



## Private sector contributions to SSNIT reach an all-time high of GH¢395.34 million in March 2024

Page 3

## FDA warns about the growing popularity of shisha among senior high school students

Page 6



## China retains position as largest source of Ghana's import in 2023

Page 8

## Ghanaians to pay more utility tariffs effective July 1

Page 5



**Best Western PLUS**

Accra Beach Hotel, Nungua

For business or leisure, there's always a little something extra.

Reservations: 233 (0) 54 83 25 18 4 [bestwesternplusaccra.com](http://bestwesternplusaccra.com)



# General News

## Hawa Koomson's son stabbed in the chest, in critical condition

**A**to Koomson, son of the Member of Parliament for Awutu Senya East and Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Mavis Hawa Koomson, has reportedly been stabbed in a violent altercation near the Electoral Commission's office in Kasoa.

According to reports, Ato Koomson was critically injured and rushed to the 37 Military Hospital for treatment. Another individual was also injured during the incident.

Eyewitness accounts indicate that the clash began early in the morning when supporters of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) disagreed over the positioning of residents in the queue for the ongoing voter ID card transfer and replacement exercise.

The disagreement allegedly started around 4:00 am due to a

dispute over reserved spots in the queue.

Mr. Koomson arrived at the registration centre approximately 45 minutes after the altercation began.

He reportedly approached an NDC organizer to help resolve the issue, but tensions escalated when another NDC supporter started verbally abusing him.

King Adawu, an NPP member who was also injured in the incident, recounted that the altercation turned violent when an NDC member allegedly pulled out a knife and stabbed Ato Koomson in the chest.

Adawu, who attempted to intervene, sustained a minor cut to his hand.

Both Koomson and Adawu were quickly taken to the hospital. Adawu was treated and discharged, while Koomson remains admitted in critical condition.

The police have arrested two persons in connection with the stabbing incident that occurred at the Ofaakor Electoral Commission Office near Kasoa in the Central Region.

Meanwhile, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the Awutu Senya East Constituency of the Central Region is calling for a thorough, transparent, and unbiased investigation into disturbances recorded at the Electoral Commission's office at Kasoa on Sunday morning.

In a statement issued by the Constituency Communication Officer, Stephen Delali Sowoeckpor, the NDC expressed concern over what they describe as selective arrests, raising questions about the police's impartiality in handling the incident.

The NDC highlighted a "historical context of attacks on NDC supporters allegedly orchestrated

by Hawa Koomson."

**Source: The Independent Ghana**



**Ato Koomson, Mavis Hawa Koomson son**

## Mahama promises to legalise "Okada" business when voted into power

**F**lagbearer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Dramani Mahama, has reaffirmed his pledge to legalise the operations of commercial motorbike riders, commonly known as "Okada," if elected in the 2024 general elections.

The NDC's initiative to formalise the "Okada" business was halted following their defeat in the 2020 general elections.

Addressing motorbike riders in Ashaiman on Friday, May 31, 2024, Mr. Mahama emphasised that the party has incorporated the legalisation of Okada activities into their 2024 manifesto.

He criticised the current government for failing to honour its commitment to replace motorbikes with cars.

"We have in our manifesto that we will legalise "Okada", but we lost the elections and so that promise was not fulfilled. Our opponents

objected to it, claiming okada activities if operationalised will cause accidents.

"They instead promised to take your motorbikes and replace them with cars. Is that not what you were promised? Have you received the cars? It turned 419, we all know that this government is only good at telling lies.

"I stand at Ashaiman here, I know in all the 16 regions you have all your associations. There wouldn't have been space if all okada riders were invited to Ashaiman, there would have been congestion.

I would like to tell those of you present to inform all your unions in the regions that from Ashaiman, I want to declare that we have in our 2024 manifesto, that we will legalise okada business when we win the 2024 general elections.

"Know that the door of your freedom will be opened on January

7, 2025, when they swear me in as President."

He also expressed concern over the country's unemployment rate since he left office in 2016.

