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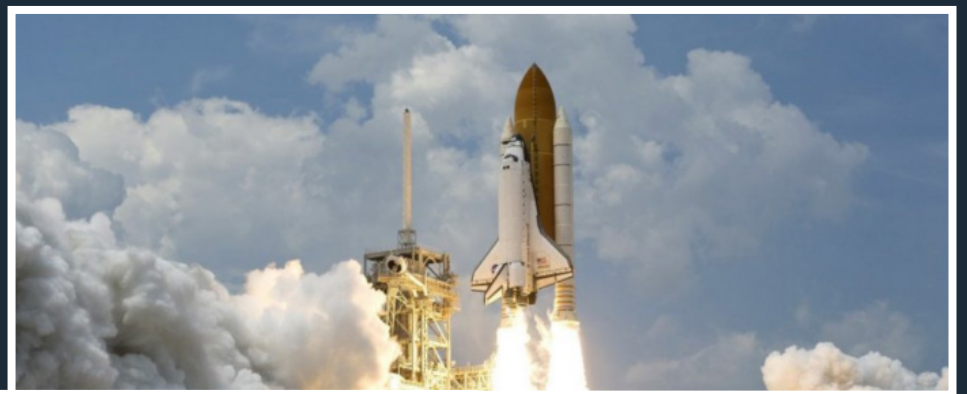


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General News

I will scrap tax on bet winnings – John Mahama promises

Former President John Dramani Mahama has pledged to eliminate the betting tax introduced by the Akufo-Addo-led government should he emerge victorious in the 2024 elections.

At a National Democratic Congress (NDC) Youth Townhall Meeting in Accra on Monday evening, August 12, Mahama outlined his plans to address significant economic challenges facing Ghanaians which have been caused by the introduction of several tax measures to enable the government rake in enough revenue.

Mahama assured attendees that the next National Democratic Congress will also scrap the Electronic Transactions Levy also known as e-levy and COVID-19 levy.

“You can also be assured that we will abolish the e-levy, remove the COVID Levy, and scrap the betting tax. I urge you to stand with us, stand for your dreams, and stand for a better Ghana,” he said

The 10 per cent betting tax

introduced in August 2023, applies to all winnings from betting and lottery games at the payout point.

On May 1, 2022, the approved E-levy by Parliament at a rate of 1.5 per cent took effect.

The levy failed to meet all of its revenue targets since its introduction with players in the telco space raising concerns over the practicality of running an effective mobile money service with the levy in place.

Following this, the government revised the rate downwards to 1 per cent and this took effect on January 11, 2023.

On March 31, 2021, President Akufo-Addo assented to the COVID-19 Health Recovery Levy Act, 2021 (Act 1068), enabling the implementation of the levy at a rate of 1 per cent from May 1, 2021

There have been growing calls from the Minority in Parliament and various public sectors to eliminate taxes like the COVID levy and e-levy to ease the

financial burdens on Ghanaians, who are grappling with a high cost of living.

Minister of State at the Finance Ministry, Abena Osei Asare, has however, highlighted the necessity of the levy, despite the official end of the pandemic.

She stressed the continuing need for funding to maintain the country’s supply of COVID-19 vaccines, which are crucial for building citizens’ immunity.

“COVID is no more, but we still feel the impact of COVID. There are many things that we did during COVID-19 that we are now having to take care of,” Osei Asare explained.

Meanwhile, the 2024 flagbearer of the NDC has urged the youth to support his vision for a prosperous

Ghana.

“Together, we can build the Ghana we want, where every young Ghanaian can succeed. With these policy proposals, I invite Ghana’s youth to partner with Naana Jane and me in our shared commitment to restoring the nation’s potential for future generations,” he said.

Additionally, Mahama called for improved mechanisms to retain local talent, noting the troubling trend of professionals leaving Ghana due to economic hardships.

He emphasized the need for a system that effectively supports and harnesses the country’s human capital.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



John Dramani Mahama, NDC Flagbearer

Bawumia halts regional campaign ahead of manifesto launch

Flagbearer of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) for the 2024 elections, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, has temporarily paused his campaign efforts to rest and prepare for the party’s upcoming manifesto launch this weekend.

