notably, no suspect has been apprehended in connection with this significant drug seizure.

NACOC takes this opportunity to remind the public of the provisions outlined in sections 39 - 42 of the Narcotics Control Commission Act, 2020 (Act 1019), which strictly prohibits the cultivation, importation, exportation, unlawful possession or control, and any business related to narcotic plants.

It is crucial to highlight that

the special provision regarding cannabis, with not more than 0.3% THC content on a dry weight basis, is outlined in the Narcotics Control Commission (Amendment) Act,

2023.

However, this provision does not signify the legalisation of cannabis; rather, it specifies permissible uses for industrial purposes such

as obtaining fibre or seed, or for medicinal purposes.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



File Photo

General News

Govt to impose 5% VAT on buildings - Minority Leader

Minority Leader in Parliament, Dr Cassiel Ato Forson, has criticised the government for what he perceives as insensitivity towards the ordinary Ghanaian over its intention to implement a 5% Value Added Tax (VAT) on any building purchased.

Dr. Forson argued that the 2024 budget, which includes these proposed VAT policies, has further burdened citizens who are already dealing with a heavy tax load. He emphasised that these VAT proposals are currently awaiting

approval in Parliament.

The Minority Leader, who also represents the Ajumako Enyan Esiam constituency, made these remarks during the National Democratic Congress' (NDC) Moment of Truth press conference on Wednesday, December 6, 2023.

"He [Akufo-Addo] has also imposed a 5% VAT flat rate on residential and commercial real estate. Ladies and gentlemen, Ghanaians should get ready to pay 5% VAT anytime they buy a house

from an individual or a real estate company going forward.

"If this law goes through; the VAT before parliament goes through - if you intend to buy a house, get ready to put 5% aside for President Akufo Addo and Alhaji Bawumia. For every house you buy going forward, you will pay 5% VAT on the quantum of the amount that you are supposed to buy. So if it is GH¢1 million you are buying you will pay GH¢50,000 to President Akufo-Addo and Alhaji Bawumia," he said.

The Minority Leader further disclosed that Value Added Tax (VAT) is set to be imposed on various stationery items, including paper, pens, textbooks, and domestic airline services, among others.

This implies that individuals purchasing books or utilising domestic flights would incur additional charges due to the proposed VAT on such items and services.

Source: *The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*



Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, Minority Leader



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Business

E-levy should not apply to bank transfers linked to MoMo wallets - GRA

The Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) has restated its stance on Electronic Transaction Levy (E-Levy) charges, specifically addressing concerns related to transactions between bank accounts and mobile money wallets.

The GRA emphasised that transactions involving bank accounts directly linked to mobile money wallets should not incur any E-Levy charges.

This clarification was prompted by inquiries from users who sought clarity on recent deductions reported on social

media platforms.

In response, the GRA made it clear that any fees associated with these kinds of transactions are the result of charging entities' mistakes.

The user questioned "Are taxes imposed on the transfer of monies from bank accounts to linked momo numbers a directive from your office? @Ghana Revenue."

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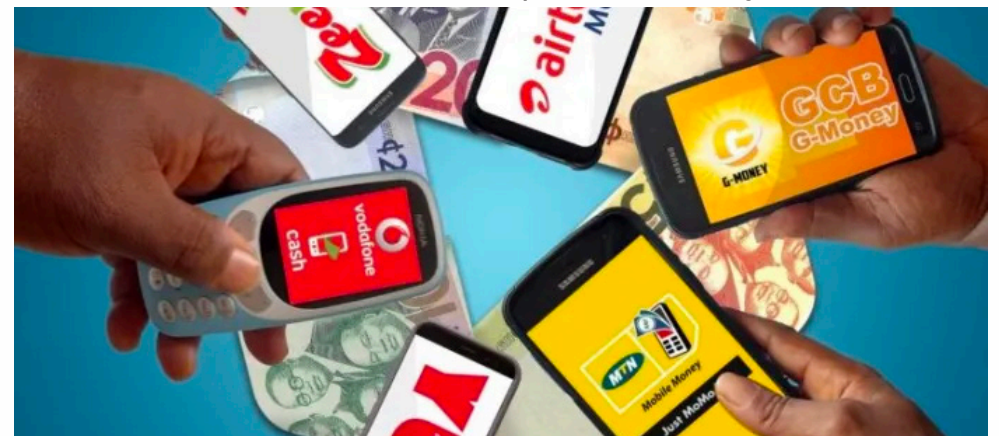
Since the laws pertaining to the

E-levy have not changed, the GRA emphasised that these charges are unlawful.

