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General News

I will increase Accra's water supply if elected President - Mahama

National Democratic Congress (NDC) flagbearer John Dramani Mahama has laid out a comprehensive strategy to address the water scarcity issue in Accra, citing the city's population growth as a contributing factor.

Emphasising the necessity of proactive measures, Mr Mahama highlighted the impact of Accra's rapid urbanisation on water resources.

While acknowledging previous advancements in water capacity during his and Professor Mills' tenures, he expressed concern about the stagnation in expansion efforts in recent years.

"We also want to expand water supply to Accra. Accra is growing very fast. Recently, the Ghana Water Company complained that they can't keep up with the supply of water because of the fast expansion of water. What you do is you plan ahead, and that is what we did.

"Between Professor Mills' time and my time, we added 40 million gallons of water to Accra's water supply. In the last eight years, there has not been a single drop expansion in Accra's water supply. So why do

you expect that the water will be enough?" he quizzed.

Mr Mahama, during his 'Building Ghana Tour' in the Greater Accra Region, pledged to prioritise the expansion of water supply upon assuming office, citing the imperative

need to plan ahead for the city's continued growth.

"This is a city that is growing. And so after we added 40 million gallons, at least in eight years, you should have added another 20 million gallons. We have started planning

ahead already that when we come into office, we are going to increase the water supply to Accra," John Mahama stated.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



John Dramani Mahama, NDC flagbearer

KATH to suspend new admissions as doctors strike today over accommodation problems

Doctors at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) and other medical workers will today lay down their tools to search for new accommodation following the alleged takeover of their current residences by private developers.

The decision was made public in a statement following an emergency meeting on Tuesday, where the doctors unanimously agreed to strike in support of 20 of their colleagues who have received eviction notice.

The Ghana Medical Association has endorsed the strike, which will only impact new admissions, as all

doctors have agreed to comply with the Association's directive.

This means that patients who would have been admitted for treatment or care at KATH may need to seek medical attention elsewhere or face delays in receiving care.

The medical workers, particularly those affiliated with the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, claim they have been given a week's ultimatum by the Ashanti Regional Coordinating Council to vacate their existing residences. They allege that their bungalows have been sold to private developers.

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Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH)



General News

KATH doctors threaten to leave post over accommodation problems

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Ashanti Regional President of the Ghana Medical Association, Dr. Paa Kwasi Baidoo, expressed dismay at the sudden displacement of hospital staff from their homes, highlighting the agreement made with Manhyia Palace for new accommodations before the handover of the land.

However, this agreement, he said, has allegedly been disregarded.

“You will notice that a lot of our staff live 15 to 20 minutes away from the hospital and all of a sudden, people will come and ask you to move from your place because it has been sold

to them and we took that issue up and we met with Manhyia on it and it was agreed that a new place be prepared to move us there before you can take possession of the land, they have disregarded that with impunity and so we are meeting this morning.

“We will all leave the hospital to go and look for accommodation because we don't have a place to sleep.”

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

Absence of fire tenders in Weija, Kasoa a threat to public safety - GNFS

The Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) has voiced concern regarding the absence of fire tenders in Weija and Kasoa.

The Fire Service warns that the lack of fire tenders in these areas could present significant challenges during fire outbreaks, potentially endangering lives and property.

Public Relations Officer at the Ghana National Fire Service, ADO1 Alex King Nartey, has emphasized the urgent need for government

intervention to rectify this issue.

He underscored the vital necessity of having fire tenders accessible in Weija and Kasoa, labeling the current situation as a potential hazard to national safety.

“In Kasoa and Weija for instance, there is no fire tender there because all the fire tenders are out of commission. So once there is a fire at Kasoa, the car comes either from Budumburam or Anya Market. And they are sitting on a time bomb as a

nation.

“So we would ask that attention should be placed on that. And in a big area like East Legon, Adjiringanor, East Legon Hills, there is no single fire station there. So when there's a fire, their vans move from the University of Ghana or Madina to go to fight the fire there.”

In October 2023, the Ghana National Fire Service in the Ashanti Region also noted that it is challenged in its swift response to distress calls due

to malfunctioning and worn out fire tenders.

The lifespan of a fire tender is between 5 and 7 years, but most tenders at fire stations in the region have exceeded their lifespan, making them unreliable.

