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General News

Akufo-Addo urges wealthy parents to enrol children in private schools to lessen gov't expenditure

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

In a bold move to mitigate mounting budgetary pressures, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, has urged affluent families to enrol their children in private schools. This move is intended to alleviate the financial strain on the government's Free Senior High School (SHS) system, a policy that has faced increasing scrutiny over its fiscal impact.

Speaking at the 2024/2025 Annual General Conference of the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) in Kumasi on Monday, September 9, the president framed the request as a necessary step to preserve the integrity and financial sustainability of a flagship education programme.

Public schools, he stressed, are designed to serve those who cannot afford private education, thereby justifying his call for wealthy families to support private schools.

"People who can afford to pay fees for the education of their wards should send them to fee-paying

private schools. Public schools that are funded by the taxpayer should be free to all who will otherwise be unable to pay for their education," President Akufo-Addo said.

Introduced in 2017, the Free SHS policy has significantly expanded access to secondary education across Ghana, doubling enrollment figures and benefiting over 5.7 million students to date. While it has been lauded for democratising education, the initiative has placed an increasing strain on the country's finances.

Minister of Finance Mohammed Amin Adam disclosed while presenting the 2024 Mid-Year Budget Review in Parliament, that the programme has cost the government GH¢9.9 billion (\$851 million) since its inception.

The president's plea to wealthier families comes at a time of growing debate over the Free SHS policy's sustainability.

The GBA's president, Yaw Acheampong Bofo, has publicly suggested a reconsideration of



Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana

the policy, reflecting concerns that Ghana's current fiscal climate may not support such expansive public spending. Similarly, stakeholders including former Rector of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Prof. Stephen Adei, have called for a focus on improving educational quality, pointing to delays in the disbursement of funds for essential services such as food supply to schools.

Despite these challenges, Akufo-Addo defended the programme as an essential long-term investment,

arguing that the social and economic benefits of broader access to education will eventually outweigh the current fiscal burden.

"The number of pupils who have access to secondary education has doubled since the introduction of the Free Senior High School policy. The following impact of this dramatic development will be felt in due course and will far outweigh the small number of privileged parents who can afford to pay for the education of their wards," he said.

2024 elections will determine if Ghana is ready for a multi-party constitutional democracy - Bagbin

By Sebastian Akaho-Tay

Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin has declared the upcoming 2024 general elections as a critical test for the country's commitment to multi-party constitutional democracy.

Bagbin made these comments during an interview with Accra-based TV3, emphasizing that the significance of the elections extends beyond just the usual political competition.

"This is not like the 1992, 1996, or even the 2020 elections," Bagbin said, highlighting the uniqueness of the 2024 polls.

He stressed that the election would measure whether Ghana is genuinely committed to its democratic system, warning that the stakes this time are extraordinarily high.

His remarks come in response to recent statements by President Nana Akufo-Addo, who implied that his administration might resist a peaceful transfer of power if the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) loses.

President Akufo-Addo, while speaking to supporters in Dohono, had earlier expressed his distrust of opposition leader John Dramani Mahama, stating that he could not hand over power to someone he defeated twice.

He urged Ghanaians to vote for the NPP's current candidate, Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, as he is confident in his ability to continue the party's developmental agenda.

"I can't hand over to someone I defeated twice and who is not happy with everything I do; he

will destroy the work that I have done.

"Vote for Dr. Bawumia; I have worked with him for the past seven and a half years; I have confidence in him; I know he can continue the good work," he said.

According to Bagbin, such comments could incite violence and are particularly troubling, given the President's long-standing experience in Ghanaian politics.

"The President has a history in political activism. For him to say something that could be interpreted as inciting violence is troubling," Bagbin stated.

He urged the President to recognize that his power is granted by the people and must be surrendered if the people vote against him in 2024.

"Once the people vote, he will have no power if he loses. His comments are merely an empty boast," Bagbin added.

As Ghana approaches the 2024 elections, the political rhetoric surrounding the polls underscores the intense nature of the upcoming contest, with both sides stressing the importance of this moment in the nation's democratic journey.



Alban Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament

General News

GHS50k bounty on man threatening to kill IGP, top government officials

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Ghana Police Service has announced a GHS50,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of Ibrahim Mohammed, also known as Commander Kanawu, who has made serious threats against key government officials.