"The unemployment rate was 8.5% when I left office in 2016, now it's 14.7% Under Akufo-Addo-Bawumia's government.

If you were not engaged in okada business, the over 1.7 million something engaged in okada, would have been part of the unemployed, if your business was abolished, the unemployment rate would have jumped higher to 25%.

"In East Africa, they have legalised it, and they are working nicely. We can also legalise it, and regulate it in safety and security. When we assume power, we will legalise it.

We have riding instructors, so the National Road Safety Commission

(NRSC) will go to the regions to train you on how to ride safely," he assured.

He encouraged motorbike riders to adhere to the regulations that would be enforced under the upcoming NDC administration.

"I'm pleading with you when we legalise it, you have to follow the rules, the passenger is also paramount. We will also assist those who don't have a licence to get a licence."

**Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**



**File Photo**



# General News

## Private sector contributions to SSNIT reach an all-time high of GH¢395.34 million in March 2024

Private sector contributions to the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) in March 2024 hit an all-time peak of GH¢395.34 million, as reported in the Bank of Ghana's Summary of Economic and Financial Data for May 2024.

This marked a rise from the GH¢334.18 million recorded in November 2023.

The data from the Bank of Ghana (BOG) indicates a positive trend in private sector contributions, with expectations for continued growth throughout the remainder of the year.

This development gains significance in light of recent controversies surrounding the sale of SSNIT's hotels to Agric Minister Bryan Acheampong.

However, Chairperson of the Board of SSNIT, Elizabeth Ohene is reported to have said that "SSNIT has not sold 60 percent shares to the Minister of Agric."

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Dr Anthony Yaw Baah has said that whether SSNIT is soliciting views or not, it will not allow the four hotels to be sold.

The latest high frequency data show broad-based improvement in all the key

indicators following the gradual

lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

*Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay*



SSNIT signage

## Ofosu-Ampofo to begin defence in leaked tape case on June 20

Former Chairman of the National Democratic Congress, Samuel Ofosu-Ampofo, is set to begin his defence on June 20, 2024, in the case where he stands accused, along with another individual, of allegedly inciting violence in a leaked audio recording.

The decision came after the court, presided over by Justice Samuel Asiedu, a Supreme Court Justice acting as an additional High Court judge, granted Mr. Ofosu-Ampofo an extension.

Originally scheduled to begin his defence on May 30, Ofosu-Ampofo was granted more time.

During the court session, Ofosu-Ampofo's counsel, Tony Lithur, informed the court that his client had suffered a leg injury due to a long flight, which affected his ability to meet and prepare for the hearing on May 30.

"I have spoken to him and his doctors say because it is just a swell, within a week or two he could walk with a stick to court. I crave my Lord's indulgence to give us two weeks to open our defence," Counsel submitted.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Yvonne Atokora Obuobisa, agreed to the request for more time since she had seen the doctor's report

indicating that Mr Ofosu-Ampofo would not be able to walk.

The case has been adjourned to June 20 this year.

Meanwhile, Mr. Samuel Ofosu-Ampofo, along with the former Deputy National Communication Officer of the NDC, is facing trial over a leaked audio recording in which Ofosu-Ampofo allegedly incited violence against the leadership of the Electoral Commission (EC) and the National Peace Council (NPC).

Both defendants have pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit assault against a public officer. Additionally, Ofosu-

Ampofo has pleaded not guilty to two separate counts of assault against a public officer.

Prosecution's facts

According to the prosecution's account, following the Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election incident on January 31, 2019, Samuel Ofosu Ampofo met with several NDC communicators on February 3, 2019.

The prosecution detailed that during this meeting, Ofosu Ampofo and Kwaku Boahen outlined a plan involving criminal activities, including acts of violence against the Electoral Commission Chairperson, Mrs. Jean Mensa,

and the Chairman of the National Peace Council, Most Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Asante.

An audio recording of this meeting was leaked, prompting an investigation by the Criminal Investigation Department of the Ghana Police Service into the comments made on the tape.