Regional Public Relations Officer, DO III Peter Addai said occasionally, the vehicles break down in the middle of emergency calls.

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



File phot

General News

NDC to use drones for December polls surveillance

The Greater Accra Regional Chairman of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Emmanuel Nii Ashie Moore, has revealed a strategic initiative involving the use of drones to monitor the upcoming December general elections in the region.

The primary focus, he said, is to secure the party's over two million votes and enhance surveillance to proactively address any potential irregularities.

With the NDC setting a targeted goal of securing a significant number of votes in the region, Ashie Moore emphasized the critical nature of this effort in influencing the election's outcome.

Speaking to the media, he stated that plans are already underway, including the training of personnel designated to operate the drones.

Addressing supporters, Ashie Moore stated, "Next week, we are going to train constituency executives on how to use drones to monitor what happens during the elections."

While specific deployment details remain undisclosed, Mr Moore reiterated the party's unwavering commitment to securing all necessary resources for a smooth electoral process.

Meanwhile, the NDC's presidential candidate, John Dramani Mahama, has echoed the call for vigilance during the polls, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive coverage and eagle-eyed observation at every polling station, particularly in Greater Accra.

During his 'Building Ghana Tour' in Accra, Mahama attributed the NDC's

loss in the 2020 elections to various irregularities.

He urged executives to carefully select capable agents to represent the party during the polls.

"One of the key aspects of this election will be vigilance. We can conduct extensive campaigns, but without vigilance on the day and

comprehensive coverage of every polling station with eagle eyes, our objectives may not be achieved. Therefore, especially in Greater Accra, we urge you to have the best party agents covering your polling stations," he added.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



File photo



Ghana gov't in talks with Benin, Gambia for free roaming mobile services

The Ghana government, in collaboration with the National Communications Authority (NCA), is currently engaged in discussions with The Gambia and Benin to introduce complementary mobile roaming services for their citizens.

The initiative aims to eliminate additional charges for data and other mobile services when Ghanaian individuals, such as businessmen, women, tourists, or traders, travel to these countries.

Vice President Dr. Mahmud Bawumia announced this development at a platinum night event organized

to welcome telecommunications service provider Telecel to Ghana.

He emphasized that the successful implementation of this initiative would significantly enhance business interactions between the involved nations.

"Government has been able to reach an agreement with neighboring Togo to roll out free roaming services on all networks in both countries. And at the moment, the National Communications Authority is in the process of signing a similar agreement with Benin and The

- continued on page 5



Dr. Mahmud Bawumia, Vice President of Ghana



General News

Ghana gov't in talks with Benin, Gambia for free roaming mobile services

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Gambia so citizens can connect easily when they are in each other's territory", Dr. Bawumia stated.

The effort is part of a broader ECOWAS initiative focused on digitally connecting member countries seamlessly.

During the event, Dr. Bawumia revealed that an agreement had already been reached with neighboring Togo to provide free

roaming services on all networks in both countries.

The National Communications Authority is now in the process of finalizing similar agreements with Benin and The Gambia.

The Vice President urged Telecel to prioritize affordable and high-quality services, addressing ongoing challenges with voice quality that some users still face.

Patricia Obo-Nai, CEO of Telecel Ghana, assured stakeholders that the acquisition of Vodafone has been a strategic move to create a competitive market for Ghanaian consumers.

She pledged significant investments in digital services, including financial technology and data services.

The platinum night event served as a platform for Telecel to engage

with industry stakeholders and policymakers regarding its planned service rollout.

Despite Vodafone's exit from the Ghanaian market, the government of Ghana maintains a 30% stake in the company.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay

Tamale residents to take turns in water supply - GWCL

The Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) has disclosed that the northern regional capital, Tamale, is experiencing a water supply capacity exceeding its limits.

This has prompted the consideration of implementing a systematic rationing approach to cope with the heightened demand for water.

Speaking to the media, the Managing Director of GWCL, Dr. Clifford A. Braimah, stated that Tamale residents will have access to water at least once a week.

He attributed the issue to disruptions caused by the construction of urban roads.

During a recent visit to the Northern and Savannah regions, Dr. Braimah emphasized the adverse impact of urban road construction on pipelines, exacerbating challenges in water supply.

He advocated for a re-engineering approach to effectively address these issues.