The police issued the alert via their official page, seeking public assistance to locate Mohammed. The threats are directed at Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, Interior Minister Henry Quartey, and other senior officials.

In a video that has circulated online, Mohammed, reportedly linked to the National Democratic Congress (NDC), claims his threats are due to alleged corruption involving these officials. He accused them of illegal police recruitment practices intended to sway the December elections.

Mohammed has stated, "My fellow Ghanaians, I am the Kanawu revolution leader. Errm IGP

Dampare, I have now believed the accusations Kennedy Agyapong leveled against you some time ago. He said you know the person who killed JB Danquah. Dampare are you aware of what happened on Tuesday in the Ashanti Region?

"Your outfit is recruiting fake police in the region. Interior Minister, Henry Quartey, be careful, I am giving you a strong warning. You are big so when there is a fight we will shoot your stomach and kill you. Akufo-Addo declared all die be die in 2012. This 2024 is all die be die," he warned.

Mohammed described the upcoming elections as a "do-or-die" situation, threatening severe consequences for any actions he perceives as obstructing the NDC's chances of returning to power.

He also urged the Electoral Commission (EC), including Chairperson Jean Mensa and Deputy Chairperson Bossman Asare, to ensure a free and fair election, accusing them of being

government allies.

He expressed confidence in his actions, saying, "Dampare be careful, I used to respect you but not anymore. Your attempts to fake recruits in the police for December polls to shoot innocent individuals will not be entertained. Dampare I promise you and Henry Quartey will be killed by us. We know where you stay. Be careful."

"NDC is a revolutionary party.

Jane Mensa and Bossman be careful, we know you are for the NPP. Whoever will misbehave in the elections shall not be spared. If you like, come and arrest me," he concluded.

The police are urging anyone with information on Mohammed's whereabouts to come forward, as investigations into the threats continue.



Dr George Akuffo Dampare, IGP

End illegal mining now or we take back our lands! - Bono Chiefs warn govt

By Amanda Cartey

The Bono Regional House of Chiefs has issued a bold ultimatum to the government, demanding an immediate halt to illegal mining activities, commonly known as "galamsey." The chiefs, led by Osagyefo Oseadeyo Agyemang Badu II, have given the government a one-month deadline to resolve the issue or risk losing control over the lands involved.

At a recent meeting with John Dramani Mahama, flagbearer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Oseadeyo Agyemang Badu II warned that if no action is taken within the timeframe, the chiefs will take matters into their own hands. "We're giving this incumbent government one month to use legal means to stop people involved in this galamsey. The government should deploy police and soldiers into the forests

to stop them," he said. He further emphasized, "If the government fails to do this, the land is ours, we will just reclaim it and we won't allow any sort of mining to take place."

The chiefs' strong stance has amplified the growing pressure on the government to act swiftly on the environmental and social impacts of illegal mining. Several organizations have also voiced their concerns over the issue.

The University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) has called for an immediate halt to gold prospecting in rivers, forests, and other ecologically sensitive areas. In a statement endorsed by nine UTAG presidents on September 9, 2024, the association demanded a complete ban on illegal mining activities.

In a similar tone, the Ghana Bar

Association (GBA) condemned the government's inaction, stating that the situation continues to worsen. The GBA criticized the politicization of the illegal mining crisis, describing it as "irresponsible, shocking, and regrettable."

The growing chorus of demands

from religious and traditional leaders, academic institutions, as well as medical and legal bodies, underscores the urgency of resolving the illegal mining issue, as the threat to the environment and local communities continues to escalate.



File Photo

General News

543 attempts, 81 completed - Ghana Mental Health Authority concerned over rising suicide rate

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Ghana is witnessing a worrying increase in suicide cases, with the Mental Health Authority (GMHA) reporting a sharp spike in the number of attempts and deaths across the country.

In the first half of 2024, 543 suicide attempts were recorded, with 81 of these tragically resulting in death. These figures surpass the total for 2023, when there were 594 attempts and 48 completed suicides for the entire year.

The GMHA revealed these troubling statistics during the commemoration of World Suicide Prevention Day, held annually on September 10. The report emphasises a pressing need for immediate intervention.

The regions most affected by this growing crisis include Greater

Accra, Eastern, and Central Regions, with Greater Accra reporting the highest number of deaths.

