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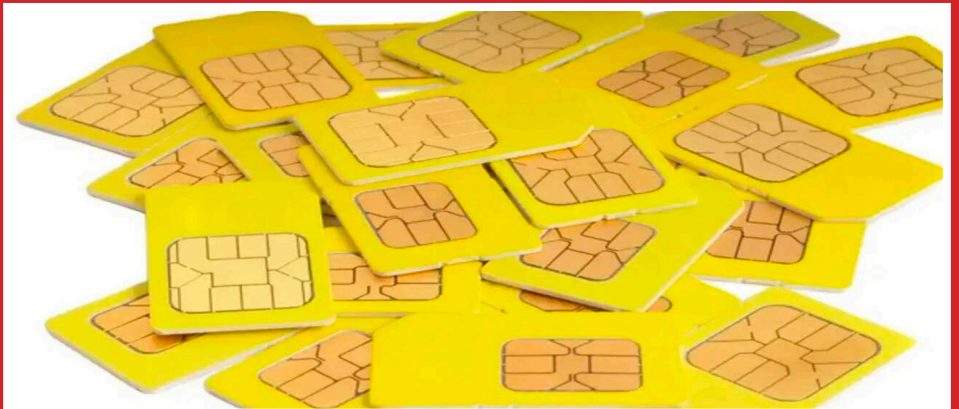
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General News

We will face off in court – Anti-LGBTQ+ bill proponents to coalition of 18 civil society groups

Proponents of the controversial Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values bill, popularly known as the Anti-LGBTQ+ bill, are gearing up for a court battle with the Coalition of 18 Civil Society Groups, also known as the 'Big 18.'

The Big 18, strongly opposing the passage of the bill, has threatened legal action if President Akufo-Addo signs the Anti-LGBTQ+ bill into law, arguing that it infringes on Ghana's diverse cultural and religious landscape.

The Anti-LGBTQ+ bill, which aims to criminalise LGBTQI+ activities in Ghana, was unanimously passed by parliament on February 28 after nearly three years of deliberation.

The legislation proposes penalties of up to 3 years in jail for individuals who practice and 5 years for promoters of LGBTQ+ activities, including forming

or funding LGBTQ+ groups.

Despite frustrations from MPs who sought to replace prison sentences with community service and counselling, the bill has now become a subject of contention between local and international human rights and Ghana's parliament.

Board Chair of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, a member of the Big 18 and a vocal critic of the bill, Professor Audrey Gadzekpo, expressed disappointment that parliament did not at any point consider the bill incompatible with the country's democracy.

Proponent of the bill, Emmanuel Kwasi Bedzrah, MP for Ho West, asserted their readiness for any legal challenge that the passage of the bill may bring up.

"We are prepared since the inception of this bill in 2021. In any case, we are prepared," he stated in an interview with JoyNews.

The 'Big 18' is set to make presentations to President Akufo-Addo, urging him not to assent to the passage of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill.

Prof Audrey Gadzekpo compared the legislation to criminal libel introduced by colonialists, expressing concerns that it might be misused against

individuals, reminiscent of past legal controversies.

As both sides brace for a possible legal battle, the fate of the Anti-LGBTQ+ bill hangs in the balance, leaving the nation divided over issues of human rights, cultural values, and the trajectory of Ghana's democratic ideals.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Professor Audrey Gadzekpo, Board Chair, Ghana Center for Democratic Development

WAEC pressured to release suspended 2023 WASSCE results as over 600 parents storm Sunyani office

Over 600 parents gathered at the West African Examination Council (WAEC) office in Sunyani, Bono region, to demand the release of their children's West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) results.

This comes as WAEC delayed the release of the results of some candidates due to alleged examination malpractices.

The 2023 results were released last December, while the results for private candidates were released last week.

WAEC withheld the results of candidates from 235 schools, citing the use of artificial intelligence-generated answers during the 2023 WASSCE. Subject results of 4,280 candidates and the entire results of 1,005 have also been withheld for various suspected offences.

In a meeting with the parents, WAEC stated that the only option for the affected students was to rewrite the papers. This decision has angered the parents, who argued that their

children were not at fault and should not be made to rewrite any paper.