Dr. Braimah stressed the need to find solutions to challenges in water supply, including those arising from the activities of external agencies and power outages from the Northern Electricity Distribution Company (NEDCO).

"We depend on NEDCO 100% for production or for us to power their machines. At any time NEDCO power, flat twist, our systems go off. So you could have your systems working properly, because of inadequate power you are unable to deliver.

"However, we have our challenges

because Tamale has outgrown the capacity that we now have. So, all we can do is to have a systematic rationing process or demand management programme so that at least everybody in Tamale will have water at least once a week," he added.

Dr. Braimah called for citizens' collaboration in identifying individuals with inland pumps in their residences.

He highlighted the company's dependency on NEDCO for 100%

of production or powering their machines, pointing out that any power outage from NEDCO affects their systems.

He expressed the company's commitment to addressing the challenges and sought support from the Regional Security Committee to mitigate issues caused by external agencies' activities.

"We are here to look at the challenges that are confronting our people regarding the supply of water and whatever interventions that we can

put in immediately to resolve or to minimize those challenges.

"That's why we are here. We were with us this morning at RCC when we spoke to the Minister about the support we need from the Regional Security Committee, because there are some of the challenges, for example in Tamale, that are a result of activities of agencies and not Ghana Water Company," he added.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Dr. Clifford A. Braimah, Managing Director of GWCL

General News

NDC to unveil manifesto for 2024 election before mid-year

Presidential Candidate for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Mahama, has announced plans to unveil the party's manifesto for the 2024 general elections before the middle of the year.

The manifesto launch will showcase key policies, including the establishment of a 24-hour economy, the discontinuation of ex-gratia payments, and the deployment of nurses abroad to address unemployment among healthcare professionals.

Speaking during his 'Building Ghana Tour' in Accra on Monday, March 11, Mr Mahama expressed confidence in the manifesto's ability to drive socioeconomic progress. He emphasized the importance of

engaging stakeholders in discussions to refine the party's objectives.

"Once we have done that fleshing out, and we'll finish the 'Building Ghana Tour', we're going to put all the points together, and we are hoping that before the middle of the year, we will be able to launch the manifesto and after that, I will launch the campaign officially...and we're going to go all out.

"We're going to go door to door. We are going to go from kitchen to kitchen," he added.

Following the manifesto launch, the NDC will formally commence its campaign to garner support for its vision.

Mr Mahama outlined the party's

outreach strategy, highlighting the significance of community engagement in effectively communicating their agenda.

One of the main policies the NDC flagbearer hopes to implement when

given the nod is the 24-hour economy which would see businesses operate around the clock, 24 hours a day.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



John Dramani Mahama, Presidential Candidate for the NDC

IMANI, Prof Aning sue AG over growing appointments of heads of uniformed security services

IMANI Centre for Policy and Education has taken legal action against the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice over concerns about the appointments of heads of various uniformed security agencies to the Supreme Court.

Their concern stems from a pattern where incoming governments force the termination of these heads' appointments, sometimes before they reach the statutory retirement age.

Director of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Professor Kwesi Aning, in partnership with the plaintiffs, has filed a lawsuit requesting the Supreme Court to declare that, according to Articles 200, 202(1), 202(2), 202(3), 205, 207(1), 207(2), 207(3), 190(1), 191, 196, 199, and 269 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the President does not have the authority to remove heads of these agencies unless there is proven misconduct or misbehaviour.

These offices included those of the Chief Fire Officer of the Fire Service,

Inspector General of Police, Director General of the Prisons Service and Comptroller General of Immigration Service.

Again, the two are seeking a declaration that ..."The President of the Republic of Ghana, upon assumption of office, does not have the power to make a fresh appointment to the office of the Chief Fire Officer of the Fire Service; Inspector General of Police; Director General of Prisons Service and Comptroller General of the Immigration Service unless the immediate holder of the office is deceased.....".

They are also seeking relief, asserting that the appointment of heads of uniformed security services by a newly elected and inaugurated president is unconstitutional.

Further elaborating on their argument, they pointed out alarming trends where incoming governments force the termination of these appointments, disregarding the constitutional rights of the appointees.

"In some cases, these removals occur

before the individual occupants of the office reach the statutory retirement age.