The Authority is especially alarmed by the rising rate of suicide among young people, particularly those aged 15-29. "Many of those affected by suicide worldwide are young, and this calls for urgent intervention," the report stated.

To address the crisis, the GMHA is calling for nationwide education and awareness campaigns. It urges media outlets, health organizations, and communities to actively engage in suicide prevention efforts.

"It is crucial to start the conversation early to prevent the loss of our future generation to suicide," the report noted,

emphasizing the need for open discussions in homes, schools, and public spaces to destigmatize suicidal behaviour.

Key preventive measures recommended by the GMHA include building interpersonal skills, restricting access to common methods of suicide, and ensuring timely intervention

for individuals showing signs of suicidal behaviour.

"Despite suicide being one of the leading causes of death among young people, it can be prevented," the report concluded.

With the surge in numbers, the GMHA's call for action is clear - more needs to be done to curb this growing public health crisis.



**MENTAL HEALTH
AUTHORITY**
Total Health

Mental Health Authority Logo

Ex-EC boss Afari-Gyan reveals who can really tamper with election results: "Blame the experts!"

By Sebastian Akaho-Tay

Former Electoral Commission (EC) Chairperson Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan has identified professional electoral officers and electronic experts as the only individuals capable of tampering with election results, placing responsibility for any misconduct squarely on their shoulders.

Speaking at the Annual General Conference of the Ghana Bar Association, he argued that while the EC is responsible for maintaining electoral integrity, any misconduct involving vote tampering should be attributed to those trained to handle the process.

"The Electoral Commission must be blamed if votes are being tampered with. Not just the Electoral Commissioners, but professional electoral officers and electronic experts. The professional electoral officers and electronic specialists are trained specifically to do what they do, hence when the results are being tampered with, only

they can be held liable," Dr. Afari-Gyan stated.

Dr. Afari-Gyan explained that electoral officers manage key aspects of the election process, including voter registration and identification, while electronic experts ensure the security and functionality of voting systems.

These roles, he stressed, make them uniquely positioned to alter the outcomes.

He pointed out that in other countries, individuals found guilty of tampering with electoral results face severe penalties, including imprisonment for up to 10 years.

He recommended Ghana adopt similar measures to reinforce its electoral system.

This issue has surfaced at a critical moment, as the National Democratic Congress (NDC) has raised concerns about irregularities in Ghana's voter register ahead of the December 7, 2024 elections.

The NDC has pointed to missing voter names, unauthorized transfers between polling stations, and other discrepancies that could prevent eligible voters from casting their ballots.

Despite these concerns, the Electoral Commission (EC) has denied the NDC's request for a forensic audit of the voter register.

The party's Director of Elections and IT, Dr. Edward Omane Boamah,

expressed disappointment over the refusal, signaling growing tensions ahead of the upcoming elections.

With the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia and the NDC, led by former President John Dramani Mahama, set to compete for the presidency, electoral integrity remains a key focus ahead of the December polls.



Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, Former EC Chairman

General News

ECOWAS allocates \$245,000 to combat obstetric fistula in Ghana and West Africa

By *Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has stepped up its efforts to address obstetric fistula, a debilitating maternal health condition, by granting \$245,000 to support affected women in Ghana and across the region.

The funds, delivered through the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, aim to bolster treatment, prevention, and social reintegration for women suffering from the condition, which disproportionately impacts those in underserved communities with limited access to healthcare.

The grant was announced during the launch of the 2024 Obstetric Fistula Program under the theme "Strengthening Women's Health Needs and Social Empowerment." This initiative, led by Ghana's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, aims to tackle the prevalence of obstetric fistula in Ghana and West Africa, with a focus on improving healthcare access and enhancing women's social standing.

Obstetric fistula, primarily caused by prolonged and obstructed labour, creates an abnormal opening between the birth canal

and the bladder or rectum, resulting in chronic incontinence. The condition not only inflicts severe physical damage but also leads to profound social stigma, as many women suffering from fistula are ostracised by their families and communities.

The most common symptom is continuous, involuntary leakage of urine (vesicovaginal fistula) or faeces (rectovaginal fistula) through the vagina. Women with fistula often suffer from repeated urinary tract or vaginal infections due to the constant exposure of the affected areas to urine or faeces.

