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# General News

## ‘Witchcraft bill’: You are choosing politics over protecting vulnerable women - Francis-Xavier tells Akufo-Addo

Member of Parliament for Madina, Francis-Xavier Sosu, who is also the primary advocate for the Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023, has voiced his dismay over President Akufo-Addo’s decision to withhold assent of the legislation.

Sosu argues that the President is choosing politics over prioritizing the well-being of vulnerable women.

“I think that he [President] is being misled or better still he is choosing politics over the protection of human rights. He is choosing politics over the protection of women’s rights. He is choosing politics over protecting vulnerable women in various witch camps probably dying on a daily basis,” he said.

Speaking to the media on Monday, December 18, 2023, Sosu shared his reservations following President Akufo-Addo’s decision to withhold assent to the bill, citing constitutional concerns related to Article 108.

The Madina MP expressed dissatisfaction with the President’s rationale, finding it unclear. He pointed out that in 2021, President Akufo-Addo had supported the bill and advocated for a bipartisan approach to its passage. Therefore, it is worrying that the President is now citing Article 108 as a basis for his refusal.

The Madina MP emphasized that all legal procedures were diligently followed, with the active involvement of the Attorney General. Consequently, he found it challenging to comprehend the President’s expressed concerns.

Mr Sosu said, “For me, for the President to choose petty partisanship over the protection of the greater good of our society, the human rights of our people. For me, it is quite sad.”

“You will recall that when this bill was sent to the president, I mean on the second of August, the president assented through the bill that abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes under

the Criminal Offences Act.”

“It was only when the other bills were presented that he refused to assent to the others and then decided to withdraw assent for the first one. So, the whole thing does not even make sense to me,” he lamented.

On December 4, President Akufo-Addo disclosed his inability to sign into law certain crucial bills passed by Parliament, citing specific constitutional concerns. Notably, among these bills are the Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023 and the Armed Forces

Amendment Bill 2023.

In July, Parliament approved the Armed Forces Bill, aiming to amend sections of Act 29 and the Armed Forces Act, 1962 (Act 105), with the intent of replacing the Death Penalty with life imprisonment.

The Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023 addresses various issues, including the prohibition of declaring, accusing, naming, or labelling an individual as a witch, among other related matters.

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



*Francis-Xavier Sosu, MP for Madina*

## 45 sacks of suspected marijuana intercepted by Ghana Navy at Agorkpo

The Ada Foah Detachment of the Riverine Command within the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) has intercepted an illicit operation involving the transportation of suspected marijuana parcels in the Agorkpo general area.

This intervention took place in the early hours of Saturday, December 16, 2023, between 3:00 am and 8:00 am, following intelligence gathered during night foot patrols conducted on Friday, December 15, 2023.

As per an official statement released on Monday, December 18, GAF disclosed that the Detachment strategically established an ambush at two locations starting from 3:00 am, anticipating the movement of canoes engaged in illegal activities.

At approximately 4:00 am, the first Ambush Team identified three canoes participating in illicit activities speeding past their location.

However, the suspects altered their anticipated course, prompting the first team of three personnel to pursue and intercept the third canoe.

Upon interception, the three suspects on the third canoe jumped into the river and successfully escaped after a scuffle with the naval personnel, abandoning the canoe and its contents.

The remaining two canoes fled towards the estuary and managed to evade capture during a subsequent chase by the main Ambush Team.

The Detachment seized 45 sacks

of suspected marijuana, pending official weighing and valuation.

The confiscated items have been

transported to the Naval Base at Tema for further investigation.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku*



*File Photo*

# General News

## SHS students achieve record WASSCE results in 2023

The provisional results for the 2023 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), released by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) on Monday, December 18, 2023, show that Ghanaian students have performed better than ever since the introduction of the Free SHS policy in September 2017.

The press release, dated December 18, 2023, and signed by John Kapi, WAEC's head of public affairs, reports that 448,674 candidates, comprising 212,453 males and 236,221 females from 975 schools, took part in the 2023 examination.

This figure reflects a 5.8% increase from the 2022 entry figure of 422,883. The results

for the "Ghana-only version" of the examination highlight the best performances in English, Integrated Science, and Social Studies from 2015 to 2023 and the third-best results in Mathematics over the same period.

According to WAEC's published data, more than 50% of Free SHS graduates achieved grades A1 to C6 in all core subjects in the years 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

The data further reveals that the percentages recorded for English Language (73.11%), Integrated Science (66.82%), and Social Studies (76.76%) in the 2023 examinations represent the highest performances on record since 2015.

The examination was not without irregularities, however. WAEC

in their statement noted that "following the completion of investigations into some cases of irregularity reported during the conduct of the examination, the 35th Meeting of the Ghana Examinations Committee, held on Wednesday, 13 December 2023 approved as follows:"

"First, cancellation of subject results of 3,647 candidates for bringing foreign material like prepared notes, textbooks, and printed material into the examination halls.

"Second, the cancellation of the entire results of 839 candidates for possession of mobile phones in the examination halls, and lastly, the withholding of subject results of 4,280 candidates and the entire results of 1,005 for various

suspected offences" the WAEC statement read.