Furthermore, the prosecution noted that on February 27, 2019, Boahen confirmed in a radio interview his participation in the meeting and stated that the leaked audio accurately represented the discussions from February 3, 2019.

*Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*



Samuel Ofosu-Ampofo, Former Chairman, NDC

# General News

## Adentan-Dodowa Road to be completed by November - Asenso Boakye

The Minister of Roads and Highways, Francis Asenso-Boakye, has announced that the long-delayed Adenta-Dodowa Road Project is expected to be completed by November.

During a visit to the site on Thursday, May 30, the Minister acknowledged the difficulties faced by residents and motorists due to the poor condition of the road.

However, he expressed confidence in the new contractor, who has made significant progress since beginning work seven weeks ago.

"They started seven weeks ago and already they've done seven kilometres, doing massive excavation works and drainage facilities and I'm very encouraged by the work that they've done and I'm very confident that they'll be able to stick within the schedule

and by November, the Motorist will start experiencing the benefits."

The Minister explained that delays were due to issues with the previous contractor and new developments along the corridor.

He assured that the necessary steps were being taken to ensure the new contractor could start work as soon as possible.

"So we had issues with the contracts and since I've been here, I've had discussions with my officials and we are going to terminate that contract, we'll repackage it and the project and give it to our new contractor. But I can assure you that we are going to go through the necessary process to ensure that contractors come to the site as soon as possible."

Residents, who have been suffering

due to the poor state of the road, expressed relief at the Minister's visit and the announcement of a new contractor.

"The place is very bad, you know some of us use the smaller vehicle and we are suffering. You have to be changing car parts almost every time at a very high price. So it's very difficult.

"It's something we've been talking about over and over again at the assembly that the government should come to our aid and so

we are happy that the Minister himself is here to ascertain the danger of the road so I think we are okay now."

One resident stated, "The situation is very bad. Many of us with smaller vehicles face frequent and costly repairs. We have repeatedly asked the assembly for help, so we're happy the Minister is here to see the danger first-hand. We feel reassured now."

**Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay**



Francis Asenso-Boakye, Minister of Roads and Highways

## MoE, NaCCA announce significant slash in courses offered at the Senior High School level

Ministry of Education (MoE), in partnership with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), has announced a substantial reduction in the number of subjects available at the Senior High School (SHS) level.

The revised curriculum will decrease the number of subjects from 63 to 37 and is scheduled to take effect in the forthcoming academic year.

Below is a list of the proposed courses to be offered in the next academic year:

New Senior High School Curriculum

### Core Subjects:

1. English Language
2. Additional Mathematics
3. Mathematics
4. General Science
5. Social Studies
6. Art & Design Foundation,
7. Agricultural Science

### Elective Subjects:

1. Biology
2. Chemistry
3. Physics
4. Computing
5. Agriculture
6. Physical Education & Health
6. Home Economics
8. History
9. Economics
10. Geography
11. Government
12. Art and Design Studio
13. Performing Arts
14. Applied Technology
15. Business
16. Religious Studies
17. Literature-in-English
18. ICT
19. Ghanaian Language
20. French
21. Arabic
22. Spanish

Furthermore, the curriculum will incorporate specialised subjects that will be offered based upon the availability of qualified teachers.

1. Engineering Science + Robotics
2. Biomedical Science

3. Aviation and Aerospace Engineering
4. Robotics

5. Manufacturing Engineering

The Ministry of Education's curriculum overhaul aims to

improve educational quality by concentrating on a more focused and pertinent selection of subjects.

This reform is anticipated to better prepare students with the necessary knowledge and skills for both higher education and the workforce.

**Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**





# General News

## Effutu registers 4,659 applicants in the just ended limited voter registration exercise

The Electoral Commission's (EC) Effutu Office concluded its limited registration on Wednesday, May 29, with a total of 4,659 eligible voters registered.

Among them were 2,369 males and 2,290 females.

During the registration process, there were 31 challenged cases based on residency status in the Effutu Municipality.