Speaking on behalf of Ghana's Health Minister Dr. Bernard Okoe-Boye, Dr. Ignatius Awinibuno, Director of Allied Health, underscored the persistent challenges posed by obstetric fistula in sub-Saharan Africa. He outlined the government's strategy under the Ghana Health Service's Obstetric Fistula Prevention and Management Strategic Plan (GOFPMSP), which focuses on enhancing emergency maternal care in remote areas, expanding treatment capacity, and reintegrating affected women into society through vocational training.

"The availability of emergency obstetric care in remote areas, enhanced treatment capacity at facilities like the Tamale Fistula Centre, and vocational training for reintegrating affected women are all critical components of this plan," Dr. Awinibuno noted.

The Tamale Fistula Centre, a key facility for obstetric fistula treatment in northern Ghana, is set to undergo significant upgrades with the help of ECOWAS funding. Dr. Gabriel Ganyagio, representing the Ministry of Health's Chief Director, announced that the centre would be equipped to provide not only surgical interventions but also psychological and social support, aiming for a holistic recovery for the affected women.

Nyavor Victoria, representing Ghana's Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, emphasized ECOWAS's broader commitment to improving the economic and social well-being of women in the region. She cited scholarships for girls pursuing technical and vocational education, as well as support for women in agriculture and craft industries, as part of ECOWAS's comprehensive strategy to empower women and girls.

The National Institutes of Health reports that globally, over 2 million girls and women live with obstetric fistula and 50,000-100,000 women develop obstetric fistula every year. In Ghana alone, approximately 1,352 women develop fistula out of 751,205 deliveries each year. Surgery remains the primary treatment for the condition, though access to such interventions is often limited in the most affected regions.

ECOWAS's intervention seeks to reverse this trend by enhancing healthcare infrastructure and supporting women's reintegration into society. The funding marks a crucial step towards addressing a condition that has, for too long, sidelined millions of women, offering hope for recovery and a return to dignity for many across the region.



File Photo

Galamsey crisis sparks looming mammoth protests amid rising unrest

By *Phoebe Martekie Doku*

The persistent scourge of illegal mining, or galamsey, is igniting a major confrontation between civil society and the Ghanaian government.

As environmental degradation escalates, both the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) and the Chamber of Agribusiness are mobilising for substantial protests unless decisive action is taken.

Despite a series of government interventions - ranging from deploying security forces to arresting offenders - the problem of galamsey continues unabated. This ongoing crisis has spurred

UTAG to announce a nationwide protest should the government fail to impose a comprehensive ban on illegal mining by September 30.

UTAG's statement underscores the severe environmental damage inflicted by galamsey, which continues to ravage the country's natural resources.

"UTAG will join all labour unions in Ghana to act decisively to ensure that the right thing is done. If this is not done by the end of September 2024, we will embark on a nationwide industrial action. We have taken this principled stand against galamsey because

our lives depend on it. We shall not waive our demand for the complete and total ban of galamsey. It's time to #BANgalamsey and ban it for good!" the association declared.

Simultaneously, the Chamber of Agribusiness is orchestrating a campaign in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization and other international bodies.

The Chamber aims to spotlight the extensive destruction of agricultural land caused by illegal mining. Anthony Morrison, CEO of the Chamber, estimates that over 1.2 million hectares of farmland have been lost, sparking concerns

over the future of agribusiness in Ghana.

"People's investments have gone down the drain as a result of activities of illegal mining and galamsey actors. We intend to follow up with a press release and, subsequently, a demonstration among the farmer and agribusiness communities. We are losing quite a lot," Morrison stated.

Criticism has also been directed at President Akufo-Addo, who is accused of failing to protect the livelihoods of Ghana's rural population, which constitutes over 57% of the country's agricultural workers.

Continued on page 4

General News

Galamsey crisis sparks looming mammoth protests amid rising unrest

Continued from page 5

Morrison expressed frustration over the government's inaction, warning that continued neglect could lead to international trade restrictions on Ghanaian agricultural exports.

"We have lost trust in President Akufo-Addo as he is not safeguarding the livelihood of over 57% of the rural population involved in agriculture. If the issues of galamsey are not resolved immediately, there could be bans on Ghanaian agricultural

exports from European countries and other international markets," Morrison warned.