"Some subject results of candidates from 235 schools have also been withheld for collusion and the use of artificial intelligence-generated answers. These cases are still under investigation. The withheld results of these candidates may be released or cancelled depending on the outcome of investigations" the statement further read.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey**



File Photo

## Next NDC government will abolish quota system in nursing training institutions - Mahama

The next NDC-led government will abolish the quota system of enrolling student nurses into Nursing Training Colleges in the country, Flagbearer of the National Democratic Congress, former President John Dramani Mahama has hinted.

The government will therefore invest in building more health facilities such as CHPS Compounds, new Polyclinics, Health Centres and Hospitals with the intention of providing more jobs for the nurses upon completion of their courses.

Former President Mahama said this when he addressed student nurses of the Tertiary Education Institutions Network (TEIN) branch at the Nursing and Midwifery Training College at Esiama in the Ellembelle District of the Western Region.

The visit formed part of a two-day Building Ghana Tour to elicit views of stakeholders to be incorporated into a new manifesto of the NDC.

The students who received

President Mahama, hoisted placards such as, "Mahama, You Deserve Our Votes In 2024", "The Youth of Ghana Support The-24-Hour Economy", "We Are Sorry for Choosing Allowances over Hospitals", "Graduate Nurses Are Crying", "Our Entire Educational System Is In Comatose" and "JM, We Love You".

He said it was against this backdrop that the erstwhile NDC government took the decision to replace the training allowance with the Students Loan Scheme being opposed by the opposition NPP at the time.

According to him, student nurses in second year have not received their allowances and appealed to President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and Dr Mahmoud Bawumia to pay the allowances to student nurses immediately.

Mr Mahama said the brain drain syndrome in the health sector had surged in recent times due to unemployment and promised to fix the economy by creating more jobs for the fruits and prosperity to be shared among all Ghanaians.

Mr. Mahama directed the Member of Parliament (MP) for Ellembelle, Mr Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah to provide the college with a brand-new water pump to replace the old one since pressure from the water from Esiama town to the college was low to increase volume of water from the town water system into the college.

The Member of Parliament for Ellembelle, Mr Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah said he would be in touch with the student nurses to address challenges they faced.

The Principal of the College, Mrs Cecilia Boame in a speech read on her health, said the school was in dire need of a new 60-seater bus to shuttle students outside the college for clinical services in the catchment area.

He said the current bus which was donated to the school by the late President John Evans Atta Mills was old and weak.

The SRC President of the college, Ms Humaizer Abubakar eulogized former President Mahama for the interventions and quick progress

in the health sector from 2012 to 2016.

She said student nurses were made to believe lies and vain promises only to vote him out in 2016.

She said the former President's decision to contest the seat again "is a testament of an enduring compassion to spearhead development of Ghana.

**Source: GNA**



John Dramani Mahama, NDC Flagbearer

# General News

## EC reschedules district-level elections in some areas in Ashanti, Eastern Regions

The Electoral Commission (EC) has postponed the district-level elections in some electoral areas in the Ashanti and Eastern regions.

The elections were scheduled for Tuesday, December 19, but the EC said in a press statement that they have been moved to Thursday, December 21, 2023.

The EC cited “a number of technical challenges” as the reason for its decision. Lower Manya in the Eastern Region is among the affected areas.

“We apologise for the inconvenience caused to residents of these electoral areas. We assure the residents of the affected areas that the district-level elections will be held on Thursday, the 21st of December, 2023,” the statement said.

In a related development, five individuals in the Duta Electoral Area of Ketu South have obtained an interim injunction, through an ex parte motion, to stop the EC

from conducting the district-level elections in the area on December 19, 2023.

The order, which is valid for ten days, restrains the EC, its assigns, and workmen from any involvement in the elections.

Meanwhile, the Director of Elections for the National

Democratic Congress (NDC), Dr Edward Omane Boamah, has criticised the EC for postponing local assembly elections in some areas on the day of the polls.

Dr Boamah urged the electoral management body not to repeat such actions during the 2024 polls.

In a post on X, formerly Twitter, Dr Boamah said, “The Electoral Commission of Ghana must learn lessons from this avoidable and unpardonable mistake. 2024 elections cannot be business as usual!”

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



File Photo

## Expired post pills, aphrodisiac, milk, others confiscated and destroyed by FDA

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) in the Western North Region has confiscated and destroyed unwholesome items from various shops across the nine districts in the region.

The FDA conducted a thorough inspection exercise to remove contaminated, expired, and unauthorised products from local markets.

Western North Regional Director of the FDA, Albert Ankomah, noted that the confiscated items weighed about three tonnes. The products included post pills, aphrodisiacs, milk, ‘ekikime’, herbal mixtures, biscuits, schnapps, and others.

The FDA burnt these products at the Sehwi Wiawso dumping site to prevent them from reaching consumers.

Albert Ankomah emphasised the importance of consumer

awareness and advised the public to be careful, especially during the festive season, by checking the food and drugs they buy.