"For instance, in 2017, the then Director-General of the Prisons Service, Mr. Emmanuel Yao Adzator, was asked to proceed on leave at the age of 54 and subsequently another was appointed in his stead," part of the writ dated March 11, 2024.

Consequently, they are requesting a consequential order that would bar the President of the Republic from dismissing the appointment

of those holding the positions of Chief Fire Officer of the Fire Service, Inspector General of Police, Director-General of Prisons Service, and Comptroller General of Immigration Service, unless there is clear and documented evidence of misconduct or misbehaviour against these individuals, or in the event of their retirement, resignation, death, or incapacity to perform the duties of the position due to physical or mental illness.

Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Professor Kwesi Aning, Director of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre



General News

Release names of beneficiaries of National Rental Assistance Scheme – NATUG charges Housing Ministry

The National Tenants' Union of Ghana has called for the release of the names of beneficiaries under the National Rental Assistance Scheme (NRAS), categorised by regions and communities.

"We humbly request the immediate publication of the names of the beneficiaries by regions and communities to help us shape the policy for the purpose it was made," the union said.

This call follows former Minister of Works and Housing, Francis Asenso Boakye's announcement that 1,492 individuals received a total disbursement of GH¢19 million through the NRAS.

However, the National Tenants' Union of Ghana expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of specific details regarding the beneficiaries as

presented to the House.

To enhance transparency, the Union is demanding the immediate publication of beneficiary names organised by regions and communities.

This, they say, would help stakeholders assess and contribute to shaping the policy for more effective implementation and impact.

Furthermore, the union is calling on the Ministry of Housing to initiate a stakeholder engagement process and temporarily halt the NRAS.

"We request the Ministry of Housing to call for stakeholder engagement and further call for immediate suspension of the scheme for a full-scale review to correct some anomalies we have found consequential to the success of the

implementation of the scheme," parts of the statement read.

This pause would facilitate a thorough review to address identified issues that could potentially hinder the scheme's success.

Among the concerns raised are the

high 24% interest rate on the rent loan, non-refundable loan processing fees of GHC100.00, and the duration for which rent advance payments are provided to beneficiaries.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



NATUG

Saglemi Housing project : Govt mulls over partnership with private investors

Deputy minister-designate for Works and Housing, Dr. Prince Hamidu Armah, has revealed the government's intentions of partnering with the private sector in the completion of the abandoned Saglemi Housing project.

Dr. Armah highlighted the importance of finishing the project, considering the significant investment already made by the state.

He said the government has established a technical committee to expedite the completion of the housing project during his appearance before Parliament's Appointments Committee for vetting.

"The state has already invested so much money into Saglemi, and I think that it is important that we bring the original intent of the project to fruition.

I understand that the ministry has already constituted a technical working committee to look at private sector participation in

offloading the project and to ensure that the project is completed for it to be used," Dr. Armah said.

The Saglemi Housing project was initiated in 2012 under the erstwhile John Dramani Mahama government for the delivery of 5,000 housing units at a total cost of US\$200 million

under an Engineering-Procurement-Contracting (EPC) Agreement with Messrs Construtora OAS Ghana Limited.