According to a statement from the Director of Communications for the Bawumia 2024 campaign, Dennis Miracles Aboagye, the Vice President is taking this short break to refine key elements of the manifesto before its official release.

“The Leader of the New Patriotic Party will, together with the team, spend the next few days preparing and finalizing the NPP 2024 Manifesto, which is scheduled to be launched on Sunday, August

18, 2024. Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia resumes the campaign tour immediately after the manifesto launch,” the release read.

Ghana’s Vice President, Dr. Bawumia, has been actively campaigning across the country, making several noteworthy promises. Among them, he has pledged to abolish the Electronic Levy (E-levy) and eliminate the tax on sports betting.

Additionally, he has committed to allocating 3 per cent of Ghana’s GDP to infrastructure and road development.

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) is set to unveil its manifesto in Takoradi, the capital of the Western Region, on Sunday, August 18, 2024.

Before halting his campaign, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia visited all 16 regions of Ghana. His tour spanned six weeks, starting on April 29 and

ending on June 12.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, NPP Flagbearer

General News

GHS intensifies surveillance amid mpox emergency declaration in Africa

The Ghana Health Service (GHS) has ramped up its surveillance efforts following the declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the Africa CDC, due to a significant surge in Mpox cases across 15 African countries.

The GHS is taking proactive measures to minimize Ghana's exposure to the disease, which, though rare, can be fatal.

This move comes as the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported 2,030 cases and 13 deaths so far this year, a sharp increase compared to the 1,145 cases and seven deaths recorded in 2023.

Notably, four countries—Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda—have reported their first-ever Mpox cases since mid-July 2024.

Director of Public Health at GHS, Dr. Franklin Asiedu Bekoe, emphasized the importance of heightened vigilance among Ghanaians, particularly regarding unusual skin rashes.

"We are going to activate our surveillance system. We aim to raise awareness so that people do not mistake Mpox for chickenpox. We will also enhance our coordination efforts," Dr. Bekoe stressed.

He further clarified that Ghana should not have been listed on the Africa CDC website as one of the 15

African countries with confirmed Mpox cases, noting that the last recorded case in Ghana was in April 2023.

"In Ghana, our last case was in April 2023. Since we have had cases in the past, we are activating our system to manage any potential cases," he added.

Mpox, which can cause severe lesions across the body, spreads from animals to humans and between people through close contact, including skin-to-skin interaction and respiratory transmission. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, and body-wide lesions, and the disease can be deadly if left untreated.

Two main strains of the virus exist,

with the milder one responsible for the global outbreak in 2022 that spread primarily through sexual contact. The more deadly strain, endemic to Central Africa, is the cause of the recent variant detected in DR Congo.

There are three available vaccines for Mpox, but they are typically reserved for individuals at high risk or those who have been in close contact with an infected person.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



File Photo

About 5.5 million Ghanaians risk being homeless due to degradation in coastal areas - World Bank

An estimated 5.5 million coastal residents in Ghana are grappling with significant challenges due to severe erosion and flooding, affecting 80% of the country's coastline.

The World Bank reports that some coastal areas are eroding at rates of 4 to 12 meters annually.

The economic impact of this coastal degradation is substantial, costing approximately 4% of Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year.

This ongoing issue threatens local communities, ecosystems, and biodiversity, as highlighted by Sustainable Development Programme Leader at the World Bank, Naila Ahmed.

"Coastal degradation costs the government and the country about 4% of its GDP each year, threatening communities, ecosystems and biodiversity," she noted in an address on behalf of the World Bank Country Director for Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Naila Ahmed made these remarks during the launch of the West Africa Coastal Areas Resilience Investment Project II (WACA ResIP 2) in Accra.

The project, supported by a \$150 million World Bank loan and a \$5 million grant, aims to enhance the resilience of targeted coastal communities and

ecosystems, thereby safeguarding livelihoods and natural resources.

Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Ophelia Mensah-Hayford, emphasized the urgent need to address coastal erosion exacerbated by climate change.

She stressed the importance of managing Ghana's coastal zones for sustainable development and climate resilience, acknowledging the significant role of the WACA ResIP in restoring these areas.