Francis Kwasi Asuade, the Sehwi Wiawso Municipal Environmental Officer, praised the FDA’s efforts, saying that the inspection and

destruction exercise was a vital step to protect public health and well-being.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku*



File Photo

# General News

## New Force spokesperson Shalimar Abbiusi re-arrested, faces deportation

Spokesperson for the political movement #TheNewForce, Shalimar Abbiusi, has been re-arrested by the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) after being granted bail on a charge of obtaining a permit by false declaration.

A video on social media showed a clash between GIS officers and Shalimar's legal counsel during her arrest, which came after state prosecutors dropped their case against her.

It has also been reported that the GIS has revoked Shalimar Abbiusi's residency permit and plans to deport her to her home country, Belgium.

Ms Shalimar Abbiusi was picked up by the National Investigations Bureau (NIB) on Monday, December 4, 2023, for failing to prove her work permit and immigration documents as well

as her affiliation with The New Force.

According to a press statement by The New Force, dated December 7, the NIB has been questioning Shalimar Abbiusi about the movement and "wanting to know which people are behind it and if the people want to run for President."

She is said to have been denied access to legal representation and held beyond the legal 48-hour limit without formal charges.

"Further, despite the objections of Ms Abbiusi's lawyers, her apartment was broken into without a warrant and the place ransacked. Yet not a single element of incriminating evidence was found against her," the statement said.

TheNewForcesaysitis"concerned"

about the recent events, as having a political organisation is not a criminal offence.

"As such, 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 movement added.

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



*Shalimar Abbiusi, Spokesperson, New Force*

## Dormaaahene urges government to consider divergent views on Lithium Agreement

President of the Bono Regional House of Chiefs, Osagyefo Oseadeeyo Agyemang Badu II, has called on the government to carefully consider the opinions of stakeholders in the agreement between Government of Ghana and Barari DV Ghana Limited Lithium.

He asked government to suspend the agreement and conduct a thorough examination into the deal, highlighting the compelling arguments put forth by the Former Chief Justice Sophia Akuffo, Civil Society Organizations, and other concerned Ghanaians.

Osagyefo Agyemang Badu II emphasized that the various arguments indicated that all was not well with the exploitation of Lithium and other associated minerals in the Ewoyaa community of the Mfantseman Municipality of Ghana.

The Paramount Chief of Dormaa Traditional Area (Dormaaahene)

made the remarks in his address at the 2023 end-of-year meeting of the Bono Regional House of Chiefs in Sunyani.

He said his opinion of not been in support for the agreement was due to its failure to solely focus on lithium mining because the agreement was not specific but was open and allowed for the extraction of any other associated minerals found on the land.

Osagyefo Agyemang Badu II highlighted that similar agreements in the past, pertaining to resources like gold, had resulted in significant hardships for the country, as the country had not benefited adequately, leading to many young Ghanaians seeking better opportunities abroad.

Furthermore, he explained that Ghanaians were not opposed to mining, however, the country should receive at least a minimum of 50 percent share from the

agreement to help contribute to the national development.

Osagyefo Agyemang Badu II urged the government to carefully review the agreement and refrain from signing any agreement that might not serve the best interests of the

country.

He commended the chiefs and people of the area for their courage in standing firm to fight for the best interest of the people in the area and the country in general

**Source: GNA**



*Osagyefo Oseadeeyo Agyemang Baadu II, Dormaaahene*

# General News

## “Irregular, wrongful, and unconstitutional!” - Bagbin says as he rejects Akufo-Addo’s reasons for not signing three bills

Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, has responded to President Akufo-Addo’s letter justifying his refusal to assent to the Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023.

In the letter, the president cited a violation of Article 108 of the constitution and the potential financial burden on the state’s consolidated fund as reasons for his decision.

However, Bagbin, while reading excerpts of the letter to the House, criticized its content as “irregular, wrongful, and unconstitutional.”

“Vehemently, we disagree with the position taken by the president. The president has gotten it tragically wrong and I will submit in the form of a statement under Article 53 my position in this matter and allow members of the House to make comments so that we can take a clear position in this

matter.”

“And I will do so during the course of this week. The president has not been properly advised. The president has not been properly informed about the processes this bill has gone through. So I will submit a detailed write-up on it for members to make their comments but I am very clear that this message and the contents are irregular, wrongful and unconstitutional,” he added.

The Speaker asserted that the president lacks a comprehensive understanding of the bill and emphasized the necessity for him to thoroughly review it.

Bagbin pointed out that it is not within the president’s authority to determine the “constitutionality” of a bill that has been presented and considered by Parliament.

He underscored that the mandate to make such determinations rests solely with Parliament and

cannot be usurped by any external authority.

“The responsibility to decide whether a bill should come from a private member or not rests on the person presiding. The procedure in the act clearly states what the president is expected to do. It is not for the president to decide on the constitutionality or otherwise of a bill that has been presented and considered by parliament. This power of parliament will not be taken away by any exempt authority,” he said.