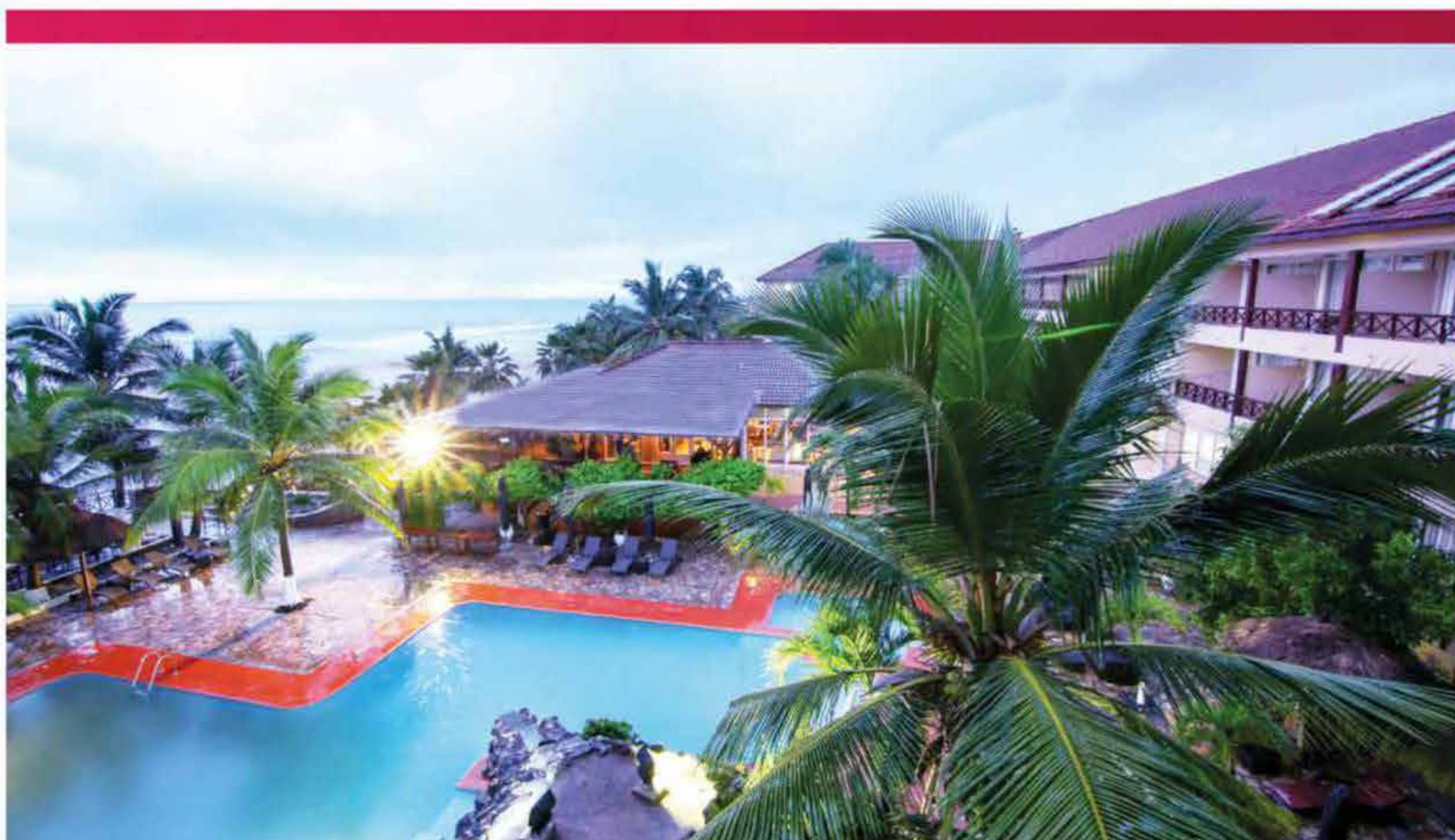
According to the government, by the end of the stipulated project execution period in 2016, only 1,506 out of the planned 5,000

housing units had been initiated and approximately US\$196 million, representing 98% of total project funds, had been expended.

Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Saglemi Housing project



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Business

COCOBOD initiates transfer of 44,769 farms to beneficiary cocoa farmers

The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) is preparing to transfer approximately 44,769 farms to more than 29,441 beneficiary farmers across the nation.

This initiative, announced by COCOBOD's Chief Executive, Joseph Boahen Aidoo, is designed to provide support to farmers within 51 cocoa districts.

According to reports from the Daily Guide network, these farmers will receive assistance from students at the Bunso Cocoa College to establish their farms using products and knowledge gained from the college. Previously focused on training

COCOBOD staff, particularly in extension and technical services, the Bunso Cocoa College has been revamped into a diploma-granting institution.

This transformation aims to bolster the sustainability of the cocoa sector by equipping graduates with expertise in cocoa agronomy, traceability, sustainability, and other pertinent areas.

A significant aspect of this overhaul is the establishment of the governing council of the Bunso Cocoa College. Comprising 10 members, including Chairman Dr. Ebenezer Owusu and Deputy Chief Executive Dr. Mercy Asamoah, this council seeks to

enhance the institute's governance framework.

Additionally, it will supervise the creation of specialized training programs to furnish students with

contemporary skills, benefiting both the learners and society as a whole.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



Joseph Boahen Aidoo, COCOBOD's Chief Executive

Telecel Ghana must prioritise investing in the digital capacities of young Ghanaians – Bawumia

Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia has urged Telecel Ghana to prioritize investments in the digital capabilities of the country's youth.