"No, please. It is an error on the part of the charging entities. The law has not changed. Transfers

between accounts owned by the same person should not attract the E-levy," the GRA said in its Twitter reply.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Amanda Cartey



File Photo

Give us any date for external debt restructure, we will take it - Finance Minister tells China, France

Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta, has expressed the country's openness to any new cut-off date proposed by external creditors for the restructuring of Ghana's external debt, especially with China.

He emphasised the importance of concluding the debt restructuring exercise to allow Ghana to access the \$600 million credit facility under the International Monetary Fund's second tranche bailout package.

China, a major creditor to Ghana, has suggested a March 2020 cut-off date for all loans given to Ghana, deviating from the initially agreed-upon date of December 2022, causing delays in Ghana's meeting with the IMF Board for the next tranche of \$600 million.

"The issue is for the membership of the Official Creditor Committee to get comfortable. We hope that by the end of next week, we will have what we need so that the Fund Board can sit", he said.

The Finance Minister highlighted that the involved parties are aiming for a level of debt restructuring that won't significantly impact their future operations.

"Everybody is looking at the comparability of treatment in there and China and France certainly are co-chairs, so they

have a good impact on what will happen, but we should be okay," he said.

Previously, Dr. Ato Forson, the Minority Leader, claimed that the negotiation had encountered challenges, and the upcoming \$600 million package is in a state of uncertainty.

"Mr. Speaker, it will interest you to know that there is a deadlock in the negotiation between Ghana and the International Official Creditors Committee (OCC) made

up of China and the Paris Club 50. There is a major disagreement on the cut-off point, regarding the external debt that must be excluded from the restructuring. Mr. Speaker, I do not need to sound the alarm that at this point, Ghana is between a rock and a hard place."

Prior to this, the Finance Minister expressed confidence that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) board would give approval for the second tranche of the

country's deal with the Fund by the year's end.

"My deep sense is that we will get whatever is appropriate for the Fund Board to be able to make their decision in November. I am confident about it. And yes, we did meet with the officials from Paris Club and there was pretty positive assurance", he said.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



Ken Ofori-Atta, Finance Minister

International

Tanzanians wonder where Vice-President Philip Mpango has gone

Some Tanzanians have expressed concern over the whereabouts of Vice-President Philip Mpango, who has not been seen in public for over a month.

He was due at a science conference on Wednesday in Arusha but was instead represented by a cabinet minister.

His disappearance from public view has sparked rumours about his health.

But Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa has warned against such speculation, saying the vice-president was out of the country for official duties.

This is not the first time there have been rumours about the state of the vice-president's health.

Before becoming vice-president, Mr Mpango, 66, had served as finance minister under the

previous President, John Magufuli, who died in office in March 2021.

A month earlier, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr Mpango appeared at a news conference in the capital, Dodoma, to deny a rumour that he, himself, had died. He coughed several times as he paid tribute to senior government officials who had passed away.

Under the country's constitution, if the president dies, resigns, is permanently incapacitated or is disqualified, the vice-president takes up the presidency for the rest of the term.

Mr Mpango was lastly seen in public on 31 October while representing President Samia Suluhu Hassan during a virtual meeting of leaders from the Southern African Development Community.

On Monday, the president had

to cut her trip short in Dubai to deal with deadly landslides in the northern region.

Some social media users have been expressing concerns about the uncharacteristic silence of Mr Mpango, who is yet to comment about the tragedy in Hanang region.

Others say they are worried about Mr Mpango's health.

Prime Minister Majaliwa,

however, said citizens should not be speculating about the vice-president's whereabouts.

"Ignore the crazy things on social media, Dr Philip Mpango is out of the country on official duties," Mr Majaliwa said on Saturday.

Mr Mpango's office did not immediately comment on the matter.

Source: BBC



Philip Mpango, Vice-President, Tanzania

Seychelles declares state of emergency after flood and explosion

Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan declared a state of emergency on Thursday after a blast at an explosives depot and heavy rains damaged an industrial zone and surrounding areas.

The blast shook the main island of Mahe as heavy rains triggered flooding which killed three people, the president's office said in a statement, calling for a minute of silence.

"Everyone is being asked to stay at home," it added. "All schools will be closed. Only workers in the essential services and persons travelling will be allowed free movement."

Footage broadcast on national television showed streets covered in deep mud and strewn with debris and uprooted trees.

The government's official Visit Seychelles account on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, said the international airport and ferries between its

islands remained operational for tourists.

The Seychelles, a major tourist destination, is made up of 115 islands and is the least populous country in Africa with about

100,000 people. It is off the eastern coast of Africa.

The floods are the latest in a series of climate shocks recorded this year in that part of the continent after a string of floods, landslides

and droughts across Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar, Somalia and Tanzania.

Source: News Agencies via Aljazeera



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