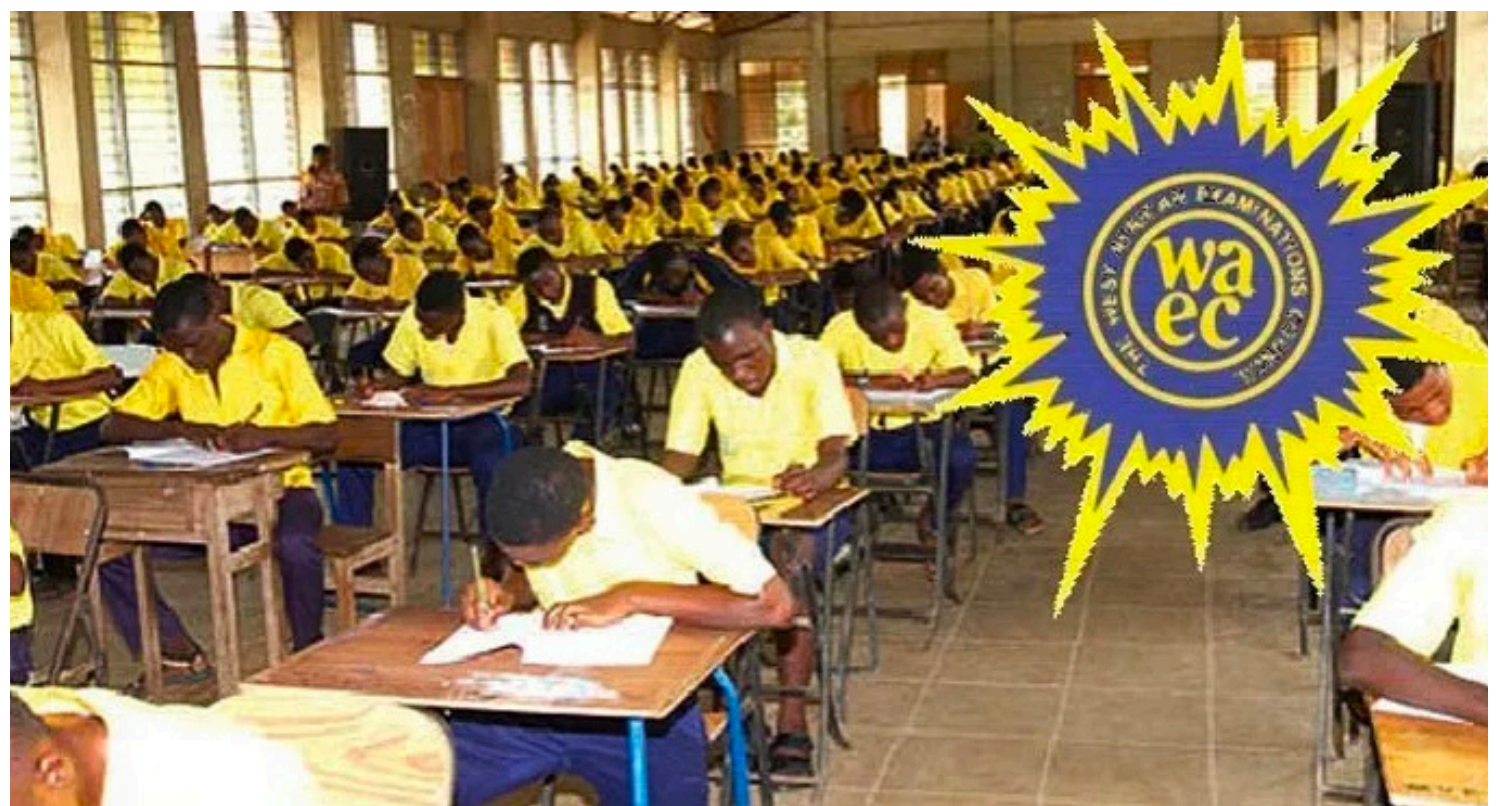
The parents emphasized that their children had studied hard and should not be punished for the negligence of exam invigilators, who failed to supervise them properly during the

exams.

Mr. Agyemang Prempeh, the spokesperson for the parents, engaged with the media to express their frustration, stating that the innocent children should not suffer for the mistakes of others.

He called on the government to intervene, noting that the affected students' peers are already in tertiary institutions.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



File Photo



General News

Dr Dacosta Aboagye appointed as NHIA CEO

President Akufo-Addo has designated Dr Dacosta Aboagye, the current Director of Health Promotion at the Ghana Health Service, as the new Chief Executive of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA).