This call to action came during the official launch of Telecel Ghana's operations, following the acquisition of majority ownership from Vodafone Ghana.

During the launch on Monday, March 12, Dr. Bawumia emphasised the importance of upholding ethical standards, transparency, and corporate governance while urging Telecel Ghana to expand its network and foster innovation.

He specifically encouraged the telecommunications and fintech industry to take on corporate social responsibilities by investing in the digital capacities of young Ghanaians, contributing to the nation's future in the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

"Welcoming Telecel Ghana, I urged them to uphold the highest standards of ethics, transparency and corporate governance, and also, to expand their network and be more innovative in their operations, in other to ensure accessible, safe,

affordable and reliable network services to their customers," the Vice President wrote on his X platform on Tuesday March 12.

He added "I also urged Telecel Ghana, and other stakeholders in the telcos and fintech industry, to, as part of their corporate social responsibilities, prioritize investing in the digital capacities of young Ghanaians, to contribute towards shaping the future of Ghana, as the country embraces the 4th Industrial Revolution."

Telecel Group, an Africa-focused telecommunications company known for combining telecommunication with fintech, e-commerce, and tech startups, acquired a 70% majority stake in Vodafone Ghana in February 2023.

This acquisition positions Telecel Ghana to introduce disruptive innovation to the country's telecom industry, promising customer-centric products with exceptional service delivery.

CEO of Telecel Group, Moh Damush, stated, "This evolution represents more than just a change in name; it signifies our commitment to advancing telecommunications in

Ghana with a renewed focus on meeting the evolving needs of our customers."

The rebranding campaign is set to unfold throughout January, culminating in a full brand reveal at the end of February 2024, promising exciting activities and campaigns for all stakeholders.

Patricia Obo-Nai, CEO of Vodafone Ghana, expressed enthusiasm about the transition, emphasizing the goal to deliver a robust network

promoting personal and business growth.

The comprehensive rebranding encompasses Vodafone Ghana and its subsidiaries: National Communication Backbone Company Limited (Vodafone Wholesale), Vodafone Ghana Mobile Financial Services Limited (Vodafone Cash), and the Vodafone Ghana Foundation.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



File photo



International

Haiti's Prime Minister resigns as law and order collapses

Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry has agreed to resign following weeks of mounting pressure and increasing violence in the impoverished country.

It comes after regional leaders met in Jamaica on Monday to discuss a political transition in Haiti.

Mr Henry is currently stranded in Puerto Rico after being prevented by armed gangs from returning home.

In a video address announcing his resignation, Mr Henry urged Haitians to remain calm.

"The government that I am leading will resign immediately after the installation of [a transition] council," Mr Henry said.

"I want to thank the Haitian people for the opportunity I had been granted. I'm asking all Haitians to remain calm and do everything they can for peace and stability to come back as fast as possible."

Mr Henry, who had led the country supposedly on an interim basis since July 2021 following former President Jovenel Moise's assassination, had repeatedly postponed elections, saying security must be restored first.

Many Haitians had questioned him governing the country for this long without an elected president.

Heavily armed gangs have tightened their grip on the streets of the capital Port-au-Prince, and attacked the main prison to help thousands of inmates escape.

They also demanded the resignation of the unelected prime minister.

The capital Port-au-Prince and the surrounding region is under a month-long state of emergency, while a curfew has been extended.

Matthias Pierre, a former elections minister in Haiti, broke the news of Mr Henry's resignation to the BBC's Newsday programme before it was confirmed publicly.

He described the current situation in the country as "very precarious".

"The police force is weak, and more than 40 police stations [are] destroyed. The army is very limited and not equipped; gang members occupy most of the [Port-au-Prince] downtown and some government headquarters.

"Very soon people will be out of food, medication and... medical support."

Mr Pierre said the gangs were now pushing to be part of any new power-sharing deal, adding that such a political settlement was impossible without the "support" of an international armed force.

Mr Henry had been in Kenya to sign a deal on the deployment of an international security force to help tackle violence when a coalition of gangs attacked police stations and stormed two of Haiti's largest prisons.

A plane carrying Mr Henry was stopped from landing following sustained attacks at Haiti's international airport.