"The core objective of WACA ResIP is to address coastal erosion, flooding, pollution and ecosystem vulnerability, both nationally and regionally. The programme integrates activities of countries and regional institutions to achieve transformational and sustainable change in coastal zone management."

"It is a multifaceted approach that aims to strengthen the resilience of targeted communities and areas in coastal West Africa by engaging countries through technical assistance, finance and dialogue."

"This project directly responds to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in coastal areas, which are among the most climate-vulnerable habitats," the minister explained.

The WACA ResIP initiative focuses on mitigating coastal erosion, flooding, pollution, and ecosystem vulnerability on both a national and regional scale.

It aims to foster transformational and sustainable change in coastal management through technical assistance, financial support, and regional collaboration. The project aligns with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for climate adaptation in vulnerable coastal areas.

In Ghana, the WACA ResIP will tackle erosion and flooding through specific interventions at Korle Lagoon, Densu Delta, and the Keta Lagoon Complex.

At Korle Lagoon, the project will enhance ongoing efforts to construct a jetty, prevent sediment buildup, and stabilize embankments.

In the Densu Delta, the focus will be on improving spatial planning and enforcement to protect the delta ecosystem and bolster buffer vegetation.

The Keta Lagoon Complex will see initiatives aimed at reforestation, particularly in mangrove areas affected by saline intrusion and sea-level rise, alongside efforts to address erosion throughout the complex.

The project is designed to go beyond

environmental remediation by creating job opportunities and contributing to national socio-economic development. Collaboration among government partners, the private sector, development partners, and civil society is crucial for the project's success.

Prof. Patrick K. Agbesinyale, Chief Director of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, and the Awomefia of Anlo State, Togbe Sri III, have both underscored the importance of this initiative for local communities and pledged their support for its effective implementation.

Since the 1960s, Ghana has experienced a temperature rise of about 1°C, with projections indicating further increases between 1°C and 3°C by mid-century, and between 2.3°C and 5.3°C by the end of the century.

This warming trend is expected to intensify heavy rainfall, leading to more frequent flooding, flash floods, and riverbank erosion. Coastal communities in Africa, including Ghana, face increasing threats from erosion, flooding, and pollution, which undermine both physical landscapes and socio-economic stability.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



World Bank Logo

General News

NPP suspends two executives in Suhum over anti-party activities

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) has taken disciplinary action against two of its executives in the Suhum Constituency, suspending them for engaging in activities that go against the party's principles.

The suspended executives are Samuel Baah, the Constituency Communication Officer, and Alhaji Bala Abubakar, the Deputy Constituency Nasara Coordinator.

The decision, made by the Constituency Executive Committee (CEC), was communicated in letters handed to the affected members.

According to a statement signed by Constituency Secretary Stephen A. Odame on Tuesday, August 13, the two executives were found guilty of actions that breached the NPP's constitution, resulting in their suspension. These actions were described as divisive and harmful to the party's unity.

The CEC outlined a series of misconducts, including the duo's involvement in campaigning against the party's officially

chosen parliamentary candidate and organizing processions with anti-party messages.

They were also accused of presenting a petition to the incumbent Member of Parliament, urging him to run as an independent candidate, a move that directly contradicts the party's rules.

In one instance, it was noted that after the Constituency Delegates' Conference, which confirmed the party's parliamentary candidate for the 2024 elections, Samuel Baah expressed dissatisfaction with the outcome.

He set up a Public Address system on his car and travelled through various communities in the constituency, playing a song that implied opposition to the party's decision.

Additionally, the CEC discovered that the two executives were behind a series of processions disguised as health walks, during which participants displayed placards with slogans like "No Oboafu, No Vote" and "Few delegates can't decide for Suhum."

These activities took place in

multiple communities, culminating in a procession through the streets of Suhum on July 28, 2024. The procession ended with the delivery of a petition to the incumbent MP, Hon. Kwadjo Asante, urging him to run as an independent candidate in the upcoming election.

The CEC's decision to suspend Baah and Abubakar was also influenced by their continued defiance, despite being removed from the party's WhatsApp platforms as a sign of disapproval.

Their actions were ultimately deemed to violate key articles of the NPP Constitution, leading to their suspension from their positions and forfeiture of party membership.

The CEC was guided by Article 3(9)(1) of the NPP Constitution to come to this decision.

