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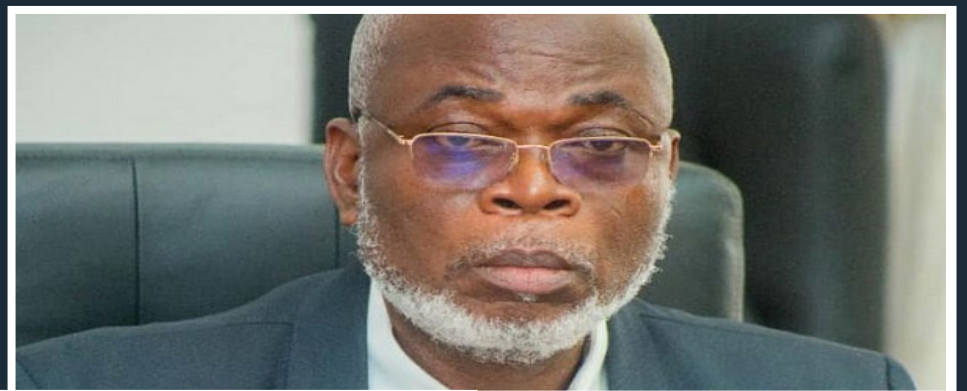


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General News

Voter registration violence shows that we have to sit up for 2024 elections – Peace Council

The Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) has responded to the recent altercation between its security personnel and officers from the Ghana Immigration Service at the Tema port.

Confirming the incident in a press release, the GPHA expressed its disapproval of the scuffle and admitted that it could have been handled more effectively to prevent escalation.

The clash, which occurred on Monday, May 13, stemmed from a disagreement during routine vessel checks on the MSC DYMPHNA at the Tema Port.

According to the GPHA, the resistance to being searched by

immigration officers contravenes the Standard Operating Procedures established by the International Ships and Port Facility Security (ISPS).

Taking full responsibility for the actions of its security personnel, the GPHA stated that the individual involved has been reprimanded.

“The Authority has taken full responsibility for the actions of its security personnel involved and stated that the individual has since been reprimanded,” the GPHA said in a statement.

The altercation unfolded when GPHA security members stationed at the Meridian Port Services (MPS) purportedly entered the GIS

office at MPS with the intention of apprehending two officers.

The disagreement arose when GPHA security personnel insisted on conducting body searches of the immigration officers, which was objected to by a GIS inspector.

“The dispute arose when GPHA security personnel insisted on searching the immigration officers after they had completed their inspection duties at the Tema Port,” the statement read.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty



File Photo

Gov't set to build temporary drainage on the Kasoa to Winneba section to mitigate flooding situation

The government is taking immediate action to address the recurring flooding issues along the Kasoa to Winneba section of the N1 highway.

Richard Kofi Amekor, Head of Drainage at the Ghana Hydrological Authority, emphasized the urgency of the situation, leading to the decision to construct a temporary drainage system despite the main storm drain being only 30% complete.

The temporary solution involves creating chambers along the stretch to facilitate water and debris flow during rainfall, with the aim of reducing flooding incidents.

This decision was announced during a visit by Minister Francis Asenso-Boakye and a team of engineers to assess the aftermath of recent flooding in the area and identify long-term solutions.

The ongoing construction of a 1.6-kilometre storm drain forms part of the comprehensive strategy, featuring sand traps for easier maintenance.

Once completed, the government plans to ensure regular upkeep through partnerships with

municipal authorities, expected within the next 17 months.

Heavy traffic has been reported between the SCC and Old Barrier stretch since last Monday following a downpour that resulted in flooding in that section.

Mr. Amekor attributed the frequent flooding around the Kasoa Old

Barrier to large volumes of water from the hills, along with soil accumulation on the road during rainfall.

He explained that the debris blocks the flow of water through the drains, leading to flooding in the area.

