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General News

Access to 2024/25 SHS, TVET placement results for BECE graduates free - Education Ministry

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Ministry of Education has introduced a significant change for Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) candidates, granting them free access to the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) platform for their Senior High School (SHS) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) placements.

This update, effective for the 2024/2025 academic year, eliminates the need for students to purchase pin codes, a common requirement in previous years.

The ministry, in a statement, described this policy shift as a step toward reducing barriers for students and their families, allowing easier access to placement results.

Eligible candidates can now check their school placements by visiting the CSSPS websites, www.cssps.gov.gh or www.cssps.org. Students will need to input their ten-digit index numbers followed by "24" to indicate their completion year. After submitting, results will be available immediately.

This year's BECE, held in July, saw participation from 569,236 students, including 282,703 boys and 286,533 girls across 19,505 schools.

Provisions were also made for students with specific needs, such as visual and hearing impairments. In addition to the school candidates, 1,390 private candidates participated in exams conducted at 15 centres nationwide.

Meanwhile, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) recently released provisional results for both school and private candidates.

However, issues of malpractice were recorded, resulting in disciplinary actions, including the cancellation of subject results for 377 school candidates and three private candidates.

Full results for 41 school candidates and one private candidate were also annulled. Further investigations are underway for 33 school candidates and three private candidates due to suspected irregularities, with 149 schools' results flagged for additional review.

This initiative by the Ministry aims to streamline the transition for BECE graduates moving into SHS or TVET institutions by reducing logistical and financial burdens.

The Ministry has encouraged all eligible students to use this opportunity for a smoother transition to the next phase of their education journey.



Kwasi Kwarteng, Ministry of Education P.R.O

Indefinite curfew imposed on Sampa over chieftaincy dispute

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Interior Minister Henry Quartey has imposed a curfew on Sampa Township, located in the Jaman North District of the Bono Region.

The curfew, which took effect on Thursday from 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM, will continue until further notice. This decision follows recommendations from the Bono Regional Security Council in light of recent chieftaincy conflicts in the area.

The government, in its statement, appealed to local chiefs, community leaders, and residents to uphold peace and address their concerns

through non-violent means.

Furthermore, a complete ban on the possession of weapons, including firearms and ammunition, has been enacted in Sampa Township.

The Ministry warned that individuals found with such items will be arrested and face prosecution.

"Government urges Chiefs, Opinion Leaders, Youth and People of the area to exercise restraint in the face of the challenges confronting them and to use non-violent means to channel their grievances into

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Henry Quartey, Interior Minister



General News

Indefinite curfew imposed on Sampa over chieftaincy dispute

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ensuring peace in the area.

“Meanwhile, there is a total ban on all persons in Sampa Township in Jaman North District of the Bono Region from carrying arms, ammunition, or any offensive

weapons. Any person found with any arms or ammunition will be arrested and prosecuted,” the statement said.

The longstanding chieftaincy dispute in Sampa has recently escalated, prompting the

government to impose a curfew as a precaution against potential violence and disorder.

Residents of Sampa Township have responded to the curfew with mixed feelings.

While some support the restrictions as a preventive step against violence, others worry about the disruptions to their daily routines and the impact on their livelihoods.

Government counters reports of Islamist support networks in Northern Ghana

By Amanda Cartey

Government has denied claims that Islamist militants from Burkina Faso are leveraging parts of northern Ghana for covert support operations.

This response follows a recent Reuters report, which suggested that extremists have been using Ghanaian border towns to gather supplies, fuel, and receive medical treatment, largely unmonitored by Ghanaian authorities.

Government spokesperson

Palgrave Boakye-Danquah rejected these claims on October 25, calling the allegations “misleading.”

He clarified that cross-border movements from Burkina Faso to Ghana are primarily for legitimate trade.

“The Reuters story is misleading... We have people who travel from Burkina Faso to Ghana for trade or to pick up goods from the harbor. Sometimes, they may use official vehicles to transport goods back. This is simply a matter of logistics, and the story misrepresents

the situation,” Boakye-Danquah explained.