The said provision states: "A member of the Party, who stands as an independent candidate against the officially elected member of the party, or who joins or declares his or her support for another Political Party, or for an independent candidate, when the

Party has sponsored a candidate in a general or by-elections, automatically forfeits his or her membership from the Party (emphasis provided)".

Also, according to article 3(5)(A) (4) of the NPP Constitution (as amended) it is the right and duty of every member of the Party, "at all times to abide by and publicly uphold the decisions of the Party".

The NPP has stressed the importance of discipline and unity as the 2024 elections approach, warning that any similar behaviour will not be tolerated within the party.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



NPP Flag

We give out more than we receive – SSNIT bemoans benefit-contribution gap

The Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) is facing a pivotal challenge due to the widening gap between benefit payouts and contributions.

This issue was highlighted by SSNIT Director-General Kofi Osafo Maafo during the 2024 Operations and Benefits Conference at Elmina Beach Resort.

Over the past decade, benefit payments under the SSNIT scheme have surged significantly, climbing from GH¢941.27 million in 2014 to over GH¢5.4 billion in 2023. In contrast, contribution collections have increased more slowly, rising from GH¢1.7 billion to just over GH¢6 billion during the same period.

Mr. Maafo pointed out that this growing disparity, where benefit payments are outstripping contributions, represents a major challenge for the Trust.

"This situation in which the Trust pays out more than it collects should be a source of great concern to all of us," Mr. Maafo warned.

He attributed the growing disparity to multiple factors, including the maturing phase of the SSNIT Fund and the rising number of retirees accessing benefits.

He also noted that changes brought about by the National Pensions Act 2008 (Act 766) have intensified the Trust's challenges.

Mr. Maafo highlighted that the reduction in the scheme's funding

rate from 17.5 percent to 11 percent, coupled with a shorter vesting period and enhanced benefits, has contributed to the financial strain on SSNIT.

While acknowledging these legislative adjustments, he emphasized the need for innovative strategies to mitigate their effects until the law can be revised.

Mr. Maafo identified one of

the immediate challenges as the inconsistent payment of contributions by public sector workers, particularly those under the Controller and Accountant General's Department.

As the government is the largest employer, delays in this sector's contribution payments put considerable pressure on SSNIT's resources.

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SSNIT Signage

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He warned that unless this problem is promptly addressed, it could impair the Trust's capacity to fulfill its future obligations.

To tackle these challenges, Mr. Maafo proposed a strategic approach focusing on three main areas: broadening the coverage of the SSNIT scheme, enforcing compliance, and implementing advanced technology to manage the Trust's operations.

He underscored the importance of increasing active membership to boost contribution collections and ensure the scheme's long-term viability.

The SEED (Self-Employed Enrollment Drive) initiative, aimed at incorporating more workers into the scheme, was highlighted as a crucial strategy. However, Mr. Maafo raised concerns about current enrollment numbers

falling short of targets.

SSNIT is focusing significantly on technology to address sustainability issues within the scheme.

The Director-General announced that SSNIT management, supported by the operations team, will soon introduce a digital solution called the 'SSNIT Digital Bouquet'.

This initiative will feature a new website, portal, an upgraded USSD platform, and the much-anticipated SSNIT Mobile App.

He expressed hope that these digital advancements will enhance service delivery and facilitate more convenient, regular contributions from members and employers.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay

GNFS saves properties worth GHS94m from fire attacks in first half of 2024

The Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) has disclosed that it prevented properties totalling over GH¢94 million from fire damage in the first half of the year.

This includes residential buildings, industrial sites, and public facilities, reflecting significant advancements in the GNFS's fire management strategies despite facing operational challenges.

The total cost of fire damage has notably decreased, dropping from GH¢120 million last year to GH¢89 million this year, a reduction of 26.5%.

Data provided to the media reveals that 3,889 fire incidents were recorded from January to July 2024, compared to 3,819 during the same period in 2023, showing a modest increase of 1.83%.

This rise is attributed to severe weather conditions and widespread non-compliance with fire safety protocols early in the year.

Major causes of these fires included electrical faults from improper appliance use, gas leaks from faulty LPG stoves and cylinders, careless burning of refuse and brush, misuse of open flames such as candles and mosquito coils, lightning strikes, and deliberate arson.