This appointment, detailed in a letter from the Secretary to the President, aligns with Section 14 (1) of the National Health Insurance Act, 2012 (Act 852).

The letter specifies that the appointment is "pending receipt of the constitutionally required advice of the governing board of the Authority given in consultation with the Public Services Commission."

Dr Aboagye, a 45-year-old expert in national health insurance, holds a higher national certificate in Pharmacy Technology from the Kumasi Technical University, awarded in 2002.

His current role as the Director of the Health Promotion Division at the Ghana Health Service has equipped

him with extensive experience in national health insurance finance, public health, and health promotion.

Previously, Dr. Aboagye played a crucial role in leading Ghana's risk communication efforts and was a member of the presidential task force managing the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana from 2020 to 2023.

Beyond his national responsibilities, Dr Aboagye has contributed significantly to international health initiatives.

He chairs the Public Health Risk Communication and Community Engagement for Disease Control within the West Africa Health Organization, facilitating experience sharing, advocacy, and promoting better health across the 15 ECOWAS member states.

Additionally, he serves as the Chairman of the Africa CDC Public Health Risk Communication and Community Engagements Community of Practice for the 55 member states, aiming to enhance best practices,

health system strengthening, and knowledge exchange in Africa.

Dr. Aboagye's impressive academic background includes serving as the cohort leader for the Public Health and Health Promotion program at the University of West London, UK.

He has also held roles as an external examiner on National Health Insurance Financing, Public Health, and Health Promotion at the University of Salford and London Metropolitan University.

With around 11 impactful research papers in health insurance, public health, and health promotion, Dr. Aboagye has presented his research work extensively both locally and

internationally.

His notable achievements have earned him prestigious awards and citations, including the MTN Young Professionals Role Model in Health (Gold Category, 2020), the Golden Citizen Award (2021), and the overall National Best Health Leader of the Year 2023.

In recognition of his contributions during Ghana's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2023, Dr. Aboagye was honored with the Order of the Volta-Companion Category, the highest award of the Republic of Ghana.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Dr Dacosta Aboagye, Newly Appointed CEO, NHIA

Akufo-Addo, SSNIT boss provide conflicting data on self-employed enrolled on pension scheme

It has come to light that there is a disparity in the data provided by government officials on pension coverage among self-employed individuals in Ghana.

On February 20, 2024, Director-General of SSNIT, Dr John Ofori-Tenkorang, said the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) has enrolled over 71,000 informal sectors and self-employed persons onto the state-run Tier One pension scheme.

When he appeared before the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament in Accra to respond to some infractions contained in the Auditor-General's report on the fund, he said the significant increase of contributors from 14,200 to 71,000 as of May last year followed the implementation of a self-employed enrolment drive (SEED) initiative.

"The initiative has made it possible for artisans, carpenters, masons, tailors, auto-mechanics and traders to contribute towards their pension. SSNIT has targeted to enrol about 10 per cent of the 3.6 million self-employed Ghanaians who are yet to join the scheme, although they fall within the required contributors age of 15 and 45," he said.

But a week later, President Akufo-Addo provided a figure which is 529,000 less than what was communicated by Dr John Ofori-Tenkorang.

Presenting the State of the Nation Address (SONA) before Parliament in Accra on Tuesday, February 27, he said that since the launch of the Self-Employed Enrolment Drive (SEED) initiative by the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), some 600,000 self-employed persons have been enrolled on the programme.

"Mr Speaker, in speaking about the work space and jobs, our thoughts invariably turn to young people and for some people, to the formal sector and formal sector jobs. We often forget that formal sector employees form only a small part of the working population. This small percentage of the working population tends to be the ones that are covered by pension schemes and, unfortunately, the majority of workers in the country do not have any pensions.

"To that extent, in May last year, SSNIT launched the Self-Employed Enrolment Drive (SEED), an initiative which seeks to improve coverage and increase the contributor base of the SSNIT Scheme. Since the launch of the SEED initiative, some six hundred thousand (600,000) self-employed persons have been enrolled onto the programme, and now have some form

of social security cover."

The contradictory figures provided have left many Ghanaians pondering whether or not SSNIT can enrol 529,000 individuals, a significant number in a week. Also, others are eager to find out which figure is indeed correct and which was fabricated.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana



General News

Please don't scrap e-levy - GRA begs political parties

The Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) has responded to campaign promises from certain political parties advocating for the elimination of the Electronic Transfer Levy (e-Levy) in the upcoming 2024 elections.