“There’s an existing pipe which

is about 1.2 meters in diameter lying parallel to the road, and we are going to create chambers within this pipe so that when it rains, some of the water can flow through those chambers into the outfall,” Mr. Amekor said.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Sebastian Akaho-Tay



File Photo

General News

Protesting opposite Jubilee House is not permissible – Police tells dumsor vigil organizers

The Greater Accra Regional Command of the Ghana Police Service has informed the organizers of the upcoming #DumsorMustStop vigil that their chosen protest site is unsuitable due to security concerns.

Organizers of the vigil, scheduled for May 25, 2024, against frequent power outages, known as dumsor, met with the police on May 15, 2024.

However, in a confidential notice dated May 15, 2024, the police expressed reservations about the chosen location, Revolution Square, citing its proximity to the Jubilee House, the seat of Government, as a security risk.

In the notice, the police cautioned that conducting the protest

at Revolution Square could jeopardize public defence, order, and safety, and could infringe upon the rights and freedoms of others.

The notice stated: “That the Jubilee House which is directly opposite the Revolution Square is the seat of Government and therefore a security zone, thus the protest and picketing at the Revolution Square may endanger public defence, public order, public safety and violate the rights and freedoms of other persons.”

Additionally, the police raised concerns about the proposed midnight closing time, citing security implications.

Instead of Revolution Square, the police suggested relocating the

protest to Independence Square and assured the organizers of their full support in facilitating the relocation.

As of now, there has been

no response from the organizers regarding this latest development.

Source: The Independent Ghana



The Jubilee House

NHIA to roll out scheme to subsidize dialysis expenses

Chief Executive Officer of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), Dr. Aboagye Dacosta, has announced a policy agreement aimed at alleviating the financial burden on end-stage kidney patients.

Dr. Dacosta disclosed that the decision awaits approval from the NHIA Board, envisaging the scheme absorbing a portion of the kidney treatment expenses.

In an interview with JoyNews on May 14, he stated, “I think we have made progress on dialysis, so just last week a committee that has been set up to chair and implement the disbursement of the funds that were approved by Parliament has actually concluded their report including the dialysis patients themselves.

He elaborated that the scheme would complement the increased dialysis costs, offering assistance to those in need.

“So, we work with themselves, they have concluded there and I can confidently say that within the next few weeks we will be starting the disbursement to the various facilities,” he said.

Dr. Dacosta noted that kidney patients at Korle Bu receive support from philanthropists covering approximately GH¢380 of their bills, with the scheme likely to cover the remaining expenses.

“We are looking at supplementing for both patients from Korle Bu, Komfo Anokye Teaching hospital in Central in such a way that for Korle Bu because they do get that support, we will be able to breach a gap for them and we support our patients also from Cape Coast and Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital

“The fact is they[kidney patients] do eight cycles per month, we cannot do all the eight so we are looking at an average or may be below average...Like I said the report is ready, it is just to be taken to the board for final consideration then implementation starts,” he added.

Regarding the coverage provided by philanthropists, Kojo Baffour Ahenkorah, President of the Renal Patients Association of Ghana, praised Dr. Dacosta’s initiative during an interview on JoyNews’ the Pulse on May 14.

He mentioned that since the hospital reopened after its temporary closure, renal patients have paid the full dialysis cost, expressing uncertainty about the NHIA boss’s statement regarding the covered costs.

“So, we work with themselves, they have concluded there, and I can confidently say that within the next few weeks we will be starting the disbursement to the various facilities,” he said.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Phoebe Martekie Doku



Dr. Aboagye Dacosta, CEO, NHIA

General News

We will hand over peacefully should NDC beat us in 2024 elections - Henry Quartey

Minister for Interior-designate, Henry Quartey, has reaffirmed the governing New Patriotic Party's (NPP) commitment to democratic principles in the event of electoral defeat amidst growing concerns from the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) regarding the peaceful transition of power.

The opposition's worries were sparked by recent comments made by President Akufo-Addo, which raised doubts about the incumbent government's readiness to peacefully transfer power if they do not succeed in the December 7 elections.

National Chairman of the NDC, Asiedu Nketia, at a press conference, urged the NPP to prioritize a smooth transition for

the nation's stability.