Ghana’s Ambassador to Burkina Faso, Boniface Gambila Adagbila, echoed this stance. Speaking on Joy FM, he emphasized Ghana’s commitment to counter-terrorism efforts with Burkina Faso, a country facing rising instability linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated groups.

Adagbila advised that while Burkina Faso is making strides against insurgent groups, travelers should use official channels due

to the region’s volatile security conditions.

“If we don’t support Burkina Faso in winning this fight, and the terrorists gain control, Ghana will logically be at risk,” he warned.

This rebuttal aims to reassure the public of Ghana’s vigilance along its northern border, maintaining that the country is proactive in collaborating with regional partners to curb any potential security threats.



Islamist militants from Burkina Faso

General News

Ghana launches ambitious deworming campaign for 2.6 million children

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Ghana is launching a major deworming initiative today, targeting over two million children aged five to 14 across 15 regions.

The campaign, called the “2024 National School and Community Deworming Exercise,” will run from October 28 to November 3 and aims to combat both schistosomiasis and soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infections.

The programme, spearheaded by the Ghana Health Service (GHS) in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service (GES), seeks to reach approximately 2.6 million children in 100 districts, extending the initiative to 1.6 million additional children and adults in 57 districts across 11 regions.

Director-General of GHS, Dr. Patrick Kuma-Aboagye, emphasised the campaign’s goal of improving health and immune resilience among school-aged children by providing 600 mg of praziquantel and 400 mg of albendazole. These medications, donated by the World Health Organization (WHO), will be administered under the supervision of trained school teachers and health professionals. Dr. Kuma-Aboagye advised that students consume food prior to taking the medication for proper absorption, recommending distribution after students’ first break or mealtime.

“All parents, guardians, and caregivers should ensure their children eat before going to school,” he advised, ensuring smooth administration of the drugs during the school day.

Combating parasitic diseases

Schistosomiasis, caused by parasitic worms in freshwater, remains a pressing health concern in Ghana, particularly in underserved regions with poor sanitation.

Affecting 23.3% of the population, with some areas experiencing over 50% prevalence, the disease causes abdominal pain, diarrhoea, liver damage, and blood in urine. In girls and women, the illness can lead to reproductive health issues, such as infertility and recurrent infections.

Soil-transmitted helminths, common in low-socioeconomic settings, lead to malnutrition, anaemia, and impaired physical and cognitive development, particularly in young children.

A coordinated effort

Representatives from GHS and GES, including Dr. Franklin Asiedu-Bekoe, Director of the Public Health Division at GHS, and Theresa Opong-Mensah, Director of the School Health Education Programme, spoke on the importance of public awareness and engagement.

Opong-Mensah noted that schools, in partnership with the Ghana School Feeding Programme, will have food available to ensure children can take the deworming tablets as recommended.

USAID’s Act to End NTDs Program Director, Irene Dzathor, expressed commitment to supporting Ghana’s efforts to control neglected tropical diseases and praised the collaborative approach.



Dr. Patrick Kuma-Aboagye, Director-General of GHS



General News

Ghana Highway Authority staff threaten strike over National Roads Authority Act

By Amanda Cartey

Workers from the Ghana Highway Authority (GHA) have issued an ultimatum to the government, threatening strike action if the recently passed National Roads Authority Act, 2024 (Act 1118), is implemented without further stakeholder consultations.

This legislation, which consolidates road sector functions under a new National Roads Authority, aims to streamline infrastructure oversight across Ghana. However, GHA employees argue that the Act risks eroding GHA's operational autonomy and could hinder their effectiveness in managing the nation's highways.

The GHA employees' petition to the President requests immediate consultations on the Act, citing a lack of input during the law's drafting stages.