Assistant Commissioner of the GRA, Charles Addae, has urged the winning party to retain the e-Levy, emphasizing that abandoning the tax measure could exacerbate the government's existing financial challenges and increase its dependence on loans.

Addressing the media at the Taxing Mobile Money: Lessons and Ways Forward Conference held in Accra on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, Mr. Addae stated, "It is good that people pay tax. We are having some political talks about whether the tax may be cancelled in the future. We are pleading that it is better we sustain the revenue that is coming from it. The GHC1.2 billion that was raised in 2023 helped fill some holes in the country; otherwise, we may be depending too much on loans, which is not helping the economy."

He further highlighted the importance of maintaining the E-Levy to enhance the country's tax-to-GDP ratio and stimulate the local economy. Mr. Addae urged the government to prioritize fiscal sustainability, asserting that adequate revenue is crucial for effective governance.

"My plea is that we maintain and help increase the tax on the GDP of

the nation to help the development agenda of the government. Whichever government is in power needs revenue to run. Without tax revenue, the country cannot run," he added.

It's worth noting that Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) flagbearer, announced on February 7, 2024, his intention to eliminate the electronic transfer levy

if elected as Ghana's president.

Similarly, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) flagbearer and former president, John Dramani Mahama, pledged in January 2024 to scrap what he described as the "burdensome e-levy" should he win the 2024 elections.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Charles Addae, Assistant Commissioner, GRA

25,789 Upper Respiratory Tract Infections recorded between 2021 and 2023 in OPDs in Accra

Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTI), myalgias, and other health conditions have emerged as the leading causes of morbidity in the Out-Patient Departments (OPD) across the Greater Accra region over the past three years.

This is according to health officials. Municipal Director of Health for Ayawaso West Municipality, Dr Louisa Ademki Matey, expressed alarm over the doubling of URTI cases from 2021 to 2023, reaching 25,789.

Also, a total of 13 local Assemblies in the region have recorded URTI as a top three OPD morbidity cases in the last three years.

Dr. Matey attributed this concerning trend to factors such as air pollution, which can impair respiratory functions and exacerbate health conditions.

She emphasized the need for a

thorough examination of data and risk factors associated with URTI. She highlighted the detrimental effects of inhaling poor air quality, underscoring the importance of addressing air pollution as a public health concern.

"In as much as air pollution has a link with URTI, we at this Health Directorate from now are going to examine the data, connect with the facilities to look at the risk factors, the conditions closely segregate the data, and take more history of persons with the conditions," she said.

Country Lead of Clean Air Fund-Ghana, Mr. Desmond Appiah, acknowledged the potential link between URTI and air pollution. He emphasized the importance of data disaggregation and further investigation to inform targeted interventions in areas most affected by poor air quality.

Appiah noted the involvement of

Ayawaso West Municipality in the Breathe Cities clean air initiative, aimed at reducing air pollution and improving public health. The initiative provides support such as low-cost sensors, capacity building, and data analysis to enable local leadership to take effective measures in ensuring clean air.

The Breathe Cities initiative, driven by evidence-based strategies and community engagement, aims to reduce air pollution by 30 percent across participating cities by 2030. This ambitious goal, if achieved, could prevent thousands of premature deaths and asthma cases, while also saving significant healthcare costs.

Accra, as one of Africa's fastest-growing cities and the commercial centre of Ghana, over the past years has faced significant challenges related to air pollution, particularly from road transport.

The city's inadequate public transport infrastructure contributes to dust and particle concentrations, impacting the health of residents and commuters. The facilitators of the above-mentioned initiatives are optimistic that such projects can help reduce the pollution in the country.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Jessie Ola-Morris



File Photo



General News

Global criticism follows Ghana's passage of anti-LGBTQ bill

The passage of Ghana's Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, also known as the anti-LGBTQ bill, has sparked strong reactions both domestically and internationally.

Parliament on Wednesday, February 28, passed the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill also known as the anti-LGBTQ bill after three years following its introduction.

U.S. Ambassador to Ghana, Virginia Palmer, has expressed deep sadness over the bill's passage, highlighting the impact it will have on the rights of LGBTQ individuals, whom she believes are one of the smartest and decent people, and all Ghanaians.