In response, former Greater Accra Regional Minister and Member of Parliament for Ayawaso Central, Henry Quartey, while addressing the media in Accra on Wednesday, May 15, reassured the public of the NPP's unwavering dedication to ensuring a peaceful electoral process.

He stressed that regardless of the election outcome, the NPP is committed to upholding democratic norms and facilitating a peaceful transfer of power, in accordance with Ghana's democratic principles.

"As a politician, as a political party, it is our hope, it is our wish, it is our belief that by the grace of God, the good people of this country, the good work that we have done in infrastructure and in other

interventions, they will give us another mandate."

"Perish the thought, and I say again, perish the thought, If they decide to give their mandate to somebody, we will hand over peacefully and walk away, go to the drawing board and come back Insha Allah," he said.

Nonetheless, he noted that the

NPP is working assiduously to secure another term to continue the works commenced by the government.

"But I know that the grace of God abounds, and so we shall break the 8," he stated.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty



Henry Quartey, Minister for Interior

Reach an agreement on our condition of service immediately - GNAT to gov't

The General Secretary of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), Thomas Musah, emphasized that teachers are eagerly awaiting a prompt resolution on their conditions of service from the government.

Musah stressed that excuses will not be tolerated, urging the government to act swiftly.

During an appearance on the Ghana Tonight show on TV3, Musah stated, "the only thing that can be done now is for the government to appreciate it and get it done as soon as possible and at least wipe away the tears of teachers and the sufferings of the teachers.

"The teachers are dying on the Volta Lake, are they not aware? Let us be serious. The teachers are wide awake, and they will not accept any apology or any excuse from the government, the earlier we come to the table to satisfy what the teachers expect, the better for all of us."

Musah highlighted the urgency of

the matter, referencing a recent petition filed by teacher unions in the central region at the office of the regional minister.

The unions expressed frustration over the sluggish progress in negotiating their conditions of service, attributing their plight to the challenging economic environment.

"We call on the Employer, once again, to honour its promises and

commitment to our teachers by addressing our concerns over the allowances enumerated above.

"We wish to stress that we have had enough of the disinterest, feet-dragging, and unfairness of the Employer, and would thus not tolerate this situation any longer. We wish to state in strongest terms that, should the Employer fail to address our demands, then we shall call on leadership to take

action immediately and when that happens, teachers should be pardoned of the blame," portions of their petition said.

In conclusion, Musah urged the government to engage in meaningful dialogue and fulfil the expectations of teachers, emphasizing that delays or excuses would not be acceptable.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Thomas Musah, General Secretary, GNAT

General News

Jurors declare nationwide strike over 10 months unpaid allowances

Jurors across the nation have initiated an indefinite strike, effective immediately, in response to the government's failure to pay their allowances for the past 10 months.

The decision to strike comes as a result of the government's non-payment of their allowances dating back to February 2023, along with outstanding allowances from July 2023 to May 2024.

In a statement released by the jurors, they emphasized the financial strain caused by the prolonged lack of payment.

"This situation has made it practically impossible for us to continue to pre-finance our transportation to and from the court premises," the statement highlighted.

Despite their dedication to the justice system, jurors expressed that the absence of financial support has left them with no alternative but to suspend their duties.

While assurances were given regarding payment in May, subsequent follow-ups revealed that no funds are currently

available.

The accumulation of 10 months' worth of unpaid allowances has significantly impacted their personal finances, leading them to take this drastic action.

"We regret any inconvenience our absence may cause to the expeditious delivery of justice," the jurors stated, acknowledging the potential disruptions to court proceedings.

The absence of jurors is anticipated to result in delays and interruptions in the judicial process, impacting the timely

dispensation of justice.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



File Photo

JB Danquah murder trial: I admitted to guilt because of DSP Kofi Sarpong's 'brutal tactics' - Sexy don don claims

Daniel Asiedu, also known as "sexy don don," the prime suspect in the 2016 murder of a sitting Member of Parliament (MP), has implicated three prominent police officers in his defence during an open court session.