His resignation has been expected for several days. The Caricom group of Caribbean nations had made its

position clear that he was seen as an impediment to Haiti's stability and that he would have to stand down so the move to a transitional council could begin.

The White House had initially wanted to see Mr Henry return to Haiti to oversee the transitional process, but the ferocity of fighting in the country changed minds in Washington in recent days.

Without the support of either the US state department or his neighbours, it was clear that Mr Henry had no alternative but to stand down.

Mr Henry has expressed a wish to return to Haiti but the security situation has to improve before he is able to do so, according to the US which was at the talks in Kingston on Monday.

A senior US official said Mr Henry had first made the decision to step down on Friday but he had waited for an official announcement so talks could take place.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken committed a further \$100m (£78m) to the 1,000-strong UN-backed security force Kenya is expected to lead in Haiti.

The proposed US contribution to the security force now stands at \$300m following Mr Blinken's announcement, with a further \$33m allocated for humanitarian aid.

Speaking following the meeting, chairman of the Caricom group and Guyana President Irfaan Ali said: "We acknowledge his resignation upon the establishment of a transitional presidential council and naming of an interim prime minister."

President Ali said the transitional presidential council would have two observers and seven voting members, including representatives from several coalitions, the private sector and civil society, and one religious leader.

The council has been mandated to "swiftly" appoint an interim prime minister, he said, adding that anyone intending to run in Haiti's next elections will not be able to participate.

It is hoped the council will pave the way for the first elections in Haiti since 2016.

Source: BBC



Ariel Henry, Haiti's Prime Minister



International

Nigeria school abductions: More pupils snatched as army hunts for missing

Armed men have kidnapped 15 pupils from a boarding school in northwestern Nigeria days after more than 280 students were abducted from another school with the army still searching for them.

The men broke into the Islamic seminary in the village of Gidan Bakuso in Sokoto state on Saturday and seized 15 children from the hostel as they slept, police told The Associated Press news agency.

Liman Abubakar, the head of the seminary, said the pupils were aged between eight and 14.

Sokoto police spokesman Ahmad Rufai told the AP that one woman was also abducted from the remote village, adding that a police tactical squad was deployed to search for the students.

It was the third incident of mass kidnapping in northern Nigeria since late last week, when more than 200 people, mostly women and children, were abducted by suspected fighters in Borno state. On Thursday, 287 students were taken hostage from a government

primary and secondary school in Kaduna state.

Saturday's kidnappings come as the Nigerian government launched a search and rescue mission for 287 missing children who were taken from Kuriga, in northwestern Kaduna state on Thursday in the largest mass abduction in three years.

Kuriga residents told Al Jazeera's Ahmed Idris that the children were seized by more than 100 attackers shortly after their daily assembly as they spoke of feeling abandoned by the government.

"They shot indiscriminately, herding us like cows and beating us," Mustafa Abubakar, a student who managed to escape, told Al Jazeera in Kuriga.

Abubakar recalled military jets flying over them twice before he escaped. "There was a long burst of gunfire at one point, but I'm not sure if it was from the aircraft or from the bandits," the still-dazed student said as he returned to the school from where he was taken.

Teacher Nura Ahmad said 187

pupils were kidnapped from the Kuriga secondary school and 100 others from the primary school.

Reporting from the compound that houses both primary and secondary schools, Idris said it was moved as the "earlier location was vulnerable to attacks and mass abductions which have forced the closure of many schools in northern Nigeria".

This has "caused the region to lag behind the rest of the country in student enrollment", Idris reported, adding that the government and aid agencies are concerned about the future of millions of children in Nigeria.

Kaduna Governor Uba Sani insisted security forces were "working round the clock" to bring back the children.

"There is no peace or peace of mind in this family," parent Shehu Lawal told Al Jazeera. "None in the village. We hardly eat or sleep. We only come home in daytime and find a safer place to stay the night. That's our lives since the abduction," said Lawal, whose child is missing.

While Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu ordered security forces to pursue the attackers, the military has been hampered by a multitude of crises across Africa's most populous country and is spread thin, and local vigilante groups are not enough of a bulwark against the armed gangs.

Kidnappings are common in northwestern and central Nigeria where criminal gangs occupying vast, remote forests terrorise residents. Known as bandits, these groups loot villages, and kill and kidnap residents, especially students, for huge ransoms.