The Criminal Offences Amendment Bill 2023 which is sponsored by Francis Xavier Sosu addresses various issues, including the prohibition of declaring, accusing, naming, or labeling an individual as a witch, among other related matters.

Despite parliamentary approval, the President’s hesitance to sign these bills revolves around

constitutional considerations.

In July, Parliament approved the Armed Forces Bill, which aims to amend sections of Act 29 and the Armed Forces Act, 1962 (Act 105), with the intent of replacing the Death Penalty with life imprisonment.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku*



*Alban Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament*

## Akufo-Addo to launch assessment of Ghana’s anti-corruption plan

President Akufo-Addo will on Thursday, December 21, launch the assessment of Ghana’s inaugural National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP) at the Jubilee House in Accra.

The NACAP serves as Ghana’s comprehensive strategy to combat corruption and foster national development, featuring strategic action plans derived from nationwide consultations with stakeholders.

This initiative aligns with Ghana’s commitment to fulfill obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the 1992 Constitution, and the President’s dedication to anti-corruption efforts.

Notably, the NACAP stands out for its integration into National Development Planning, making its action plans an intrinsic component of the regular activities of Public Institutions, including Ministries, Departments, and

Agencies (MDAs).

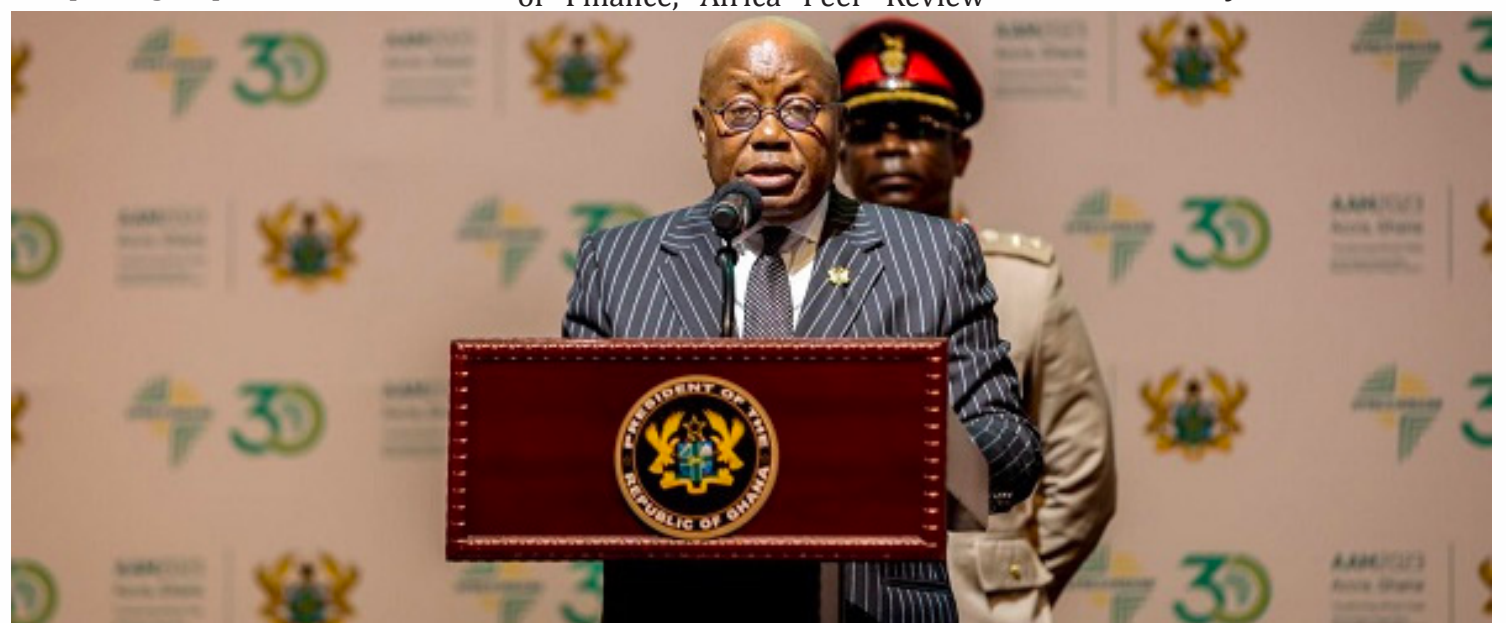
As the country nears the end of several years of successful NACAP implementation, it becomes imperative to evaluate the progress in the fight against corruption.

The formulation of NACAP was facilitated by a group of experts and anti-corruption practitioners constituted into a working group, comprising representatives from

the following institutions and organisations: Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Office of the President, Internal Audit Agency (IAA), Parliament of Ghana, Judicial Service of Ghana, Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice, National Development Planning Commission, Public Services Commission, Ministry of Finance, Africa Peer Review

Mechanism (APRM), Economic and Organized Crime Office, Ghana Integrity Initiative, Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition, Ghana Centre for Democratic Development, The Justice and Human Rights Institute, African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption, and Development Partners.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey*



*Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana*

# General News

## MPs outraged as govt drops cashew prices to GHC7 per kilo, call for 17% increase

A group of Members of Parliament (MPs) has urgently called on the government to reconsider the current pricing structure for cashew nuts, expressing concerns about its impact on the industry.