The officers mentioned include the current Inspector-General of Police, George Akuffo Dampare, Superintendent of Police Kofi Sarpong, and retired SP Afia Tenge. Asiedu claimed that these officers were present immediately after his arrest on suspicion of murdering the New Patriotic Party (NPP) lawmaker for Abuakwa North, Joseph Boakye Danquah, on February 8, 2016.

During cross-examination, Asiedu maintained his innocence, alleging that he was not at the murder scene.

Instead, he claimed to have spent the evening at Agbogboloshie, where he engaged in sexual activity with a call girl. He further alleged that a pimp associated with the call girl threatened him in his absence.

Asiedu stated that he attempted to report the threat at the Accra Central police station but was advised by a motorcycle rider to seek the assistance of a police informant named Adotey.

According to Asiedu, Adotey then accompanied him to the police station, where he was subsequently arrested as a murder suspect.

Asiedu claimed that he confessed to the murder under duress, alleging that Superintendent Sarpong violently attacked him in an engine room.

He stated that Sarpong threatened him with a machete, causing him to feel disoriented and fearful for his life. Asiedu asserted that he eventually capitulated to Sarpong's demands out of concern for his safety.

The court adjourned the case until May 29 to allow for the continuation of Daniel Asiedu's testimony.

Below are excerpts of his cross-examination:

A. I made up my mind to report the matter at the regional police station but on my way to pick an okada the rider told me not to because he knows Mawuko's superior who goes by the name Adotey and that he would lead me to Adotey to report the matter to him so that he would warm Mawuko.

When the okada took me to Adotey, he gave me a seat and I explained to him what happened and that was the first time I met Adotey

who is an informant.

Adotey told me to exercise patience and that he would lead me to the regional police station to report the issue and that was the first time I went to the regional police station.

When we got to the police station Adotey asked me to wait by a police officer while he went to see the police commander. When he returned from seeing the police commander, he asked me to come with him to see the police commander so the two of us went to the police commander's office.

Q. Tell this court what time was this?

A. We got to the police at about 5:25 am

Q. In your statement yesterday you mentioned Allotey and today

you mentioned Adotey. Who are they?

A. The name I mentioned yesterday is not Allotey. His name is Adotey and he is an informant. They (officers) mentioned their name to me as Dampare, ASP Kofi Sarpong and the female was Afia Tenge.

I turned around and saw that Adotey had left the office and was standing outside. Officer Dampare gave me a seat in front of him and two other officers sat by each side of me.

Dampare took his phone out and decided to record me and he asked me 'who sent you?' and I asked what was going on. He continued to ask me if one NDC man called Sorogho and one short NDC man with an Ewe name.

When I was at the police station

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Daniel Asiedu AKA Sexy don don

General News

JB Danquah murder trial: I admitted to guilt because of DSP Kofi Sarpong's 'brutal tactics' - Sexy don don claims

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I saw on the TV that he had been arrested at his office and sent to the CID HQ. He has an Ewe name that I cannot pronounce.

ASP Sarpong took me to the engine room and took a machete out of a fridge and hit my head with it. I was bleeding and dazed. He told me to accept whatever Dampare was telling me or else I would be killed. I stood there for a while because at that moment I couldn't think straight. I did not answer the

questions he was asking me.

Q. When you were attacked with a machete by this gospel singer police officer and you felt dizzy and did not answer his questions, what happened after that?

A. He stood behind me and slapped me from both sides. At that moment I knelt down and begged him that whatever he said I have said and I shall do as he had asked me.

Q. Why did you kneel down to beg?

A. I have not died and resurrected before so I did not want to take any decision that he would regret. So, I agreed to do whatever he asked me hoping that I could explain and understand what they were asking from me.

He understood me and took me back to the office and sat me down. Dampare once again took out his phones and started filming me.

He mentioned those two names and asked if they were the persons who sent me? and I said yes. I was kept there from morning till about 6 pm and I was moved to the BNI office at Kawukudi.