The workers state that they were not consulted, leading to a law "that does not serve the interests or welfare of workers." They further insist that the Act be suspended to allow for wider consultation and adjustments to address their concerns over institutional independence.

A core demand in the workers' petition is the removal of GHA Board Chairman, Ing. I.K. Mensah, and Chief Executive, Ing. Collins B. Donkor. Workers accuse both officials of endorsing the new law without engaging GHA staff or advocating for the Authority's operational autonomy.

"We have lost all confidence in their leadership," the employees stated, claiming the Act could

effectively reduce GHA's status to a division within the new Authority, jeopardizing its independence.

The workers also referenced the World Bank's 2022 Diagnostic Study on the Ghana Highway Authority, which recommended enhancing GHA's autonomy as a standalone entity rather than integrating it into a larger body. This recommendation, they argue, was disregarded in the drafting of

Act 1118.

Issuing a seven-day ultimatum for the dismissal of the GHA's top leadership and a 14-day deadline to repeal the Act, the workers have threatened to boycott GHA's upcoming 50th-anniversary dinner with the President if their demands are not met.

They call on the President to intervene to protect his administration's legacy within Ghana's road sector.



Employees of the Ghana Highway Authority (GHA)

Four Ghanaians sentenced for £4.5m cannabis smuggling operation in UK; two remain at large

By Amanda Cartey

A UK court has sentenced four Ghanaian men involved in a cannabis smuggling scheme valued at £4.5 million.

Following an intensive investigation led by UK and Ghanaian authorities, the Southwark Crown Court issued prison sentences ranging from four to ten years. Two of the men, Baidoo and Bonsu, remain on the run after failing to appear in court. The operation was uncovered

through a collaborative investigation between Ghana's Narcotics Control Commission and the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA).

Officers at Tilbury Docks intercepted a shipping container from Ghana, uncovering 2,335 packages of cannabis concealed within sacks of gari, a traditional Ghanaian staple.

Valued at £4.3 million on the street, the drugs were removed and

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The convicts Kristoffen Yaw Baidoo, Kwaku Addae Bonsu, Daniel Yeboah and Edward Adjei

General News

Four Ghanaians sentenced for £4.5m cannabis smuggling operation in UK; two remain at large

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replaced with a dummy package equipped with a tracking device, which allowed authorities to follow the container's movements. The dummy package was delivered to an industrial yard in North London, where Yeboah signed for it under an alias. Adjei and Baidoo arrived on site shortly afterward, with Baidoo renting the premises using false identification.

Authorities observed the group attempt to access the container, with Bonsu seen photographing the site from his vehicle.

When the suspects realized the cannabis was no longer in the container, they fled the scene. Police later apprehended Adjei and Yeboah in Homerton, Baidoo in Stratford, and Bonsu in Edmonton.

Upon further investigation, officers discovered a 10-ton hydraulic press, a tool commonly used to compact drugs, and electronic devices at Baidoo's home. Dashcam footage from Adjei showed his communication with Baidoo and Yeboah, revealing suspicions about the missing drugs. "My brother,

be a little watchful. It is all a little dodgy," Adjei warned Yeboah.

In response, Yeboah questioned the whereabouts of the cannabis, stating, "I don't think the food [drugs] is in it. They have removed most of the gari." Additionally, Baidoo's text messages and emails confirmed his plans to receive the drugs at the rented yard. Bonsu's bank records also showed payments to a shipping company for transporting the container.

With Baidoo and Bonsu evading

authorities, UK law enforcement has issued warrants for their arrests. This case marks a significant crackdown on international drug trafficking operations involving Ghana and the UK.

The UK National Crime Agency has emphasized that their collaboration with Ghanaian authorities was pivotal to intercepting the shipment and dismantling the smuggling network.

Farmers' Day to be celebrated on Nov 8

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) has announced that the 40th National Farmers' Day celebration will take place on Friday, November 8, 2024, at the Alisa Hotel in North Ridge, Accra. This year's event will mark a departure from previous celebrations, shifting the focus from regional events to a central Awards Night Ceremony in Accra, where awardees from across the country will gather for recognition.