The spokesperson for the group, Frederick Yaw Ahenkwah, who is also the MP for Jaman North, argued that cashew farmers are experiencing financial losses under the current farm gate price of GHS7. He cited high inflation and production costs as contributing factors.

According to the MPs, the producer price for cashews has significantly dropped from the original GHS10 to GHS7 this year, negatively affecting the farmers' ability to sustain production.

"The Tree Crop Development Authority in 2022 set a price for cashews, starting with GHS10. The following year, they increased it, and now, this is the third year. In the first two years, the farmers saw an appreciable increase in the price. So, we thought that as the years advanced, the government would continue to set a good price for the farmers. But, to our surprise, the price, which was GHS8.50 last year, has been reduced to GHS7 this particular year, and we know that there is inflation in the system," explained Frederick Yaw Ahenkwah.

"Prices of farm inputs are high; fuel and other things are skyrocketing. So, these factors go into production. They are all factors of production. By the end of the day, if these farmers bear these high prices and are then unable to pay for the costs they have incurred, I think they are virtually running at a loss... So, we are appealing to the government to, as a matter of urgency, try and review the price. At least GHS9 or GHS10 would make them happy with it," he added.

The MP for Jaman North emphasized the need for a price increase to at least GHS9 or GHS10 per unit.

According to them, the farmers have expressed their dissatisfaction

with the current pricing structure, hence the urgent need to resolve the issue.

"We need it very important to draw the attention of the government although the price regime has come to stay. But we are appealing to the government as a matter of urgency to try and review the price, at least GHS9 OR GHS10 for the farmers. They would be happy with it. As we speak to you, since the price came out we have been receiving a lot of calls from our constituents, and we cannot sit down unconcerned. It is our mandate to draw the government's attention to what is happening there."

According to the farmers, the existing price regime, although established, is causing tension and agitation within the industry.

They argue that the government's attention is crucial at this point, especially considering the recent approval of a loan aimed at boosting the production of cashew and other crops.

The MPs stressed that their constituents have been reaching out, expressing their discontent with the current prices.

"There's tension there, there's agitation. Just last week a loan was approved here to boost the production of cashew and other crops. If the government has this good intention to expand the production of cashew and the very industry players who will help the industry to expand are treated this way, do you think they will

have the energy to continue the production?" they added.

They highlighted the importance of addressing this issue promptly to ensure the sustainability of cashew production.

They added that the tension within the industry poses a threat to the government's goal of expanding cashew production, as industry players may lose the motivation to contribute to the sector's growth.

As discussions surrounding the cashew industry continue, farmers await government intervention to review and potentially adjust the pricing structure, aiming for a resolution that satisfies both producers and industry sustainability goals.

The government declared a reduction in cashew prices for the upcoming 2024 crop season, effective from January 2024.

According to the Chief Executive Officer of the Tree Crop Development Authority, Hon. William Agyapong Quaitoo, the new minimum price for a kilogram of cashew will be GHC7, down from the initial price of GHC8.5.

Despite the calculated figure being GHC6.76 per kilo using the current formula, the government has chosen to round it up to GHC7.

The announcement was made during a meeting with cashew farmers and buyers in Kintampo, Bono East region, on Friday, December 16, 2023.

The primary reason cited for the

reduction is the decline in the quality of Ghanaian cashew in the international market, causing Ghana to fall from the second position to the third in West Africa. This decline in quality has resulted in a decrease in the price per ton from USD 1,080 to USD 880.

Additionally, the value of the Ghanaian currency plays a role in the downward revision of the cashew price.

However, Hon. Quaitoo mentioned that the announced figure is subject to review after two months if the quality of Ghanaian cashew improves. Steps are being taken, including training farmers and stakeholders and regulating traders in the cashew industry, to enhance quality.

Ghana is a major exporter of cashew in West Africa, expecting to export about 350,000 metric tons of Raw Cashew Nut (RCN) in 2024. Cashew farmers, particularly in the top-producing regions of Bono, Ahafo, Bono East, and Savana, have consistently expressed concerns about losses due to low market prices after harvest.

In recent years, the government has regularly announced minimum cashew prices, with the 2023 crop season's GHC8.50 being the highest. Farmers, anticipating an increase for the 2024 season, appeared visibly disappointed with the announced GHC7 per kilogram.

**Source: The Independent Ghana | Phoebe Martekie Doku**



File Photo

# General News

## EC scraps usage of indelible ink in elections

The Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana has declared that indelible ink will no longer be used in elections held in the country be it on a national or district level.

Indelible ink, a semi-permanent dye applied to voters' fingerprints, is traditionally used to indicate that a person has cast their vote and to prevent double voting.

Chairperson of the EC, Jean Mensa, announced this decision at a press conference preceding the district-level election scheduled for December 19.

The omission of indelible ink, according to the Commission, forms part of efforts to enhance the electoral process and establish a more robust identification

system.