Presiding judge Lydia Osei Marfo adjourned the case to May 29 for the continuation of the witness testimony of Daniel Asiedu.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Phoebe Martekie Doku

Ghana's tourism sector generated \$3.8bn in 2023

Ghana's tourism industry has surged, bouncing back from the crippling effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

At a recent breakfast meeting in Accra, Chief Director of the Ministry, John Yao Agbeko, unveiled that the sector amassed a staggering \$3.8 billion from international arrivals in 2023.

This remarkable figure marks a substantial increase from the previous year's earnings of \$2.5 billion, signifying a robust recovery for the industry in the wake of pandemic challenges.

Agbeko highlighted Ghana's impressive rebound in international arrivals, with numbers soaring from 914,882 visitors in 2022 to 1,148,002 in 2023.

These increased arrivals translated into significant revenue growth, showcasing the sector's resilience and potential for expansion.

The Ministry of Tourism has pledged to nurture an enabling environment for sustainable growth and development in tourism, arts, and culture, recognizing the sector's critical contribution to Ghana's GDP.

"In Africa, the tourism industry showed considerable strength in coping with 75% of each pandemic receipt. Ghana, however, recovered a total international arrival of nine hundred and fourteen thousand,

eight hundred and eighty-two in 2022 and One million, one hundred and forty-eight thousand and two in 2023 giving a receipt of \$2.5 billion and \$3.8 billion respectively.

These are just the international arrivals. The Ministry of Tourism exists to create a conducive environment for sustainable growth and development of Tourism, Arts, and Culture to contribute enormously to GDP through effective and efficient

use of appropriate policies, plans, programmes and projects" he noted.

Deputy Finance Minister, Dr. Stephen Amoah, echoed this sentiment, urging stakeholders to prioritize domestic tourism as a strategy to stabilize the Ghanaian cedi.

He emphasized the necessity of implementing tailored, home-grown policy measures to address the country's specific needs and spur local economic

development.

"One thing I've seen about Africa is that we have a lot of ideas but sometimes the global modules control us too much. We need to build home-grown policy tools that specifically address our needs.

"Let's begin to show the high level of patronage and keep the money here. I think as a country we have everything at our disposal to develop tourism because God has endowed us" he added.

Source: The Independent Ghana | Abiaail Twumwaa Ambofo



John Yao Agbeko, Chief Director, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC)

General News

9 assemblies spend over GHS4m on workshops, fuel, honorarium - Revelations from Takoradi PAC sitting

In a startling disclosure at the Zone four public hearing of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), in Takoradi, Western Region, it has come to light that nine assemblies have collectively exhausted over 4 million Ghana cedis on workshops, fuel, honorarium, and other related expenses.

The findings, extracted from the 2022 Auditor-General's Report, indicate an excess expenditure of GHc 2,706,135.00 by these

assemblies.

The Auditor-General emphasized that, according to the 2019 Guidelines for the utilization of the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), a maximum of 10 percent of the allocations is permitted for administrative expenditure.

Despite receiving a total Common Fund allocation of GHc 20,977,699.78, the nine assemblies surpassed the administrative expense limit by

GHc 2,097,769.98.

The Auditor-General has recommended that the management of the nine assemblies should reimburse the excess expenditure from their Internal Generated Fund (IGF) accounts back into the DACF accounts, ensuring adherence to the guidelines.

Chairman of the Committee, James Klutse-Avedzi, expressed firm resolve during the hearing.

He stated that the Committee would strongly advocate in its final report to Parliament for the rejection of all expenditures exceeding the required 10 percent for administrative purposes on the GIFMIS platform.

This measure is expected to address the issue of over-utilization of the Common Fund for administrative expenses within the assemblies.

Source: *The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey*



James Klutse-Avedzi, Chairman, Public Accounts Committee



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Business

Depreciation of cedi may impede IMF programme - Ato Forson

The Minority Leader in Parliament, has voiced apprehensions regarding the government's management of the Ghanaian cedi, Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, foreseeing potential disruption to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme by year-end.