She emphasized that the bill not only infringes upon basic human rights but also undermines constitutional freedoms such as freedom of speech, assembly, and the press.

Palmer warned of the negative implications the bill could have on public order, public health, Ghana's international reputation, and its economy.

"I am saddened because some of the

smartest, most creative, most decent people I know are LGBT. The bill Parliament passed takes away not only their basic human rights but those of all Ghanaians because it undermines their constitutional rights to freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. It will be bad for public order and public health. If enacted, it will also hurt Ghana's international reputation and Ghana's economy."

On his part, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has described the development as "profoundly disturbing."

"The bill broadens the scope of criminal sanctions against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual and queer people – simply for being who they are – and threatens criminal penalties against perceived allies of LGBTQ+ people," said Türk.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called on President Akufo-Addo not to assent to the claim, a request also made by Professor Audrey Gadzekpo, the Board Chair of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana).

"I call for the bill not to become law.

I urge the Ghanaian Government to take steps to ensure everyone can live free from violence, stigma and discrimination, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Consensual same-sex conduct should never be criminalized."

Also, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Winnie Byanyima, has voiced serious concerns regarding the approval of the bill.

Byanyima argued that the bill could have severe repercussions on various fronts, including its adverse impact on the fight against AIDS and the overall jeopardization of public health.

Prior to its passage, there were several amendments made to the bill, including setting a minimum custodial sentence of three years and a maximum of five years for promoters and sympathizers.

Individuals caught directly engaging in LGBTQ activities will face a minimum sentence of six months, extendable to a maximum of three years.

Now, the bill awaits President Akufo-Addo's assent to become law. Ghana is among many African countries that are working to rid LGBTQ activities in

the society.

Uganda enacted one of the world's harshest anti-gay laws in May, which calls for the death penalty for certain same-sex acts.

Following this, the country faced sanctions from international communities. The U.S. imposed a first round of visa restrictions on Ugandan officials in response to the law in June, and the World Bank halted new lending to the country in August.

The concern now is Ghana could face similar sanctions and be blocked from receiving financial aid from countries that uphold LGBTQ rights.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



File Photo

Fuel shortage, faulty thermal plants causing 'dumsor' - John Jinapor claims

Member of Parliament for Yapei-Kusawgu constituency, John Jinapor, has attributed the ongoing power cuts in the country, commonly referred to as 'dumsor,' to fuel shortages and inefficiencies in thermal power plants.

In recent times, Accra and various parts of the country have been facing frequent power outages. The capital has witnessed high-profile disconnections affecting schools, residential properties, and state institutions.

Today, Ghana's Parliament House and Job 600, the office complex for Members of Parliament, experienced a disconnection from the national grid over an outstanding debt totaling GH¢23 million owed to the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). The disconnection, carried out by

the National Taskforce on Thursday, February 29, is part of the ongoing "Operation Zero Balance" initiative by the ECG task force, intended to recover unpaid debts from various customers.

Efforts to collect the debt from the parliamentary facilities proved unsuccessful, necessitating the disconnection.

Meanwhile, Mr Jinapor has urged the authorities responsible for the power sector to release a schedule for planned power outages, providing Ghanaians with the opportunity to plan accordingly.

"The minority side has been monitoring the power situation for the past month, and it appears, based on the information available to us, that the power sector is collapsing. Since February 2, there has been persistent

and consistent load shedding by the generation companies; indeed, the load shedding is worsening by the day. The day the president was delivering SONA and boasting, there was some load-shedding happening," Mr Jinapor said in an interview.

"Today at 12 pm, load shedding will commence again; our investigation indicates that some of our thermal plants are down, and there is a lack of fuel causing the load shedding. The handlers of the power sector should do the honourable thing by informing the people of Ghana so they can plan ahead of time."

The Deputy Energy Minister-designate, Collins Adomako-Mensah, has assured that the ongoing power outages will be rectified within the upcoming two weeks.

"I admit that for the past two or three weeks, there have been some power outages, but it is interesting that the two-week power outages are causing the Minority to have a press conference. I am yet to fully settle into the [Energy] Ministry, but the little interaction I have had with the officers in the Ministry before my vetting is that this should be taken care of in the next two weeks," Collins Adomako-Mensah said in the interview.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



John Jinapor, MP for Yapei-Kusawgu



General News

Prof Adei scores Akufo-Addo 5 over 10 in corruption fight

Former Rector of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Prof. Stephen Adei has given President Akufo-Addo a middling score of 5 out of 10 in the President's fight against corruption.