"The issue of indelible ink, the question is when we were not doing biometric we were basically using your face, your card. We look at your face and we say this picture looks like you."

"The biometric technology makes it difficult for a person who has been verified and cast their vote to come a second time. So, there is no need for indelible ink. Once you have been verified, it goes into the system and you cannot come back a second time," she said.

Jean Mensa stated that the biometric identification system in place will identify and flag anyone attempting multiple registrations. This, she emphasized, ensures that individuals who have already

been verified and cast their ballots cannot vote again.

The EC Chairperson expressed confidence in the effectiveness of the new system and issued a challenge, daring anyone to attempt voting twice to test the system's capability.

"Once you have been verified, it goes into the system and you

cannot come back a second time. You can try it, if you wish at this election. Of course, it will be deemed as an electoral offence. Because of biometric technology your facial features are recognised, or your fingerprint is recognised. You cannot go a second time," she added.

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



File Photo

## Cold weather affects BVD machine operation in Sissala East

Voting in the ongoing District Level Elections delayed in most centers in the Sissala East constituency, due to the cold weather conditions adversely affecting the operation of the BVD machines in the area.

Mr Moro Baba, the Deputy Returning Officer of the Electoral Commission in the Sissala East, explained that the cold weather could cause the BVD machines to lose their sensitivity, making them ineffective to capture fingerprints.

He therefore advised Electoral Commission (EC) officials at the various polling stations to make water available for voters to dip their fingers or wash their hands, to make their fingers soft for the BVD to capture their fingerprints.

As at 7:13 GMT when the Ghana News Agency (GNA) team visited the Falahia Basic School polling centre, the exercise was yet to start and when they finally did, the Biometric Verification Device (BVD) had challenges verifying the voters.

Mr Musah Moro, the Returning Officer at the polling centre, said the polling station had a total

register of 598 eligible voters, and by 7:15, no one had voted.

At the TB GPRTU, Mr Lamin Abdullah, the Returning Officer said by 7:05 the polling station had been set up and by 7:30 am only two people out of the 647 registered voters on the register had voted due to the slow response from the BVD machines.

Mr Hussein Eliasu, the Sissala East Municipal Director of the

NCCE who also monitored the exercise told the GNA that the slow operation of the BVD was worrying and expressed hope that it might improve if the weather conditions improved within the day.

Mr Hussein said some of the traders who could not wait left the queues for their workplaces, and expressed fears that it might affect the voter turnout.

At the Court House one polling centre, Mr Kande Jabreel, the Returning Officer said voting started on time and that as at 7:55 AM, 14 people had voted out of the 748 on the roll despite the initial challenges with the BVD.

There were agents for some of the contestants in the three polling stations visited.

**Source: GNA**



File Photo



# General News

## “I don’t hate NPP”, I just think of Ghana first - Goaso Chief

**P**aramount Chief of Goaso Traditional Council in the Ahafo Region, Nana Kwasi Bosomprah, has clarified that his criticism of the government does not indicate a dislike for the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

He made this statement during a visit by the Asunafo North MP and Deputy Sports Minister, Evans Opoku Bobie, along with party executives and sports journalists, who informed him about the construction of an Astroturf at Goaso and introduced the contractor.

Nana Kwasi Bosomprah explained that his critiques are aimed at holding duty-bearers accountable for the pace of development in his community, emphasizing that his intention is not to express hatred towards the NPP.

“I do not hate the government. You know what I am saying is the truth and when I’m speaking the truth I do not fear anyone except God. Let us think of Ghana first. Everyone looking at me today can see how happy I am because my expectations have been met. I have the park I wanted,” he said.

Nana Kwasi Bosomprah urged other traditional leaders to advocate for the development of their communities without aligning themselves with any specific political party.

During a visit by the Asunafo North MP and Deputy Sports Minister, Evans Opoku Bobie, the completion of the Astroturf project was discussed. Bobie assured that the funds for the project are secure, and there will be no delays in its completion.

The Deputy Sports Minister emphasized that the Astroturf,

expected to be finished within six months, will help unearth football talents in the Ahafo Region. He expressed gratitude to the Akufo-Addo-led government for its support in the project.

“There is enough money to get the Astroturf completed early. We had only two Astroturf in Ghana before the current government. But today we have 153 turfs. The president has helped the sports infrastructure department which is helping young ones to develop their talents.”

**Source:** *The Independent Ghana*



Nana Kwasi Bosomprah, Paramount Chief, Goaso Traditional Council



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# Business

## Prices of petrol, diesel to fall by about 4% this week - IES

The Institute for Energy Securities (IES) has projected a slight decrease in the prices of petrol and diesel, which has attributed to a decline in the prices of finished petroleum products on the global market.

On the other hand, the cost of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) might experience an upward trend due to a combination of an increased product price and the depreciation of the local currency. "In the wake of the price falls recorded for liquid fuels: gasoline (2.84%), and gasoil (4.84%) on the international market, it is expected that the prices of the two commodities will fall on the domestic fuel market. In the final two weeks in December 2023, the

price of liquid fuels on the local market are likely to drop marginally given that net price reductions recorded on international fuels market. However LPG could see its price go up following an increased product price coupled with a depreciated local currency".