Returning Officer, Mr. Rufai Sabtiwu, disclosed to the Ghana News Agency that the registered figure surpassed the targeted 3000, marking a successful

outcome despite a few instances of confusion outside the office.

Police intervention helped resolve these issues.

Mr. Sabtiwu urged political parties and stakeholders to continue educating people about the importance of a peaceful and successful electoral exercise.

The Electoral Commission (EC) officially ended the 2024 limited voter registration exercise today, Wednesday, May 29, 2024.

The 21-day exercise which commenced on Tuesday, May 7, was extended by two days to

make up for the challenges that fraught the first two days of the process.

The Commission targeted 623,000 first-time voters to be enrolled in

the national album ahead of the 2024 election.

*Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay*



File Photo

## Ghanaians to pay more utility tariffs effective July 1

Starting July 1, 2024, household and industrial consumers will see an increase in utility tariffs for electricity and water, following the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission's (PURC) second-quarter review under the Quarterly Tariff Review Mechanism.

The PURC has announced a 3.45% increase in electricity tariffs for lifeline consumers (0-30kWh).

Other residential electricity consumers (31 kWh and above), as well as non-residential users, will face a 5.84% increase.

Industrial electricity consumers will experience a 4.92% increase, effective from the same date.

Water tariffs will also rise by 5.16% across all customer classes for the period under review, according to PURC's quarterly update.

These changes will be in effect from July 1, 2024, to September 30, 2024, as per the second-quarter tariff announcement.

"These reviews are undertaken to maintain the real value of the tariffs, thereby keeping the utility service providers financially viable to enable them to deliver their services to consumers," stated the Commission.

The decision to raise electricity and water tariffs was influenced by key uncontrollable factors, including the exchange rate between the US Dollar and the Ghana Cedi, domestic inflation, the electricity generation mix, and the cost of fuel, particularly natural gas.

The Commission also took into account the competitiveness of industries and the general living conditions of Ghanaians before determining the new tariffs.

During the review period, there

was no change in the generation mix between hydro and thermal power.

However, the weighted average cost of gas (WACOG) rose by 5.23%, from USD 7.6426/MMBtu to USD 8.0422/MMBtu.

The Cedi depreciated against the Dollar by 20.80%, moving from GHS 12.1349 in the first quarter to GHS 14.6584 in the second quarter.

Meanwhile, inflation eased slightly from 28.27% in the first quarter to 24.38% in the second quarter of

2024.

In the first-quarter review, there was no change in electricity tariffs for lifeline consumers, and an average reduction of 6.56% for those consuming 301kWh and above.

Consumers using more than 301kWh saw an average reduction of 4.98%.

The water tariff for the first quarter of 2024 remained at 0.34%, unchanged from the fourth quarter of 2023.

*Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay*



ECG meters

# General News

## FDA warns about the growing popularity of shisha among senior high school students

**F**ood and Drugs Authority (FDA) has raised concerns about the growing trend of shisha usage among senior high school students in the Ashanti Region.

In response to this worrying trend, the FDA, in collaboration with KIDA Network, has intensified awareness campaigns in senior high schools to educate students about the dangers and consequences of drug abuse.

Regulatory Officer Prince Osei Owusu has emphasised the need for stronger cooperation between the Ghana Education Service and the FDA to effectively tackle this issue.

“Students are abusing the drugs, especially with the introduction of Shisha. You know this is a modern way of introducing cigarettes into the system and is targeted among the youth. In fact, they don’t know that it’s also a form of tobacco.

“And I think that with this information, they are enlightened, they are going to put it into use, now that they know that it’s also a form of tobacco. Going forward, they’ll know how to desist from it. Based on the schools we’ve visited; I can say that it’s on the ascendancy.”

“I think the Ghana Education Service should collaborate with the FDA so that we can have access

to most of these schools because this is where the Youth are more concentrated.”

Students who have been informed about the dangers of drug abuse have pledged to steer clear of all forms of substance misuse.

Group Coordinator for KIDA Network, Diya Williams, highlighted the importance of increasing awareness about the severe consequences of drug abuse and addiction.