In a recent statement, Acting Chief Director of MOFA, Paul Siameh, confirmed that the event will start at 4:00 p.m. and will see the participation of His Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana.

This special day recognizes farmers and fishermen for their dedication to strengthening Ghana's agricultural sector and ensuring food security.

Instead of hosting regional-level ceremonies, each region will now nominate individuals for ten award categories. These regional winners will travel to Accra, where they will be acknowledged at the national event.

"There will be no regional-level celebrations this year," MOFA's statement clarified, adding that all costs associated with travel,

accommodation, and meals for the regional winners would be covered by their respective Regional Coordinating Councils.

During the ceremony, each Regional Minister, joined by Regional Directors of Agriculture,

will present awards to honorees from their regions. The Ministry highlighted that the participation of these officials would emphasise the importance of Ghanaian farmers in national development.

With National Farmers' Day

being a public holiday dedicated to celebrating the country's agricultural contributions, the centralised event this year aims to reinforce the importance of agriculture while enhancing national recognition for the role of farmers in Ghana's progress.



Farmer

General News

University of Ghana refutes claims of rising HIV rates on campus

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

The University of Ghana (UG) has dismissed recent allegations of increased HIV infections among its students, calling the claims unfounded and potentially harmful.

The assertions, made by Rev. Lawrence Tetteh on a GTV Breakfast Show on 24 October, attributed a supposed rise in HIV cases to “widespread promiscuity” among UG students, sparking concern within the university community.

Rev. Tetteh, Founder of the Worldwide Miracle Outreach, had said on air, “The number of boys and girls in Legon who are HIV positive, you would have the biggest shock of your life. This is sad, this is sad and I’m happy I’m saying this on national TV.”

He further speculated on infection trends, describing scenarios he believes lead to the spread of HIV among young people.

UG Management quickly refuted these remarks, emphasising that HIV prevalence can only be accurately assessed through scientific testing, not assumptions. In a statement, UG officials highlighted the dangers of spreading unverified

information, warning of the potential for increased stigma, fear, and misunderstanding surrounding HIV/AIDS.

“Statements made without data-backed evidence mislead the public and risk amplifying fear, stigma, and misinformation,” UG’s statement read, condemning the statements as unethical and irresponsible.

UG further expressed disappointment over Rev. Tetteh’s decision to discuss sensitive health issues on national television without adequate regard for privacy. “It is, therefore, disappointing that Rev. Tetteh, given his standing, would make such comments without regard for the privacy and dignity of those affected,” the University stated.

UG reassured its community of ongoing health measures, including medical screenings by the University Health Services Directorate and counselling from the Careers and Counselling Directorate. These services, UG noted, are vital to maintaining the health, safety, and dignity of its students.

In its statement, UG urged both Rev. Tetteh and GTV to retract the claims and issue an apology, stressing that responsible reporting on HIV/AIDS

is essential to prevent harm and misinformation.

Meanwhile, the Ghana AIDS Commission noted that while new HIV cases have decreased by 14.8% in recent years, infections remain significant in key regions like Accra, Ashanti, and the Eastern Region.

The Bono Region, in particular, has the nation’s highest HIV prevalence rate at 2.12%. Ghana’s HIV population has seen a slight overall increase over the last decade, with adults aged 25 and above

comprising the majority of cases.

Dr. Kyeremeh Atuahene, Director-General of the Ghana AIDS Commission, highlighted the challenges in tackling the epidemic, especially among those aged 15 to 49. “This population is an economically active population. These are the people who work and earn income to support the country as well as the dependent population in the country,” Dr. Atuahene stated, underscoring the need for targeted intervention.



University of Ghana (UG)

Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey becomes first African Commonwealth Secretary-General

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

Ghana’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, has been elected as the Commonwealth Secretary-General, marking a historic first for both Ghana and the African continent.