The Greater Accra and Ashanti regions experienced the highest number of fires, with 712 and 429 incidents respectively, followed by the Eastern Region with 390 fires. The North East Region had the fewest fires, with only 23 incidents.

Comparing this year's data to the previous year's, domestic fires decreased by 3.33%, from 1,476 in 2023 to 1,427 in 2024. Commercial fires fell by 4.86%, from 638 to 607, industrial fires dropped by 13.33%, from 15 to 13, and vehicular fires decreased by 9.36%, from 363 to 329.

On the other hand, bushfires increased by 9.5%, rising from 559 last year to 612 this year. Fire-

related deaths decreased from 18 in 2023 to 12 in 2024, a 33.33% reduction, while fire-related injuries also dropped significantly from 90 to 30, a decrease of 66.67%.

Deputy National Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the GNFS, Divisional Officer III (DO III) Desmond Essoun Ackah, attributed these positive outcomes to the effective implementation of safety measures and emergency response strategies.

He highlighted that these improvements have not only enhanced public safety but also streamlined the service's operations, enabling better resource management and emergency response.

Looking ahead, DO III Ackah assured that the GNFS will intensify public fire safety campaigns through traditional and social media, focusing on residential areas, transport hubs, market centers, and institutions.

Additionally, there will be an increase in fire safety audits and inspections at both public and private commercial properties to identify and address fire hazards.

The GNFS is also collaborating with the National Road Safety Authority and other relevant organizations to enhance road safety education, promote compliance with emergency vehicle sirens, and reduce road accidents and fatalities.

He urged the public to follow basic fire safety protocols to prevent incidents and protect lives, property, and the environment.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



File Photo

Ghana will launch a rocket into space soon - Space Science and Technology Institute

Ghana is on the path to launching a rocket into space, according to an announcement by the Ghana Space Science and Technology Institute.

However, this ambitious goal

will necessitate partnerships with other member states of the International Astronomical Union (IAU).

This announcement comes on the sidelines of the 2024 IAU General Assembly, which is being held in

Cape Town, South Africa.

This marks a historic moment as it is the first time in the Union's 105-year history that this prestigious event is being hosted on African soil, symbolizing a major milestone for both the IAU and

South Africa.

The IAU General Assembly is recognized as the world's largest platform for astronomers, scientists, and researchers to engage in discussions on the latest developments in astronomical research and to strengthen

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international collaborations.

The event is expected to draw over 2,000 experts from 82 countries, further establishing Cape Town as a significant hub for scientific innovation and discourse.

Engaging the media, a Research Scientist at the Ghana Space Science and Technology Institute, Dr. Naomi Asabre Frimpong, confirmed Ghana's plans for space exploration.

"Ghana does plan to go to space," she stated. "However, we will need a lot of investment in space technology, space engineering, communication, and research because our current infrastructure does not support space missions as far as the international space station."

Addressing concerns regarding the perceived lack of advanced satellite technology in Ghana and other African countries, Dr. Asabre Frimpong emphasized the capabilities of Ghanaian scientists.

"Ghanaians are really brilliant; we have a lot of potential and are able to achieve a lot with the limited infrastructure we have. With support from the government, the public, and our own research

institutions and universities, Ghanaians can contribute significantly to the international scientific community. Therefore, we should not underestimate our scientists. We can achieve more with additional support," he said.

South Africa, the host of the 2024 IAU General Assembly, has expressed its eagerness to collaborate with countries like Ghana to enhance their contributions to global astronomy.

General Manager for Communications at Brand South Africa, Thoko Modise, the official marketing agency of South Africa, shared her enthusiasm for such partnerships.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with the International Astronomical Union for the 2024 General Assembly," Modise said.

"Hosting this prestigious event in Cape Town not only highlights South Africa's role as a significant player in the global astronomy community but also reflects our commitment to supporting international collaboration and innovation. This assembly underscores our country's growing prominence in the field

and our capability to host world-class events."

The 2024 IAU General Assembly presents a vital opportunity for South African scientists to showcase their contributions to astronomy, particularly through their involvement in the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project.