“We expect to create more awareness because we believe the voice out there is not loud enough, so we’ve added ours to educate not just the youth but the general public on the risk that is involved

in drug abuse, drug addiction.”

This increase in shisha smoking, along with the rising abuse of other drugs, poses a serious threat to the youth’s future.

Shisha smoking, which involves inhaling flavoured tobacco through a water pipe, contains nicotine and can be addictive.

Public health organisations, including the World Health Organisation, warn that shisha smoking can be as harmful as cigarette smoking.

**Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**



FDA Office Building





## For business or leisure, there's always a little something extra.

### Amenities:

- Delicious Breakfast
- 24 Hour Parking
- Complimentary continental breakfast
- Pool with waterfall
- Refrigerators in all rooms
- WiFi Internet
- 37 min from the airport

### Accra Beach Hotel

51 Beach Drive, Nungua P: 233 (0) 302 71 11 11 - 8  
Reservations: 233 (0) 54 83 25 18 4 [bestwesternplusaccra.com](http://bestwesternplusaccra.com)

**Wherever Life Takes You, Best Western Is There.®**

Each Best Western® branded hotel is independently owned and operated.



# Business

## China retains position as largest source of Ghana's import in 2023

China retained its status as Ghana's primary import source in 2023, with imports totalling GHC 33.9 billion, up from GHC 26.4 billion in 2022, as per the Ghana 2023 Trade Report by the Ghana Statistical Service.

This represented a slight decrease in China's share from 23.2% to 22.5%.

The Russian Federation entered the top five import sources, surpassing the United Kingdom, mainly importing mineral fuels and oils.

The Netherlands continued as a significant contributor, providing GHC 17.3 billion worth of mineral

fuels and oils to Ghana.

India rose to the fourth position with GHC 11.7 billion in imports, while the United States maintained the fifth position with GHC 10.9 billion.

The top ten products accounted for over a third of all imports, led by diesel-automotive gas oil at GHC 27.1 billion, followed by light oils, motor spirit, and super at GHC 22.3 billion.

Sea transport dominated the import mode at 89.1%, followed by road transport at 6.1%, and air transport at 4.7% in 2023.

*Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay*



File Photo

## Ghana records GH¢11.5 billion trade surplus in the first quarter of 2024

Ghana achieved a significant trade surplus of GH¢11.5 billion in the first quarter of 2024.

This surplus comes amidst a notable 20.4% increase in the average prices of export commodities between Q1 2023 and Q1 2024.

According to the latest quarterly report released by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), this increase signals a promising economic trajectory for the nation.

Exports in the first quarter of 2024 amounted to GH¢59.5 billion, while imports were GH¢48.1 billion, leading to a trade surplus of GH¢11.5 billion.

Gold bullion, valued at GH¢29.7 billion, was the top export product in Q1 2024, with a value more than twice that of the second-highest export, crude petroleum, at GH¢12.2 billion.

The top five export products are gold, crude petroleum, cocoa beans, cashew nuts, and cocoa paste, which together account for 82.6 per cent of all exports.

Speaking during the launch of the Ghana 2023 Trade Report,

Government Statistician, Professor Samuel Kobina Annim said "total exports in the first quarter of 2024 are GH¢59.5 billion relative to GH¢48.1 billion.

Our trade balance in the first quarter of 2024 was G¢11.5 billion, which is a trade surplus that is exports being higher than imports by GH¢11.5 billion".

Meanwhile, the export value of cocoa products in the first quarter of 2024 decreased to \$592.2 million relative to the average of \$825.8 million for the first quarters

of 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Commenting on this, Prof. Annim emphasised the need for immediate measures to tackle the weaknesses surrounding the decline of cocoa exports

"In 2022, the highest was in the first quarter. In 2023, the highest was in the first quarter, averaging about US\$ 875 million for these quarters in the last three years.

Then suddenly, we see a sharp decline to about \$585 million in the first quarter of 2023.

"A significant decline from about

\$ 870 million to about US\$ 580 million in the first quarter of 2023.