Dr. Forson criticized the government's fiscal strategies, suggesting that efforts to stabilize the national currency are insufficient and could have adverse economic repercussions.

On Wednesday, May 15, the minority caucus raised alarm over the government's recent borrowing of GH¢7 billion from the treasury bills market to compensate contractors outside its budgetary allocations.

According to the Minority, this practice of exceeding budget limits for political reasons is exacerbating the depreciation of

the Cedi against the dollar.

In an interview with Bernard Avle on the Citi Breakfast Show on Thursday, the minority leader highlighted the likelihood of the IMF program encountering setbacks, which was initially progressing well.

"I must be frank; this program is likely to veer off course by the end of this year, and rectifying it will take time. I am certain of that... let's wait and observe. It primarily hinges on the fiscal aspect," he remarked.

Dr. Ato Forson further elucidated that the forthcoming IMF review, pivotal for releasing the third tranche of the 3 billion External Credit Facility, would rely on outdated data from the previous year, failing to accurately reflect the current economic scenario.

"Let me be honest with you, this programme is certainly going to be derailed by the end of this year and

it is going to take a while. I have no doubt about that... let's wait and see. It is actually on the back of the fiscal," he stated.

"They were on course but as you know the review dates back. So, the next review is going to use the data as of December last year. So the programme indicators to check whether the programme is performing or not is going to use

data six months before the time of review.

"So, obviously six months before it was good. But I can tell you that based on the data and the way they are conducting the affairs of the policy going forward, there is going to be a complete commotion," he stated.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, Minority Leader

Trade Minister orders reversal of recent increase in cement prices

Minister for Trade and Industry, Kobina Tahir Hammond, has taken decisive steps to tackle the recent surge in cement prices by instructing the Cement Manufacturing Development Committee (CMDC) to intervene immediately.

This directive aligns with his earlier mandate to the CMDC during its inauguration on March 8, 2024.

Mr Hammond stressed the urgency for Ghanaian cement manufacturers to swiftly reverse the recent price hikes.

Additionally, he urged the CMDC to enforce transparency by compelling all cement companies to publish their retail prices.

The Minister highlighted that these measures aim to alleviate the burden placed on consumers by arbitrary increases in cement prices.

Furthermore, Hammond

reiterated his call for the adoption of a unified cement pricing mechanism nationwide.

He proposed a model similar to the Unified Petroleum Pricing Fund (UPPF), which regulates fuel retail prices in Ghana, to ensure price consistency and fairness in the cement market.

Established under the Ghana Standards Authority (Manufacture of Cement) Regulations, 2023 (LJ 2480), the CMDC plays a crucial role in regulating the cement industry.

Director-General of the Ghana Standards Authority, Prof. Alex Dodoo, chairs the committee, which includes representatives from cement manufacturers, the Association of Ghana Industries, and governmental bodies.

The CMDC's mandate extends to promoting the manufacture, wholesale, and retail of cement and its components.

With a diverse membership comprising industry experts and regulatory agencies, the CMDC is well-equipped to address

challenges and ensure compliance within the sector.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



K.T. Hammond, Minister for Trade and Industry

International

Dollar rebounds on hot US import prices

The dollar rose on Thursday after data showed U.S. import prices increased 0.9% last month, a jump that raised market fears that the Federal Reserve's fight to tame inflation is not done and could delay plans for policymakers to cut interest rates.

The market also was grappling with a drop in the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits last week that pointed to underlying strength in the U.S. labor market.

The jump in the price index for U.S. imports in April was the largest one-month increase since it rose 2.9% in March 2022, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said. Prices for U.S. imports last declined on a monthly basis in December, BLS said.

"The market is of course very sensitive to signs of inflation from wherever it may come, and the import price series that we got today was meaningfully stronger than expected," said Brain Daingerfield, head of G10 FX strategy at NatWest Markets in Stamford, Connecticut.