As the crisis deepens, the urgency for effective government intervention grows, with both UTAG and the Chamber of Agribusiness preparing to escalate their protests if their demands are not met. The stakes are high, and the coming weeks may well determine the future trajectory of Ghana's environmental and agricultural policies.



File Photo

NDC to embark on 'historic' nationwide protest on Sep. 17 over voter register discrepancies

By Amanda Cratey

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) has announced plans for a large-scale demonstration on September 17, 2024, in response to alleged irregularities in the voter register.

The party has raised concerns over what it describes as significant anomalies discovered during a recent voter exhibition exercise, which it believes could affect the integrity of the upcoming elections.

NDC Chairman Johnson Asiedu Nketiah revealed these plans after submitting the presidential nomination forms for John Mahama.

He stated, "On the 17th of this month [September], the NDC is embarking on a massive nationwide demonstration in all 16 regional capitals, descend on the electoral commission officers, and we in Accra will descend to the headquarters and present further petitions as to why we think that they should conduct themselves in a manner that will guarantee peaceful, free and fair election."

The protest will occur in all 16 regional capitals, with party leaders and supporters marching to the offices of the Electoral Commission (EC). The national executives will also present

a formal petition at the EC's headquarters in Accra.

The NDC's primary concern stems from discrepancies in the voter register, which they claim could result in the disenfranchisement of voters. Some of the key issues identified include missing names from the voter list, the wrongful placement of eligible voters on exclusion lists, and the inclusion of individuals in the voter register who were not qualified to vote due to issues like multiple

registrations.

There were also instances of unauthorized transfers of voters between polling stations and unresolved transfers from previous elections, raising additional concerns about possible voter suppression.

In response to these findings, the NDC called for a forensic audit of the voter register. However, the EC denied this request, leading to further dissatisfaction within the party.

Dr. Edward Omane Boamah, the NDC's Director of Elections and IT, commented, "They [the EC] have not accepted the independent forensic audit expectedly."

The demonstration, described by the NDC as "historic," is intended to hold the EC accountable and push for a transparent electoral process. Asiedu Nketiah stressed the importance of ensuring peaceful, free, and fair elections, highlighting the NDC's commitment to this goal.



Johnson Asiedu Nketiah, NDC Chairman

General News

Ghana unveils groundbreaking National Health Database to boost healthcare efficiency

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Ministry of Health has officially launched the National Health Database Platform, along with HEFRA's Digitized Health Facility Assessment System, marking a significant milestone in Ghana's healthcare sector.

The initiative, supported by the USAID Health Strengthening Accelerator Project, aims to consolidate health data from

all agencies under the ministry, streamlining decision-making processes and enhancing healthcare delivery.

Chief Director of the Ministry, Alhaji Hafiz Adam, explained that the platform - developed by Results for Development (R4D) - equips the ministry with the tools to prioritise health needs and make informed, data-driven decisions.

"The development of the National Health Database and HEFRA's Digitized Health Facility Assessment Platform is crucial for achieving Universal Health Coverage," Alhaji Hafiz Adam emphasised.

Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Bernard Okoe Boye, commended the Accelerator Project for its pivotal role in shaping various health initiatives, including the Health

Sector Medium Term Development Plan (2022-2025). The plan serves as a key framework for providing essential health services across the country.

Dr. Okoe Boye extended his gratitude to USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and other partners, encouraging further collaboration to ensure that all Ghanaians have access to quality healthcare services.



Alhaji Hafiz Adam, Chief Director, GHS



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Business

Small-scale miners fight proposed ban, warn of job losses and loan defaults

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The Association of Small Scale Miners has expressed strong opposition to a proposal by various national health unions calling for a blanket ban on all small-scale mining activities.

The unions, led by the Ghana Medical Association (GMA) and supported by groups like the Ghana Registered Nurses and Midwives Association (GRNMA) and the Health Services Workers Union of Ghana (TUC), have cited serious environmental and public health concerns tied to illegal mining.

General Secretary of the Association of Small Scale Miners, Godwin Armah, in response to this call, insisted that such a ban would unfairly target legitimate operators. He argued that illegal miners, not licensed small-scale miners, should be the focus of government efforts to combat environmental degradation.