Speaking in an interview with JoyNews, Prof Adei intimated that the current administration has not effectively tackled corruption.

He noted that although the President started well in his fight against the canker, he could not follow through and ensure closure to various corruption cases.

"I will rate him (President Akufo-Addo) about what other presidents had done and in that case, I will rate him five because I think he went upfront with these institutions and other things but did not follow through."

"For example, I think no matter whatever institutions you establish, if the President who is the head of State says that when you smell corruption,

you are going to be out of my sight, if you don't do that, you can never tackle corruption," he said.

President Akufo-Addo, prior to assuming office, made a resolute promise to prioritize the fight against corruption.

He declared his willingness to stake his presidency on this crucial endeavour.

This assertion came against the backdrop of persistent concerns about corruption in the country.

However, corruption remains a significant challenge in the country, undermining public trust in institutions and hindering socio-economic development.

President Akufo-Addo has also been

criticised over what many describe as a failed effort in tackling the canker.

Adding his voice to the discourse, Prof Adei noted that the President could have put in more efforts in combating the canker.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Jessie Ola-Morris



Professor Stephen Adei, Former Rector, GIMPA

Anti-Smuggling task force seizes 1,450 gallons of illicit oil at CMB

The Anti-Smuggling Task Force is actively addressing the issue of illicit vegetable oil imports, recently seizing 1,450 gallons lacking proper documentation at CMB.

The task force, comprising the Tree Crop Development Authority, the Oil Palm Development Association of Ghana, the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority, and National Security, began its operation in Madina, Atomic Junction, Dome market, and concluded in Okaishie and CMB.

Initiated on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, the exercise aims to curb the illegal influx of smuggled vegetable oil into the Ghanaian market and safeguard the local industry.

Leader of the task force, Paul Amaning, highlighted the positive results yielded since the commencement of

the exercise. Mr. Amaning stressed the importance of having proper documentation for the confiscated vegetable oil before proceeding with any further actions.

He also cautioned the public against purchasing oil packaged in water bottles, citing concerns about its safety for consumption. Mr. Amaning mentioned that adherence to regulations is impacting legal businesses, as smuggled goods, sold without paying duties or taxes, are priced as low as GH¢341.

"Some are doing a great job and must be commended, but they are doing what is right. They are running out of business because, after paying the right taxes and duties, their wholesale price shot up," he said.

The task force plans to continue its

operations in various markets in Accra and extend its efforts to other regions.

In recent visits to establishments in Kasoa, Mallam Market, McCarthy Hill, and Adabraka, Perfect End Logistics in McCarthy Hill was directed to halt operations due to the discovery of

suspected smuggled vegetable oil on its premises. Despite claims that the oil was domestically produced, the task force deemed it necessary to suspend operations.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Jessie Ola-Morris



File Photo



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Business

Gov't to settle \$700 million debt restructuring agreement with IPP in March

The government is striving to finalize a debt restructuring agreement with Independent Power Producers (IPPs) by the end of March this year.

Notably, the debt owed to power producers has been successfully reduced to approximately \$700 million, marking a substantial milestone in the ongoing negotiations.

Payments to IPPs have been in progress since 2023, following agreements with five Independent Power Producers in July of that year, when the debt stood at \$1.6 billion.

"We are targeting the end of March to conclude the restructuring. We have also been able to reduce the

debt to \$700 million, which we believe is a significant step in the negotiations," some individuals close to the negotiation process told JOY Business.

The government had initiated payments after threats from some IPPs to disrupt power supply if outstanding debts were not settled.

As of February 28, 2024, term sheets have been exchanged with five independent power producers for further examination, with no reported objections to the proposed terms.

Additional information suggests that the government is actively working to involve two more independent power producers in the negotiation process for debt

restructuring.

The government has also secured agreements with the Electricity Company of Ghana to receive payments, and the overall

restructuring is anticipated to conclude by the end of March 2024 upon the signing of the agreement.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



File Photo

MTN Ghana deactivates 4.8m unregistered SIM cards

MTN Ghana has blocked 4.8 million subscribers who failed to re-register their SIM cards with the Ghana card in accordance with a directive from the National Communications Authority (NCA).