This massive international initiative aims to build the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescope, with components situated in South Africa's Karoo desert and Australia's Murchison region.

The SKA project is poised to revolutionize our understanding of the universe with its unmatched sensitivity and scale. Recent achievements include the successful installation of the first phase of dishes and the deployment of advanced technology, setting the stage for groundbreaking discoveries in radio astronomy and deeper exploration of cosmic phenomena.

The assembly will also feature presentations on topics such as the influence of the James Webb Space Telescope on our comprehension of the universe, cutting-edge techniques for

discovering exoplanets, efforts to combat light pollution, and the role of astronomy in global development.

Notable participants include Dr. Sian Proctor, who made history as the first African American woman to pilot a spacecraft during the all-civilian Inspiration4 mission, and Dr. Brian Schmidt, a Nobel laureate in Physics for his work on the accelerating expansion of the universe.

Additionally, former NASA astronaut Mae Jemison, the first African American woman in space, will be featured in public events, along with a live radio link between ten Cape Town students and NASA astronaut Sunitha Williams aboard the International Space Station.

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



Rocket

Illegal connections have cost us GH¢3.7m - NEDCO

The Northern Electricity Distribution Company (NEDCo) has disclosed that it has incurred substantial financial losses due to illegal power connections in the Northern region, totalling GH¢3.7 million.

This information was revealed by NEDCo's Managing Director, Osman Ayuba, during his appearance before the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament on August 12, 2024.

Mr. Ayuba addressed the persistent issue of illegal connections and detailed NEDCo's ongoing efforts to address the problem.

"In the northern area alone, we

have had about 627 summons that have been issued to these illegal connectors, and in the northern area alone, the number was 473.

"Those who were served in the northern area were 103 and NEDCo-wide, it was 173, so you can see that it is tilting towards the northern area," he explained.

The total estimated loss of power across NEDCo's operational areas is GH¢4.1 million, with the Northern region accounting for a substantial portion of this figure.

Mr. Ayuba emphasised that illegal connections in the Northern

region alone led to a loss of GH¢3.7 million.

Despite these challenges, NEDCo has managed to recover a portion of the lost revenue.

"Following the issuance of

summons to offenders, NEDCo has recovered GH¢1.5 million," Mr. Ayuba disclosed to the committee.

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



NEDCo

General News

ECG, SSNIT, others owe KNUST over GHC1.2m for renting private residence

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is taking action to recover a debt of GH¢1.2 million owed by the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), and three other organizations.

The debt arises from unpaid rent for office spaces and private hostel operations over several years, according to the Auditor-General.

During her appearance before the Public Accounts Committee, KNUST Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rita Akosua Dickson, disclosed that only one of the debtors

has made a partial payment of GH¢25,000, leaving the majority of the debt unpaid.

“With the Electricity Company of Ghana, we’ve arranged a barter trade settlement plan. We owe ECG a significant amount, so we’ve proposed that they offset the debt by deducting the amount they owe us. We’ve already communicated this plan to ECG,” Professor Dickson explained.

She added that other entities, like UBA, have settled their debts in full, including the premiums they owed.

However, Professor Dickson acknowledged the challenges

KNUST has faced in recovering these outstanding debts, despite sending multiple demand notices and following up with the entities involved.

In a related issue, the Public Accounts Committee also expressed concern over Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development (AAMUSTED) for procuring medical supplies from two unlicensed entities.

The Auditor-General’s report indicated that the university purchased GH¢414,000 worth of drugs from these unregistered suppliers in 2022.

“This is a serious violation.

Selling drugs requires a license, and purchasing from unlicensed suppliers is risky. It is essential to ensure that all entities involved in procurement have the proper certifications from regulatory bodies like the FDA and the Pharmacy Council,” the Committee warned.

The Committee advised AAMUSTED to prioritize obtaining necessary certifications in future procurements, especially when it concerns health-related items, to ensure compliance and protect public safety.

Source: *The Independent Ghana* / Amanda Cartey





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Business

Cocoa sector will collapse by 2029 due to galamsey - Association of Cocoa Farmers

The National Association of Cocoa Farmers has issued a warning that the cocoa sector could collapse within five to ten years if current challenges are not addressed by authorities.