"We will not sit for illegal operators to perpetrate illegality on our river bodies," Armah said. "Those in the forest reserves and near roads are not small-scale miners. Those working close to the roads are not small-scale miners," Mr Armah asserted.

"And you say because these people are perpetrating illegality, they should come and ban us who have gone through the process to acquire a licence to work?"

Mr Armah also emphasised the role of the Minerals Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in regulating the sector and ensuring that illegal mining activities are curtailed.

The Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703), mandates the Inspections and Compliance Division of the Minerals Commission to conduct mine inspections and enforce compliance with mining laws. The Act also ensures that licensed miners operate within legal boundaries.

It is the EPA's duty to ensure that the implementation of environmental policy and planning are integrated and consistent with the country's desire for effective, long-term

maintenance of environmental quality.

He further noted that it would be unfair to businesses operating legally to bear the financial burden of a ban. "If you are working as a mine and you put so much into it, even if they ban you for a week, two weeks, a month, or a year, you still have to maintain your mines," he added.

Small-Scale mining's impact on Ghana's economy

Ghana ranks among the top two gold producers in Africa. Research from 2021 shows that over 35% of the country's gold output comes from artisanal and small-scale miners, supporting the livelihoods of an estimated 4.5 million Ghanaians - roughly 12% of the population. Small-scale mining also accounts for more than 60% of the mining sector's labour force.

Yet the industry's rapid expansion, particularly in the form of illegal mining, has come at a steep environmental cost.

Major rivers, including the Bona and Pra, have been severely polluted by toxic chemicals used in mining, and forest reserves such as Tano Nimiri have suffered irreversible damage.

Health unions, alarmed by the implications of widespread environmental degradation, have called for the ban as a last-ditch effort to stave off further harm.

"If not addressed immediately, [this situation] will severely endanger the health, well-being, and future of its citizens," the unions warned in a joint statement.

History of Small-Scale Mining Regulation

Small-scale mining was legitimised through the Small-Scale Mining Act (PNDCL 218) and later incorporated into the current Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703). The law requires prospective miners to apply for a licence to mine up to 25 acres of land. It also reserves small-scale

mining for Ghanaians, aiming to formalise the sector and curb illegal activities.

Ghana's battle with galamsey has been ongoing for years, with several interventions introduced to address the issue, including military operations, temporary bans, dialogues, and community mining initiatives.

In 2017, President Nana Akufo-Addo's administration imposed a nationwide ban on small-scale mining, which lasted until 2019. During that period, the government launched Operation Vanguard, a military initiative that aimed to root out illegal mining activities. Hundreds of arrests were made, and mining equipment was seized.

By December 2018, around 1,350 miners had been vetted, and about 900 licences were issued. In 2019, the ban was lifted, with small-scale miners contributing 2.1 million ounces of gold, accounting for 43.1% of total national production that year.

For small-scale mining companies to operate, they must secure permits from the EPA, Minerals Commission, and Water Resource Commission, in addition to having tax identification numbers.

Political parties' vision for small-scale miners

The recent calls for a ban contrast sharply with the plans of Vice President and New Patriotic Party (NPP) flagbearer, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia. Speaking to small-

scale miners and youth groups in Tarkwa, Dr. Bawumia pledged to transform small-scale miners into "millionaires" through policies designed to improve their livelihoods.

He promised that under his leadership, every district would have a mining committee that would issue temporary licences in consultation with local chiefs. His vision for the sector is rooted in formalising operations and ensuring that mining remains a viable source of income for millions of Ghanaians.

Also, the leader of the Movement for Change and a presidential aspirant for the 2024 general elections, Alan Kyerematen, has pledged to create legal private firms for young people involved in illegal mining, commonly known as "galamsey."

Speaking to the media during his campaign tour, Mr Kyerematen emphasised the need for a new approach to the issue, which has plagued many communities across Ghana.

He noted that in many mining centres, just as in areas where agriculture or fishing is dominant, mining is considered a primary livelihood by the locals. Mr Kyerematen proposed that the government develop "a new business model to create a legitimate framework" for young people to engage in mining activities legally.



File Photo

Business

Private sector SSNIT contributions surge by 2.4% amid growth in manufacturing sector - BoG Report

By Sebastian Akaho-Tay

The private sector's contributions to the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) Pension Scheme (Tier-1) have seen a notable rise, according to the Bank of Ghana's July Monetary Policy Report.