Her appointment was confirmed at the 27th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Apia, Samoa. Botchwey succeeds Patricia Scotland, Baroness Scotland of the United Kingdom, who served in the role since 2016.

Baroness Scotland expressed her

support for Botchwey in a message posted on X (formerly Twitter), stating, “It is my honour to pass the baton to my dear sister, the Hon Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, who will succeed me as the next Commonwealth Secretary-General.”

Botchwey, chosen after a competitive selection process that included candidates from Lesotho and The Gambia, underscored her commitment to the Commonwealth’s mission and its 2.68 billion citizens.

“I care deeply about the Commonwealth and its diverse people,” Botchwey said in her

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Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Ghana’s Minister of Foreign Affairs

General News

Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey becomes first African Commonwealth Secretary-General

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acceptance speech, highlighting her dedication to fostering resilience and prosperity across member states.

She outlined her priorities as Secretary-General, which include strengthening democratic governance, championing human rights, and focusing on climate resilience, particularly for small and island nations. Her agenda aligns with this year's CHOGM theme, "One Resilient Common Future: Transforming Our Common Wealth."

Ghana's President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo congratulated Botchwey on her achievement, commending her commitment to service.

"Today, I feel a deep sense of pride and joy in congratulating Hon. Shirley

Ayorkor Botchwey on her election as the next and 7th Secretary-General of the Commonwealth," he remarked, noting her accomplishment as a testament to her character and the esteem in which Ghana is held.

The role of the Commonwealth Secretary-General

The Commonwealth Secretary-General represents the organisation globally, promoting its values and managing the Commonwealth Secretariat. Each Secretary-General can serve a maximum of two terms, each lasting four years.

Botchwey joins a line of distinguished leaders, including Patricia Scotland, Kamallesh Sharma of India, and Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria, each of whom has contributed significantly to shaping

the organisation's modern identity.

Botchwey's appointment comes amid pressing global issues requiring unified action. In her recent tenure as Ghana's representative on the UN Security Council (2021-2023), she led initiatives to secure funding for African-led peace efforts. Her role as Chair of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers also saw her contribute to regional stability, with efforts to counter military coups in West Africa.

The Commonwealth's mission and relevance

Founded on the values of democracy, development, and peace, the Commonwealth today includes 56 member countries, with diverse economies ranging from developed nations to small island states.

Though the association has its origins in the British Empire, modern Commonwealth membership is open to any country committed to these shared ideals. The latest additions to the association, Gabon and Togo, joined in 2022.

With her extensive diplomatic experience, Botchwey takes on leadership at a time when the Commonwealth is striving to address global challenges through collaborative action.

Her focus on promoting a resilient and unified Commonwealth aligns closely with this mission, and her tenure is anticipated to bring a strengthened emphasis on the needs and voices of smaller and developing nations within the Commonwealth community.

Anti-terror hotline 999 goes unresponsive as threats rise in northern Ghana

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

A recent revelation has brought attention to significant issues with Ghana's anti-terror hotline, 999, which has gone unresponsive despite reports of heightened threats in the region. Launched in May 2022 by the Ministry of National Security, the 999 hotline was intended to enable citizens to report suspicious activity swiftly, offering an early warning system to prevent terrorism.

However, repeated calls by The Independent Ghana on October 25 yielded only an automated message from MTN, advertising a Christianity service. Several attempts throughout the day went unanswered.

Public concern has been mounting, with citizens expressing frustration. One individual, quoted by The Independent Ghana, recounted his experience: "I tried calling this morning. They didn't pick up. Hmm, Ghana."

At a time of heightened alert, especially given a Reuters report that militants from Burkina Faso are using Ghana's northern regions as a logistical base, the inactive hotline

could undermine national security efforts.

According to Reuters, these cross-border insurgents gather supplies and receive medical treatment in Ghana, raising fears that they may establish roots or recruit within vulnerable communities.