President of the Association, Stephenson Anane Boateng, highlighted the severe impact of illegal mining, known as galamsey, in cocoa-growing regions.

He noted that this has led to significant issues such as water pollution, competition for land with illegal miners, and a decline in cocoa production.

Mr Boateng expressed concern that cocoa farmers are struggling to manage ageing cocoa trees, weeds, pests, diseases, and falling yields, all of which have negatively affected their income and livelihoods.

According to data from the 2022/23 season released by COCOBOD, approximately 150,000 metric tonnes of cocoa were lost due to smuggling and illegal gold

mining activities. Additionally, the cocoa-swollen shoot virus devastated around 500,000 hectares of cocoa farmland.

He criticized national leaders for failing to implement effective initiatives to tackle these challenges, questioning why cocoa farmers are not being empowered to help resolve the crisis.

Although the government claims to have introduced measures to address production issues, such as a farm rehabilitation program and collaborations with security agencies to combat smuggling, the Association insists that successive governments have not adequately addressed their concerns.

"All the various sectors get the needed support and resources to enhance their work. However, the cocoa sector has been ignored. The situation has made cocoa farming unattractive, and our young people are not interested in the sector. They accuse us of selling our lands to illegal miners,

but that is false."

"The cocoa sector is no longer thriving. My prediction is that in the next five years, we will have no cocoa sector to boast of. If we are lucky, it will last for the next ten years."

"The youth of today have all joined galamsey activities. When we raise these issues, the CEO of COCOBOD, Joseph Boahen Aidoo, will rubbish them. We have a crisis at hand, and it is our collective duty as Ghanaians to talk and have the issues addressed," he said.

On the investment of Ghc942 million on farms, he shot it down, stressing that "COCOBOD keeps making losses. Read the Auditor

General's report and let me know if, indeed, they have made any investments in farms, as he claimed."

In a media engagement, Kwabena Agyapong said, "Ghana is now controlled by politicians, and when important issues are raised, they are not addressed."

"They come in to make money, and when they leave, they and their families enjoy themselves and create problems for us. But as Ghanaians, we have to rise and speak up and have them resolve these challenges," he added.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



Cocoa Beans

Excessive tax exemptions unhealthy for Ghana's economy - World Bank to gov't

The World Bank has raised concerns that Ghana's tax system is underperforming due to excessive tax exemptions and reliefs that significantly reduce the corporate income tax (CIT) base.

According to the institution, these generous tax breaks are hindering the country from maximizing its revenue potential.

From 2015 to 2020, Ghana missed out on an average of about 1.3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in corporate tax revenue each year.

The World Bank highlighted that the existence of over two dozen different types of tax breaks for companies is a major contributor to this shortfall.

The World Bank estimates that these tax breaks are costing Ghana around 0.5% of its GDP in lost

revenue annually.

"By reducing or eliminating some of these generous tax breaks, Ghana could improve its tax system and collect more revenue from corporate taxes," the institution noted in its 8th Ghana Economic Update.

The Exemptions Act, 2022 (Act 1083), was presented to Parliament by the former Minister for Finance, Ken Ofori-Atta, in 2022.

In 2021, the Ministry of Finance initiated processes to secure approximately \$335,072,712.13 in tax exemptions for 42 companies under the government's One District One Factory (1D1F) initiative.

Parliament in July 2024, approved the first of numerous tax waivers before the House, which the Finance Committee was previously

blocking.

The approved tax waiver amounts to €1.5 million for the supply and installation of e-learning laboratories in Senior High Schools across the country.

Ghana's personal income tax (PIT) accounts for approximately 15% of the country's total tax revenues, which is below the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average of 18%. As of 2020, the country's PIT revenue was equivalent to 2% of GDP, compared to the SSA average of 3.5%, highlighting a gap between actual and potential PIT revenue of more than 2% of GDP.

Payroll taxes constitute over 99% of total PIT proceeds, with other forms of PIT, such as taxes on capital gains, investment income, and business income of the self-employed, making up less than 1% of the total—a stark contrast

to more than 30% in some lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) like India.