This a situation that the agency [COCOBOD] is aware of and has found reasons that led to it, our expectation is that we minimise the vulnerabilities associated with whatever led to it [the decline in cocoa exports], and going forward we can sustain the returns from cocoa," Prof. Anim noted.

*Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*



File Photo



# International

## Zambian ex-first lady arrested on fraud charges

Zambia's former First Lady Esther Lungu and her daughter Chiyeso Katete have been arrested over possession of properties suspected to be proceeds of crime.

The two were arrested on Thursday in the capital, Lusaka, alongside another close relative identified as Charles Phiri, authorities said.

Ms Lungu "failed to give a reasonable explanation" of how she acquired a \$1.5m (£1.2m) estate in the capital, the state anti-drug agency said.

Former President Edgar Lungu said the family would challenge the charges in court.

The former leader has been accusing the government of victimising him and members of his Patriotic Front (PF) party to block his return to politics ahead of 2026 elections.

He recently claimed to have been put under house arrest over his heightened political activities although the government denied it.

Last September, his wife was arrested over corruption allegations, involving cases of theft of motor vehicles and title deeds, which she denied.

On Thursday, Ms Lungu, 66, was arrested on suspicion of fraudulently acquiring a luxurious real estate in Lusaka, the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) said in a statement.

It said Ms Lungu owned "15 white double storey flats" situated in State Lodge area of Lusaka's Chongwe town, "reasonably suspected to be proceeds of crime".

The exact date the property, owned jointly with other unknown people, was acquired was not clear but the DEC said it was bought between 2015 and 2023.

The DEC said her daughter was faced with additional charges of acquiring another three flats estate in Lusaka, suspected to have been bought fraudulently.

"Further, she was arrested for possession of 1 high-cost house, four chicken runs, and associated external works in the property," the agency added.

They were all released on bond, said Mr Lungu, adding that they were safe at home after being questioned by DEC officials for several hours on Thursday.

Another of Ms Lungu's daughters, Tasila, is facing separate but

related charges, according to the DEC.

She has been ordered, through her lawyers, to appear at the DEC on Monday.

The accused persons did not comment on the allegations but in a brief statement, the former president said the family would challenge them in court.

It was not immediately clear if and when they will appear in court.

Mr Lungu announced a comeback to politics last October, prompting the government to withdraw his retirement benefits.

He had retired from politics after losing the presidency to Hakainde

Hichilema in 2021.

After six years in office, Mr Lungu left the southern African country heavily in debt and with a precarious economy.

Several former ministers, government officials and members of Mr Lungu's family have been on the radar of Zambia's investigative agencies in an anti-corruption campaign launched by President Hichilema.

Mr Hichilema has vowed to recover all resources allegedly looted while Mr Lungu was in power.

Critics say the anti-corruption drive is politically motivated.

Source: BBC.com



Esther Lungu, Zambia's Former First Lady

## Israeli ministers threaten to quit over ceasefire plan

Two far-right Israeli ministers have threatened to quit and collapse the governing coalition if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agrees to a Gaza ceasefire proposal unveiled by US President Joe Biden on Friday.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said they were opposed to striking any deal before Hamas was destroyed.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid has pledged to back the government if Mr Netanyahu supported the plan.

The prime minister himself insisted there would be no

permanent truce until Hamas's military and governing capabilities were destroyed and all hostages released.

However, the White House said on Sunday it expected Israel would agree to the plan.

"This was an Israeli proposal. We have every expectation that if Hamas agrees to the proposal - as was transmitted to them, an Israeli proposal - then Israel would say yes," White House national security spokesperson John Kirby told ABC News.

Before the threats of resignation were issued, one of Mr Netanyahu's advisers told the Sunday Times that many of the plan's details needed to be worked out, and

there would be no permanent ceasefire "until all our objectives are met".

But senior foreign policy adviser Ophir Falk also said Mr Biden's plan was a "deal we agreed to - it's not a good deal, but we dearly want the hostages released, all of them".

The three-part proposal would begin with a six-week ceasefire in which the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) would withdraw from populated areas of Gaza.