Despite no confirmed attacks in Ghana, security experts warn that unchecked movement could lay the groundwork for future operations

in the region. Ghanaian authorities have reportedly been working with Burkina Faso to monitor these activities and prevent cross-border incursions.

The Ministry for National Security has yet to comment on the hotline's inaccessibility, leaving citizens and officials calling for renewed attention to Ghana's counter-terrorism measures.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands-based Clingendael Institute indicates Ghana's current strategy

is balancing between cooperation with neighbouring states and a low-profile, observational approach to managing extremists at its borders. Calls for a responsive anti-terror hotline reflect a growing concern among citizens and officials alike. As the situation in the Sahel worsens, maintaining active, reliable communication channels becomes essential in bolstering Ghana's defences against an expanding regional threat.



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Business

Govt expenditure on compensation and wages surges by 21.79% to GHC16bn in Q2

By *Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

The government of Ghana's expenditure on compensation and wages rose by 21.79% in the second quarter of 2024, reaching GHC16,088,370,059.45, compared to the first quarter's total of GHC13,209,784,023.58.

This increase per data from the Ministry of Finance reflects a heightened focus on meeting obligations in wages, pensions, social security, and related areas, amid rising fiscal pressures.

Q1 and Q2 Spending Overview

In the first quarter, the government's total expenditure on compensation stood at GHC 13.21 billion, with March recording the highest monthly expenditure at GHC4.74 billion. January and February registered GHC4.23 billion and GHC4.24 billion, respectively. In Q2, spending increased to GHC16.09 billion, with June seeing the peak expenditure at GHC5.39 billion, followed closely by May (GHC5.37 billion) and April (GHC5.32 billion).

Wages & Salaries Analysis

Wages and salaries dominate the government's spending on compensation. In Q1, a total of GHC11.53 billion was disbursed, with March (GHC4.14 billion) outpacing January and February (GHC3.71 billion and GHC3.68 billion). The second quarter saw a significant increase, with GHC14.74 billion spent—an increase of 27.84% from the previous quarter. June was the highest month for wages, at GHC5.16 billion, reflecting possible adjustments in wage settlements or an expanded payroll.

Social Contributions

Expenditure on social contributions saw a nuanced trend. The total amount spent in Q1 was GHC1.68 billion, with February (GHC554.60 million) and March (GHC600.55 million) showing increases from January's GHC520.57 million. In Q2, social contributions spending totaled GHC1.34 billion, marking a 19.8% decrease compared to Q1. This decline was due to a steep

reduction in June's contribution to GHC229.34 million.

Pensions

Pension payments remained relatively stable between the quarters. In Q1, the government allocated GHC568.63 million, with March leading at GHC226.56 million. The second quarter saw a slightly higher expenditure of GHC571.82 million, indicating an increase of 0.56%.

Gratuities

Gratuity payments witnessed a slight reduction in Q2. In the first quarter, GHC132.12 million was spent, with March being the highest at GHC49.49 million. Q2 spending on gratuities fell to GHC126.24 million—a decrease of 4.45%. This dip was driven by lower spending in April (GHC41.01 million) and May (GHC40.09 million).

Social Security

Expenditure on social security remained consistent. In Q1, the government spent GHC974.96 million, with February (GHC325.83 million) slightly ahead of January and March. In Q2, spending stood

at GHC646.12 million for April and May, with no data available for June.

Six-Month Summary

Over the first half of 2024, the government has allocated GHC29.30 billion to compensation of employees, including wages, pensions, social contributions, gratuities, and social security. This figure represents approximately 46% of the annual budget of GHC63.68 billion for compensation, leaving a budget balance of GHC34.39 billion for the remaining half of the year. This spending pattern, if maintained, suggests the government is likely to stay within its budget. However, unexpected expenditures could pose a risk of exceeding the annual target.