In 2022, fewer than 25% of Ghanaians of voting age (18 and older) paid payroll taxes under the Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) scheme, and less than 0.2% declared any business income. This is in sharp contrast to countries with high PIT productivity, such as Norway, Sweden, and Canada, where almost 100% of the voting population files PIT returns.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



World Bank Signage

International

Africa public health body declares mpox emergency

Africa's top public health body declared what it termed a "public health emergency of continental security" on Tuesday over an outbreak of mpox that has spread from the Democratic Republic of Congo to neighbouring countries.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) had warned last week of an alarming rate of spread of the viral infection, which is transmitted through close contact and causes flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions.

Most cases are mild but it can kill.

"We declare today this public health emergency of continental security to mobilize our institutions, our collective will, and our resources to act swiftly and decisively," Director General Jean Kaseya said in a briefing that

was live-streamed on Zoom.

The outbreak in Congo began with the spread of an endemic strain, known as Clade I. But the new variant, known as Clade Ib, appears to spread more easily through routine close contact, particularly among children.

Kaseya said in the briefing that the continent needs more than 10 million doses of the vaccine, but only about 200,000 are available. He promised that Africa CDC would work to quickly increase the supply to the continent.

"We have a clear plan to secure more than 10 million doses in Africa, starting with 3 million doses in 2024," he added, without saying where the vaccines would be sourced.

The health body said that more than 15,000 mpox cases and 461 deaths were reported on the continent this year so far,

representing a 160% increase from the same period last year. A total of 18 countries have reported cases.

Mpox has been endemic in parts of Africa for decades after it was first detected in humans in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1970.

A milder version of the virus spread to more than a hundred countries in 2022, largely through sexual contact, prompting the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a public health emergency of international concern, its highest level of alert.

The WHO ended the emergency 10 months later, saying the health crisis had come under control.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a second health alert last week to notify clinicians and health departments about the

deadly new strain.

Also last week, Africa CDC said it had been granted \$10.4 million in emergency funding from the Africa Union for its mpox response.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has promised to convene an emergency committee to discuss whether the outbreak in Congo represents a public health emergency of international concern.

Source: Reuters



File Photo

UN chief calls for permanent Africa Security Council seat

UN chief António Guterres has called for Africa to be given a permanent seat at the UN Security Council as part of reforms to correct historical injustices.

The Security Council - the five permanent members of which are China, France, Russia, the UK and the US - has long been criticised for representing the realities that prevailed at the end of World War Two when much of Africa was still under colonial rule.

"The world has changed since 1945. But the composition of the Council, despite a few changes, has not kept pace," Mr Guterres said.

The 10 non-permanent members of the body are allocated by region, but unlike the five permanent members, they do not have the power of veto.

The African Union has long been pushing for the continent to have two permanent representatives on the council and an additional

two seats as non-permanent representatives.

The debate on Monday was convened by Sierra Leone - and its President Julius Maada Bio made the case for the continent.

"The time for half-measures and incremental progress is over. Africa must be heard, and its demands for justice and equity must be met," he said.

The UN Security Council has significant responsibilities, including authorising peacekeeping operations, imposing international sanctions and determining how the UN should respond to conflicts around the world.

Other UN officials echoed the sentiments for reform, including Dennis Francis - the president of the UN General Assembly, as well as Mr Guterres.

"We cannot accept that the world's preeminent peace and security body lacks a permanent voice for a continent of well over a billion

people - a young and rapidly growing population - making up 28% of the membership of the United Nations," the UN chief said.

Africa was under-represented at the UN Security Council and international financial institutions but "over-represented in the very challenges these structures are designed to address", he added.

Africa has often been at the centre of conflicts fuelled by greed for the continent's resources, necessary to the global economy, Mr Guterres said.

He also pointed out that almost half of all UN peacekeeping operations were in Africa and 40% of UN peacekeepers were African.

The UN chief added that the body had failed to adequately align African representation with the continent's efforts and contributions.

The UN was set up after the end of World War Two to spare succeeding generations from the

scourge of armed conflict.

Only four African nations - Egypt, Liberia, Ethiopia, and South Africa - were amongst the founding members.

For Mr Guterres, the need for change was not only about ethics and justice.

"It is also a strategic imperative that can increase global acceptance of the council's decisions - benefitting Africa and the world," he said.

Source: BBC



António Guterres, UN Secretary

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