"The Fed wants to see consistent progress in more than just one point. The number we got yesterday - the CPI - was not as bad as feared," he said. "But I don't think it was enough to materially change the market's outlook for the Fed and that's reflected in the way that the dollar has bounced back today."

The dollar rebounded from a sharp decline against all major currencies on Wednesday when data showed U.S. inflation slowing to 0.3% in April from a month earlier.

The slowing of consumer prices prompted markets to price in the likelihood that the Fed would cut rates twice this year, with the first coming as early as September.

The import price data, however, raised caution as the dollar index, which tracks the currency against six major peers, rose 0.29% to 104.49 after sliding 0.75% on Wednesday.

A strong U.S. economy also questions how fast inflation might slow.

"Claims between 200,000 and 250,000 tells you you've got a strong labor market," said Steven Ricchiuto, U.S. chief economist at Mizuho Securities USA in New York.

"The reality is inflation is moderating to 3%. That's still above target. Maybe you're jumping to the gun on the inflation story," he said.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 10,000 to a seasonally adjusted 222,000 for the week ended May 11, the Labor Department said. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 220,000 claims in the latest week.

Easing labor market conditions and the resumption in inflation's downward trend have raised the odds of a rate cut in September.

The U.S. central bank last month left its benchmark overnight interest rate unchanged in the current 5.25%-5.50% range, where it has been since July.

The dollar dropped 1% against the yen on Wednesday but was

up 0.26% on Thursday at 155.28, having fallen as low as 153.6 before weak Japanese growth figures dented the yen.

The Japanese currency has fallen around 9.5% this year as the Bank of Japan has kept monetary policy loose while higher Fed interest rates have drawn money towards U.S. bonds and the dollar.

The yen has been particularly sensitive to any widening or closing of the interest rate differential.

The euro hit a two-month high at \$1.0895 on Thursday before dipping to trade 0.19% lower at \$1.0861. Britain's pound reached a one-month top of \$1.2675 before falling back 0.20%.

Source: Reuters



US Dollars

European Union investigates Facebook and Instagram over children's mental health

The European Union is investigating Facebook and Instagram over whether they are so addictive that they are having "negative effects" on the "physical and mental health" of children.

It will also scrutinise if have done enough to check whether users are old enough to use them, and how content is recommended to children.

A number of big tech firms are now under investigation for potential breaches of the EU's tough new Digital Services Act (DSA), and could be fined up to 6% of annual global turnover.

Meta, which owns both platforms, says it has "spent a decade developing more than 50 tools and policies" to protect children.

"This is a challenge the whole industry is facing, and we look

forward to sharing details of our work with the European Commission," it said.

in September, Meta provided regulators with a report on the risks associated with its platforms, as required under the DSA.

The EU has responded by beginning proceedings.

"The Commission is concerned that the systems of both Facebook and Instagram, including their algorithms, may stimulate behavioural addictions in children, as well as create so-called 'rabbit-hole effects,'" the EU said announcing the investigation.

Rabbit-hole effects refer to the propensity of algorithms, when a user looks at one piece of harmful content, to suggest more of the same.

How Meta checks the ages of users

- so called age assurance - is of concern to the EU.

"In addition, the Commission is also concerned about age-assurance and verification methods put in place by Meta," the statement added.

Algorithms which promote harmful content have also been a key concern of the UK communications watchdog Ofcom as it sets out how it may enforce the Online Safety Act.

As with most social networks, users of Meta platforms must be 13 or over, but as Ofcom revealed in a recent report many much younger children use accounts, sometimes with the knowledge of their parents.

EU Commissioner Thierry Breton said in a post on X: "We are not convinced that Meta has done enough to comply with the DSA obligations — to mitigate the risks of

negative effects to the physical and mental health of young Europeans on its platforms Facebook and Instagram".

Mr Breton added the EU was "sparing no effort to protect youth".

Fellow commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in a statement: "We have concerns that Facebook and Instagram may stimulate behavioural addiction and that the methods of age verification that Meta has put in place on their services is not adequate."

Meta is already under investigation by the EU over concerns around political disinformation.

Source: BBC



File Photo

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