Contributions for the first half of 2024 increased by 2.4%, reflecting ongoing improvements in the country's labour market, especially within the manufacturing sector.

A key highlight from the report is the 39.6% year-on-year increase in private sector workers'

contributions in May 2024, which amounted to GH¢470.92 million, up from GH¢337.23 million in May 2023.

Cumulatively, contributions for the first five months of 2024 grew by 28.8%, reaching GH¢1.97 billion, compared to GH¢1.53 billion for the same period in 2023.

The number of private sector contributors also grew, rising by 2.7% to 1,007,341 in May 2024, from 980,808 in May 2023. Over the first five months, the total number of contributors increased by 4.8%, reaching 5,063,676.

The manufacturing sector's

expansion is believed to have driven these increases in employment and, consequently, SSNIT contributions.

In addition to the rise in contributions, the Bank of Ghana report showed a strong performance in direct tax collection. Direct taxes in May 2024 increased by 43.7% year-on-year to GH¢4.11 billion, compared to GH¢2.86 billion in May 2023.

For the first five months of 2024, total direct taxes collected amounted to GH¢22.19 billion, representing a 31.6% increase from the GH¢16.86 billion recorded

in the same period in 2023.

Income taxes, including Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) and self-employed contributions, made up 48.8% of the total direct tax collection, while corporate tax contributed 38.4%, and other tax sources accounted for 12.8%.

Labour demand remained stable, with 2,968 job advertisements recorded in June 2024, slightly down from 2,993 in June 2023. Job adverts for the first half of 2024 rose by 2.4%, with a total of 17,278 listings compared to 16,866 during the same period in 2023.



SSNIT Building

International

Crocodiles wash into community as floods decimate Nigerian zoo

By Reuters

Floods in north Nigeria have killed more than 80% of animals in a large zoo with an array of wildlife from lions and crocodiles to buffaloes and ostriches, the facility said on Tuesday.

“Some deadly animals have been washed away into our communities, like crocodiles and snakes,” Sanda Kyarimi Park Zoo added in a statement on the floods in northern Borno state, urging residents to take precautions.

Floods began when a dam overflowed following heavy rains, uprooting thousands of people.

The disaster has affected other facilities in the state capital Maiduguri including the post office and a teaching hospital, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu’s office

said, telling people to evacuate worst-hit areas.

“President Tinubu extends his heartfelt condolences to the government and people of the state, especially to the families that have lost their means of

livelihood due to the disaster triggered by the overflow of the Alau Dam,” the statement said, saying humanitarian needs would be addressed.

Floods in the northeast killed at least 49 people last month, while

a 2022 flood killed more than 600.

Borno state, the birthplace of Boko Haram, is already grappling with a 15-year insurgency that has killed and displaced many.



File Photo

Anguish as dozens die in Senegal shipwreck

By BBC

At least 26 people have died after a boat carrying migrants capsized off Senegal’s coast.

Authorities say more than 100 people were on board the wooden fishing vessel when it sank just 4km (2.5 miles) into its journey.

Distraught relatives and friends have gathered along the beach, anxiously waiting for news of their loved ones. So far, four people have been rescued and search efforts are still under way.

The boat had departed from Mbour, about 80km south of the capital city Dakar, bound for Spain’s Canary Islands, which are off the coast of West Africa.

In recent years, the number of migrants leaving West Africa through Senegal has surged.

Mostly young men - fleeing conflict, poverty, and unemployment - are attempting the dangerous Atlantic

route to the Spanish Islands, with nearly 30,000 arrivals recorded this year.

Spain is one of the European countries that takes in the most migrants, and the Mediterranean Sea route remains the most popular.

But a growing number of West African migrants are choosing to

travel via the Atlantic Ocean to the Canary Islands instead.

Despite the dangers, it involves just one step, rather than needing to cross both the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean.

The surge in migrants attempting the crossing prompted Spain’s prime minister to visit three West African countries last month

- Senegal, Mauritania and The Gambia - for crisis talks with leaders.

Earlier this year, a \$227m deal was made between the EU and Mauritania to bolster border security. Spain was a key partner in the talks in Mauritania that had led to it.



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