Total Fiscal Expenditure

The government's total expenditure across all sectors in the first half of 2024 surpassed GHC 101 billion, signalling progress toward the projected annual target of GHC226 billion. While the current spending aligns with fiscal goals, rising costs in areas such as interest payments, social benefits, and subsidies could strain future budgets. There is the need for fiscal prudence and

effective budget monitoring to ensure economic stability.

As the year progresses, maintaining a balance between meeting compensation obligations and adhering to the budget will be critical for fiscal health.

Total Revenue

The government recorded about 42% increase in total revenue from the first quarter (Q1) to the second quarter (Q2), according to data from the Finance Ministry.

The revenue figures reveal a notable surge, from GHS 7,836,251,007 in Q1 to GHS 11,125,051,450 in Q2, resulting in a quarterly difference of GHS 3,288,800,443.

The key drivers of this growth were taxes on domestic goods and services, which jumped by GHS 1.5 billion, and income and property taxes, which increased by nearly GHS 1.8 billion.

Furthermore, the first quarter demonstrated stable growth in revenue generation, with a gradual month-on-month improvement.



Dr Mohammed Amin Adam, Finance Minister



Business

IMF warns Ghana to maintain current debt levels to avoid 'economic pitfalls'

By Amanda Cartey

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cautioned Ghana against overspending as the nation approaches an election year, warning that unchecked expenditure could jeopardize recent economic gains.

Addressing a press conference during the IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington, IMF Africa Department Director Abebe Aemro Selassie stressed the importance of debt management and fiscal discipline, advising Ghana to avoid the "economic pitfalls" associated with previous

election cycles.

According to Selassie, Ghana's economic reforms, which include steps toward restructuring public debt and reducing fiscal deficits, are beginning to yield positive results, reflected in stronger growth projections for 2024.

"Maintaining modest levels of fiscal deficits and avoiding the pitfalls Ghana has faced in past election cycles will be critical to ensuring a healthy macroeconomic situation going forward," he stated.

As part of Ghana's debt restructuring, Selassie urged the

government to negotiate favorable terms with private lenders outside of the Eurobond market. These discussions are crucial to aligning with IMF program requirements and achieving debt sustainability.

"There is still a considerable amount of debt that needs to be agreed upon with non-Eurobond commercial creditors," he added, emphasizing that a successful negotiation would ensure Ghana secures the best possible deal for its people.

The Finance Minister, Dr. Mohammed Amin Adam, also confirmed that the IMF Board

is scheduled to review Ghana's progress on December 2, a session that could lead to the release of \$360 million in funding.

This sum, part of a broader IMF program, aims to support Ghana's budget and balance of payments, bringing the total IMF disbursement under the program to \$1.92 billion.

Economic growth projections for Ghana show an expected increase of around 4.0% for 2024, attributed in part to the reforms implemented under the IMF's guidance.



Abebe Aemro Selassie, Head of the IMF's African Department

International

War affects over 600 million women, UN says

Source: AfricaNews

More than 600 million women and girls are now affected by war, a 50% increase from a decade ago, and they fear the world has forgotten them amid an escalating backlash against women's rights and gender equality, top U.N. officials say.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a new report that amid record levels of armed conflict and violence, progress over the decades for women is vanishing and "generational gains in women's rights hang in the balance around the world."

The U.N. chief was assessing the state of a Security Council resolution adopted on Oct. 31, 2000, that demanded equal participation for women in peace negotiations, a goal that remains as distant as gender equality.

Guterres said current data and findings show that "the transformative potential of women's leadership and inclusion in the pursuit of peace" is being undercut — with power and decision-making on peace and

security matters overwhelmingly in the hands of men.

"As long as oppressive patriarchal social structures and gender biases hold back half our societies, peace will remain elusive," he warned.

The report says the proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubled in 2023 compared with a year earlier; U.N.-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence were 50% higher; and the number of girls affected by grave violations in conflicts increased by 35%.

At a two-day U.N. Security Council meeting on the topic that ended Friday, Sima Bahous, head of the U.N. agency promoting gender equality known as UN Women, also pointed to a lack of attention to women's voices in the search for peace.