"Specifically, liquid fuels price could go down between 2%-4% respectively, whereas LPG price is expected to go up by about 5%", it added.

As of December 11, 2023, the Global Standard & Poor (S&P) Platts reported closing prices for refined petroleum products on the world fuel market. The recorded prices per metric tonne were \$767.20 for gasoline (petrol), \$810.70 for gasoil (diesel), and \$573.20 for Liquefied Petroleum

Gas.

Upon conducting a comparative analysis of the refined petroleum price data, it was observed that the prices of petrol and diesel experienced a decrease of \$22.55 and \$39.30 per metric tonne, representing a 2.80% and 4.84% dip in prices, respectively. In contrast, Liquefied Petroleum Gas traded at \$573.30, indicating an increase of \$50.55 per metric tonne, reflecting a 9.71% rise in price.

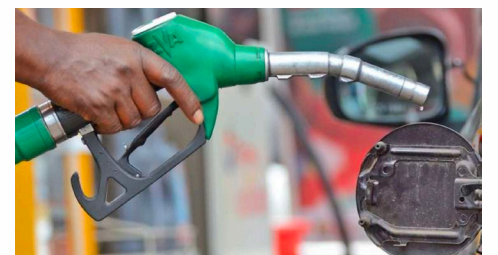
During the initial pricing-window of December 2023, the fuel prices in the local market exhibited stability across all petroleum products.

All Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) monitored in the first two weeks of December 2023 chose to

maintain the selling prices of both petrol and diesel, aligning them with the previous closing prices from the second pricing-window. Similarly, the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) remained consistent with the rates observed in the November second pricing window.

Specifically, petrol was retailed at ₵12.21, diesel at ₵13.10, and LPG at ₵13 per kilogramme during this period.

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



File Photo

## World Bank reports growth in remittance flows in 2023

The World Bank's recently released Migration and Development Brief, has highlighted concerns about the potential decline in real income for migrants in 2024 amid global inflation and low growth prospects.

Remittances to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) experienced an estimated growth of 3.8% in 2023, a moderation from the high gains of the previous two years.

In 2023, remittance flows to LMICs reached an estimated US\$669 billion, supported by resilient labor markets in advanced economies and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, enabling migrants to send money home.

Remittance inflows grew for Latin America and the Caribbean (8%), South Asia (7.2%), East Asia and the Pacific (3%), and sub-Saharan Africa (1.9%). However, flows to the Middle East and North Africa fell for the second year, declining by 5.3%, mainly due to a sharp drop in flows to Egypt. Remittances to Europe and Central Asia also decreased by 1.4% after a gain of more than 18% in 2022.

The United States remained the largest source of remittances, with the top five recipient countries being India (\$125 billion), Mexico

(\$67 billion), China (\$50 billion), the Philippines (\$40 billion), and Egypt (\$24 billion).

Economies where remittance inflows represent substantial shares of GDP include Tajikistan (48%), Tonga (41%), Samoa (32%), Lebanon (28%), and Nicaragua (27%), emphasizing the importance of remittances for funding current account and fiscal shortfalls.

The trajectory of weaker global economic activity is expected to result in a further softening of remittance growth to LMICs, projected at 3.1% in 2024. Factors contributing to this moderated forecast include slowing economic growth and the prospect of weaker job markets in several high-income countries. Additional downside risks include volatile oil prices, currency exchange rates, and a deeper-than-expected economic downturn in high-income countries.

"During crises, migrants have weathered risks and shown resilience to support families back home. But high inflation and subdued global growth is affecting how much money they can send," said Iffath Sharif, global director of the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice at the World Bank. "Labor markets and

social protection policies in host countries should be inclusive of migrants, whose remittances serve as a vital lifeline for developing countries."

As per the Remittances Prices Worldwide Database from the World Bank, remittance costs remain consistently high, averaging 6.2% to send US\$200 in the second quarter of 2023. In comparison to the previous year, sending money to all regions has become more expensive, with the Middle East and North Africa being the only exception.

Banks continue to be the most expensive channel for sending remittances, with an average cost of 12.1%, followed by post offices (7%), money transfer operators (5.3%), and mobile operators (4.1%).

"Remittances are one of the few sources of private external finance that are expected to continue to grow in the coming decade. They must be leveraged for private capital mobilization to support development finance, especially via diaspora bonds," said Dilip Ratha, lead economist and lead author of the report.

"Remittance flows to developing countries have surpassed the sum of foreign direct investment and official development assistance

in recent years, and the gap is increasing."

A dedicated segment of the report explores the potential of mobilizing diaspora finances for development and fortifying a country's debt position. Diaspora bonds offer a structured approach to directly access diaspora savings held in foreign destinations. Many nations have provisions for nonresident deposits aimed at attracting diaspora savings.