Some 1,400 children have been abducted in Nigeria since 300 girls were taken from the northeastern town of Chibok in 2014, sparking widespread international condemnation. Attackers also took 150 children in Kaduna in July 2021, the previous major abduction. The students were reunited months later after their families paid ransoms.

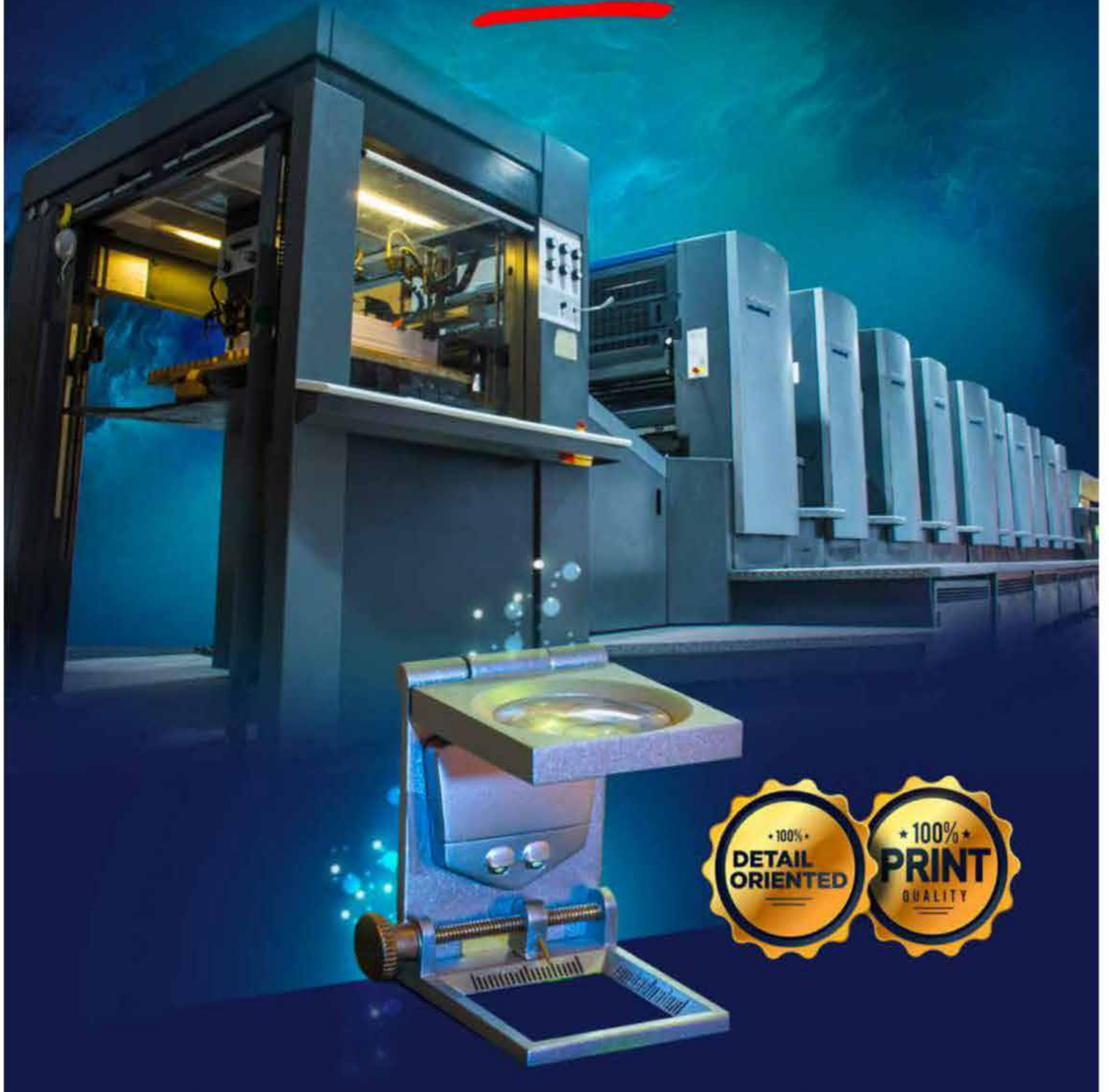
Source: Al Jazeera and News Agencies



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