She cited the fears of millions of women and girls in Afghanistan deprived of an education and a future; of displaced women in Gaza "waiting for death"; of women in Sudan who are victims of sexual violence; and of the vanishing hopes of women in Myanmar, Haiti, Congo, the Sahel region of

Africa, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen and elsewhere.

Bahous said 612 million women and girls who are affected by war "wonder if the world has already forgotten them, if they have fallen from the agenda of an international community overwhelmed by crises of ever deeper frequency, severity and urgency."

The world needs to answer their fears with hope, she said, but the reality is grim: "One in two women and girls in conflict-affected settings are facing moderate to severe food insecurity, 61% of all maternal mortality is concentrated in 35 conflict-affected countries."

As for women's participation in decision-making and politics in countries in conflict, Bahous said it's stalled.

"The percentage of women in peace negotiations has not improved over the last decade: under 10% on average in all processes, and under 20% in processes led or supported by the United Nations," she said.

U.N. Deputy Secretary-General

Amina Mohammed announced the launch of a "Common Pledge on Women's Participation in Peace Processes," and urged governments, regional organizations and others involved in mediation to join the U.N. in taking concrete steps toward that end. The commitments include appointing women as lead mediators and team members, promoting direct and meaningful participation of women in peace processes, consulting women leaders at all stages and embedding women with expertise "to foster gender-responsive peace processes and agreements," she said.

Many U.N. ambassadors who spoke at the council meeting focused on the lack of "political will" to promote women in the peace process.

"We've seen how the lack of political will continues to stand in the way of the full implementation of the commitments entered into by member states," Panama's U.N. Ambassador Eloy Alfaro de Alba said Friday.



File photo



International

Growth in sub-Saharan Africa projected at 3.6% in 2024 - IMF

Source: IMF

Sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth is projected to remain subdued at 3.6 percent in 2024, unchanged from 2023, with a modest pickup to 4.2 percent expected in 2025, according to the latest IMF Regional Economic Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa published on October 25.

The report notes that countries in the region are still grappling with macroeconomic imbalances, tight financing conditions, amid rising social pressures, leaving policymakers facing difficult choices in implementing reforms.

"Sub-Saharan African countries are navigating a complex economic landscape marked by both progress and persistent vulnerabilities," said Abebe Aemro Selassie, Director of the

IMF's African Department. "While many of the region's countries are among the world's fastest-growing economies, resource-intensive countries—particularly oil exporters—continue to struggle with lower growth rates. Inflation is declining but remains in double digits in nearly one-third of countries. Public debt has stabilized at a high level, with rising debt service burdens crowding out resources for development spending."

"While we are seeing some improvement in macroeconomic imbalances, growth remains insufficient to significantly reduce poverty or address substantial developmental challenges in the region."

The report includes focused notes addressing critical issues facing the region: the urgent need for job

creation, the economic divergence between resource-rich and non-resource-rich countries, and the positive effects of striving for greater gender equality.

Against this backdrop, Mr. Selassie pointed to priorities for policymakers in the region:

"The policy mix should be consistent with the size of macroeconomic imbalances, while taking into account the political economy constraints that will affect the pace of reforms."

"Countries with high macroeconomic imbalances are more likely to resort to relatively large and frontloaded fiscal reforms, given the tight financing constraints. The need for financial support from the international community is most acute for this group."

"For countries with lower imbalances, policymakers should consider easing monetary policy toward a more neutral stance, while rebuilding fiscal and external buffers over time."

"Policymakers need to focus on designing reforms that are socially acceptable, including effective communication and consultation strategies and measures to protect the most vulnerable."

"With continued efforts, sub-Saharan Africa can address its current challenges and move towards more sustainable and inclusive growth," Mr. Selassie concluded. "However, the path ahead requires careful policy calibration and a strong commitment to implementing necessary reforms while managing social pressures."



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