However, in contrast to diaspora bonds, these savings often exhibit short-term and volatile characteristics. Leveraging future remittance inflows as collateral presents an opportunity to reduce the costs of international borrowing for developing countries.

Given their substantial size compared to other foreign exchange sources, counter-cyclical nature, and indirect contribution to public finances, remittances can play a crucial role in enhancing a country's sovereign ratings and its capacity to meet debt obligations.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey**



World Bank Building

# International

## Putin to run as independent candidate for new presidential term - senior politicians

Vladimir Putin will run for president again as an independent candidate with a wide support base but not on a party ticket, Russian news agencies reported on Saturday, citing his supporters.

An initiative group made up of over 700 politicians and figures from the sporting and cultural worlds met on Saturday in Moscow and unanimously endorsed Putin's nomination as an independent candidate, Russian news agencies said.

Putin, who has been in power as either president or prime minister for more than two decades, has announced he will seek another six-year term in March next year in an election he is comfortably

expected to win.

Putin will not run as a candidate for the ruling United Russia (UR) party even though he has its complete support but as an independent candidate, Andrei Turchak, a senior UR party official, was cited as saying by the RIA news agency.

"More than 3.5 million party members and supporters will actively take part in the election campaign," RIA quoted Turchak as saying, noting that Putin had been one of the founders of United Russia.

Sergei Mironov, a senior politician from the Just Russia party who supports Putin, was also quoted by RIA as saying Putin would run as an independent and that

signatures would be gathered in his support.

For Putin, 71, the election is a formality: with the support of the state, the state-run media and almost no mainstream public dissent, he is certain to win.

Supporters of Putin say he has restored order, national pride, and some of the clout Russia lost during the chaos of the Soviet collapse and that his war in

Ukraine - something Putin calls a "special military operation" - is justified.

A years-long crackdown on opponents and critics bolstered by sweeping new laws on "fake news" and "discrediting the army" has seen critics and opponents of the war handed long jail terms or flee abroad as the room for dissent has steadily shrunk.

**Source: Reuters**



Vladimir Putin, President of Russia

## Gansu earthquake: Over 120 killed in China's deadliest quake in years

At least 127 people have been killed in north-west China in the country's deadliest earthquake for years.

The 6.2 magnitude quake hit mountainous Gansu province around midnight on Monday (16:00 GMT), also shaking neighbouring Qinghai.

Fatalities may rise, with more than 700 reported injured in icy conditions.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered thousands of rescue crew to the region, among the poorest and most diverse in China.

The earthquake is the country's deadliest since 2014, when more than 600 people were killed by a quake in south-western Yunnan province.

On Tuesday, footage shown on state TV and social media networks showed entire villages split by the quake, as well as collapsed buildings and houses.

Residents who fled their homes were also shown huddling over makeshift fires at hastily erected evacuation camps. Temperatures hit -13C (8.7F) on Tuesday, Chinese

media reported.

Survivors said the tremors had felt like "being tossed by surging waves" and recalled rushing out of their apartments.

"I woke my family up and we rushed down all 16 floors in one breath," said one man named Mr Qin by Chinese outlets.

Local officials in Jishishan county, the worst-hit in Gansu province, said more than 5,000 buildings in the area had been damaged. Many other buildings in the province have been hit by mudslides triggered by the quake, while dozens of roads have been damaged by landslides.

Chinese media quoted a director of the Gansu rescue team, who attributed the widescale damage to poor building quality in the villages - many homes being old and made of clay.

Gansu lies between the Tibetan and Loess plateaus and borders Mongolia. The remote region is one of China's poorest and most ethnically diverse.

The epicentre of the quake was in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture,

home to many Chinese Muslim groups, including the Hui, Bonan, Dongxiang and Salar people.

Chinese authorities said the quake measured 6.2 on the Richter scale, while the US Geological Survey (USGS) recorded a magnitude of 5.9 and depth of 10km (6 miles). About 10 aftershocks have taken place, local authorities reported.

On Tuesday, Xinjiang, the province west of Gansu, also recorded a 5.5 magnitude quake - but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

Across the region, power and water supplies have been disrupted, hindering rescue efforts.

Officials say they have limited time left to rescue people in the sub-zero conditions.

"It is too cold to bear... it's -15C [here]," Wang Yi, chief commander of the Blue Sky Rescue Team, told the BBC. Blue Sky is China's largest non-governmental humanitarian organisation, with more than 30,000 volunteers across the country.

Mr Wang said he expected the number of casualties to climb. "We now need to dig deeper [into

the rubble]. But there are no big buildings in the area. So it will rise, but it won't be much," he said.

President Xi has said "all efforts should be made to carry out search and rescue, treat the injured in a timely manner, and minimise casualties".

China sits in a region where a number of tectonic plates - notably the Eurasian, Indian and Pacific plates - meet. It is particularly prone to earthquakes.

An earthquake in Yushu in Qinghai province, which is next to Gansu, claimed almost 2,700 lives in 2010.

China's most devastating earthquake in recent decades was in the south-western province of Sichuan in 2008 when 87,000 people were killed.

**Source: BBC**



File Photo

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