The deal would eventually lead to the release of all hostages, a permanent "cessation of hostilities" and a major reconstruction plan for Gaza.

But in a post on social media on Saturday, Mr Smotrich said he told Mr Netanyahu he would "not be part of a government that agrees to the proposed outline and ends the war without destroying Hamas and bringing back all the hostages".

Echoing his words, Mr Ben-Gvir said "the deal.. means the end of the war and the abandonment of the goal to destroy Hamas. This is a reckless deal, which constitutes a victory for terrorism and a security threat to the State of Israel".

He vowed to "dissolve the government" rather than agree to the proposal.

Mr Netanyahu's right-wing

Continued on page 10



# International

## *Israeli ministers threaten to quit over ceasefire plan*

*Continued from page 9*

coalition holds a slim majority in parliament, relying on a host of factions, including Mr Ben-Gvir's Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) party - who hold six seats - and Mr Smotrich's Religious Zionism party - who hold seven seats - to maintain power.

But Yair Lapid, one of Israel's most influential opposition politicians, was quick to offer his backing to the embattled prime minister. His Yesh Atid (There is a future) party holds 24 seats.

He said the prime minister "has our safety net for a hostage deal if Ben-Gvir and Smotrich leave the government".

The row came as tens of thousands of people rallied in Tel Aviv, calling on the Israeli government to accept Mr Biden's proposed plan.

Many demonstrators also demanded Mr Netanyahu's resignation and some told reporters they feared the prime minister could torpedo the proposal.

A group campaigning to bring home Israeli hostages captured by Hamas has warned that such a move would endanger the lives of those held in Gaza.

Scuffles broke out between protesters and police, who used mounted officers and water cannons to disperse the crowds. Some demonstrators were reportedly detained.

Protests have become a fixture in Tel Aviv in recent months, as families of hostages and other anti-government campaigners have held rallies calling for a hostage deal - as well as for Mr Netanyahu to step down or call an election.

In a joint statement on Saturday, mediators from Egypt, Qatar and the US urged both Israel and Hamas to "finalise" Mr Biden's proposed deal.

Officials said that "as mediators in the ongoing discussions to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages and detainees",

they "call on both Hamas and Israel to finalise the agreement embodying the principles outlined by President Joe Biden".

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also offered his backing to the plan, telling reporters that his government could "flood Gaza with far more aid" if Hamas accepts the ceasefire plan.

Earlier, a senior Hamas politician told the BBC it "will go for this deal" if Israel does.

In a statement after Mr Biden unveiled the plan, Mr Netanyahu's office insisted Israel's "conditions for ending the war have not changed".

It listed these as "the destruction of Hamas military and governing capabilities, the freeing of all hostages and ensuring that Gaza no longer poses a threat to Israel".

The statement added Israel would "continue to insist these conditions are met" before agreeing to a

permanent ceasefire.

However, the comments seemed to be vague enough for Mr Netanyahu to be able to claim that his objectives had been achieved.

Mr Netanyahu's office did not mention "total victory" - which he has repeatedly highlighted as a key aim for the war in Gaza.

This omission may allow the prime minister to reject criticism that the deal offers major concessions to Hamas.

On Sunday, Israeli President Isaac Herzog said on social media that he would give Mr Netanyahu's government his "full support for a deal which will see the release of the hostages".

"It is our inherent obligation to bring them home within the framework of a deal that preserves the security interests of the State of Israel," he said

**Source: BBC.com**



File Photo



Our excellent customer service and high quality printing  
make us the most reliable printing partner for all the projects  
you need done, right now.

## Your Print Solutions Partner



**Universal**  
CRYSTAL PRINT GHANA LTD.

No. 13 St. John's Road, Achimota  
P.O. Box AN 19472 Accra North

+233 (0) 302 409 210  
+233 (0) 302 409 211

[www.universalcrystalprint.com](http://www.universalcrystalprint.com)  
[info@universalcrystalprint.com](mailto:info@universalcrystalprint.com)