As a result, the telecom giant reported a decrease in its subscriber base by 6.3%, amounting to 26.8 million subscribers by the end of 2023.

MTN Ghana had initially blocked 5.4 million SIMs that were not

registered with the Ghana card as of May 31, 2023. However, 600,000 SIMs from this group were successfully re-registered.

The nationwide re-registration of all SIM cards using the Ghana National ID card was initiated

by the NCA through telecom operators in October 2021. The exercise was concluded at the end of May 2023.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



SIM Cards



International

Yaya Dillo: Chad opposition leader killed in shootout

A leading critic of Chad's military leader, Mahamat Déby, has been killed in a shootout with security forces, officials say.

Yaya Dillo's death comes after the government blamed him for a deadly attack on the country's security agency. He denied the accusation.

On Wednesday, heavy gunfire was heard near his party's headquarters in the capital, N'Djamena.

Mr Dillo was also a cousin of President Déby, who has been in power since 2021.

Mr Déby was named by the army to succeed his father who was killed by rebels after three decades in power.

The unrest in the Central African country follows the announcement that the presidential election will be held on 6 May.

These elections are intended to return the country to constitutional rule.

Before his death, Mr Dillo was widely predicted to be his cousin's main opponent in the election.

He was the leader of the Socialist Party Without Borders (PSF).

Communications Minister Abderaman Koulamallah told the AFP news agency that Mr Dillo had died on Wednesday "where he had retreated, at the headquarters of his party. He didn't want to surrender and fired on law enforcement".

The authorities said 12 others also died in the shootout.

Mobile phone and internet networks in Chad have been down since the reported attack on the National Security Agency (ANSE) headquarters.

On Wednesday, Mr Dillo said the accusation he was behind the

attack was intended "to make me afraid so that I don't go to the election".

The government had accused Mr Dillo's PSF colleague, Ahmed Torabi, of attempting to assassinate the president of the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

Mr Torabi was arrested and shot dead, the PSF said.

Wednesday was not Mr Dillo's first violent run-in with security forces.

When running against the current president's father, Idriss Déby, for the presidency in 2021, state forces killed Mr Dillo's mother, son and three others, the PSF said.

The party said the assailants were attempting to arrest Mr Dillo.

At the time, the government contested the PSF's death toll, saying three people had been killed.

Source: BBC



Yaya Dillo: Chad opposition leader

Illinois judge disqualifies Trump from primary ballot over Capitol riot

A judge in the US state of Illinois has barred former President Donald Trump from appearing on Illinois's Republican presidential primary ballot because of his role in the attack at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Cook County Circuit Judge Tracie Porter, however, delayed her ruling, issued on Wednesday, from taking effect in light of an expected appeal by Trump.

In her ruling, Porter sided with Illinois voters who argued that the former president should be disqualified from the state's March 19 primary ballot and its November 5 general election ballot for violating the anti-insurrection clause of the US Constitution's 14th Amendment.

The final outcome of the Illinois case and similar challenges will likely be decided by the US Supreme Court, which heard arguments related to Trump's

ballot eligibility on February 8.

Porter said she was staying her decision because she expected his appeal to Illinois's appellate courts and a potential ruling from the US Supreme Court.

The advocacy group Free Speech For People, which spearheaded the Illinois disqualification effort, praised the ruling as a "historic victory" in a statement.

A campaign spokesperson for Trump, the national frontrunner for the 2024 Republican nomination, said in a statement this "is an unconstitutional ruling that we will quickly appeal".

Colorado and Maine earlier removed Trump from their state ballots after determining he is disqualified under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

Both decisions are on hold while Trump appeals.

Section 3 bars from public office

anyone who took an oath to support the US Constitution and then has "engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof".

Trump supporters on January 6, 2021, attacked police and swarmed the Capitol in a bid to prevent Congress from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's 2020 election victory. Trump gave an incendiary speech to supporters beforehand, telling them to go to

the Capitol and "fight like hell". He then for hours did not act on requests that he urge the mob to stop.

The Supreme Court is currently weighing Trump's challenge to his Colorado disqualification.

The justices in Washington appeared sceptical of the decision during oral arguments in the case, expressing concerns about states taking sweeping actions that could affect the national election.

Source: Al Jazeera via News Agencies



Donald Trump, Former US President

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