



Mpox cases in Ghana surge to 230, GHS tags coastal areas as hotspots

Page 5

GNAT vows to proceed with nationwide strike against galamsey despite Akufo-Addo's plea

Page 6



Ghana must stick to reform agenda – IMF cautions as elections approach

Page 8



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General News

Galamsey: High levels of heavy metals now detected in Ghanaian yam exports – US-based engineer warns

By Persis Roberts

The fight against illegal mining, locally known as galamsey, has drawn criticism from various sectors in Ghana, but it seems the effects of the activity stretch far beyond the country's borders.

AUS-based licensed Environmental Engineer, Dr. Juliet Ohemeng-Ntiamoah, has raised an alarming concern about how galamsey's harmful consequences are reaching the diaspora, especially through food exports.

Speaking on Joy News' Newsfile on October 5, 2024, Dr. Ohemeng-Ntiamoah, who specialises in bioenergy and wastewater process engineering, shared her insights on how the activities of illegal miners are impacting not only those living in Ghana but also those abroad who still consume Ghanaian products.

She disclosed a disturbing conversation with a colleague at the Ghana Standards Authority. "I was talking to a friend who works at Ghana Standards Board recently, and she told me that they tested yams being exported, and they had high levels of heavy metals," she explained. "This is a call to those in the diaspora who think that galamsey is only happening in Ghana - the effects of galamsey are coming to our doorstep, even in the US."

Dr. Ohemeng-Ntiamoah highlighted that although she has lived in the United States for about a decade, she still frequents African markets for Ghanaian food items. However, she now fears that some of these products might be contaminated due to the uncontrolled mining activities that have polluted water sources and soils in Ghana.



File Photo

"I wanted to use this platform to highlight that even those of us in the US who still patronise Ghanaian food in our African markets are not spared from the effects of galamsey," she added, emphasising the far-reaching nature of the crisis.

This disclosure comes at a time when protests are gaining

momentum across Ghana, with citizens demanding accountability and stronger measures to combat illegal mining.

The government has been urged to implement stricter policies and increase enforcement in mining communities to reduce the ecological damage.

Keep protests against galamsey peaceful and responsible - UN warns Ghana

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The United Nations (UN) has called for peaceful protests in Ghana as citizens demand action to stop illegal mining, commonly known as galamsey.

The UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana, Charles Abani, in a statement released on October 5, 2024, urged demonstrators to remain calm and responsible while advocating for an end to the environmental damage caused by galamsey.

This message follows a three-day demonstration led by Democracy Hub, which highlighted the urgent need for the government to address the severe impact of illegal mining on water bodies and local communities across the country.

Abani stressed the importance of peaceful demonstrations and called for collaboration among various sectors to tackle the issue. "We call on all protesters

to maintain a peaceful and responsible approach and on the police to maintain professionalism in protecting law and order while upholding human and civil rights," he said.

Abani's statement also addressed Ghana's leadership, urging government officials, political parties, traditional and religious institutions, civil society, and the private sector to unite in the fight against galamsey. He warned that illegal mining not only destroys the environment but also deepens poverty, undermines livelihoods, contaminates water sources, and fuels illegal financial activities.

"We have seen this across West Africa, and Ghana is no exception. Among other things, it exacerbates poverty, damages livelihoods, pollutes the environment, negatively impacts health and water, disrupts peace, and fuels illicit financial flows," Abani added.

The UN's call comes amid growing concern over the environmental and economic damage caused by galamsey, which has devastated river bodies and disrupted communities nationwide. The illegal activity has also raised health concerns due to water contamination and other environmental hazards.

Reaffirming the UN's commitment to sustainability and climate action, Abani emphasised the need for responsible mining practices. He urged Ghanaians to

adopt measures that align with the UN's #PactfortheFuture, a global initiative aimed at ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

"The UN in Ghana supports all actions in line with the #PactfortheFuture, including sustainability, climate action, the environment, and pollution, that secure a peaceful, brighter future for people, the planet, and generations yet unborn. This is our collective ambition," Abani said.



File Photo

General News

Ghana urges citizens to leave Lebanon amid escalating conflict

By Persis Roberts

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration has advised Ghanaians residing in Lebanon to evacuate immediately as tensions escalate in the region.

The advisory comes in response to the growing conflict between Israeli forces and Hezbollah militants, which has resulted in air strikes, artillery, and tank exchanges in Lebanon.

In a statement released on October 4, 2024, the ministry expressed concern over the security of Ghanaian nationals living in Lebanon, urging them to leave the country while limited flight options

remain available. The situation has been described as increasingly dangerous, with civilians at risk due to the intensifying clashes.

The ministry emphasised the importance of swift action, stating, "The Government of Ghana urges all Ghanaians in Lebanon to make use of available flights to evacuate the country without delay."

For those without valid travel documents, the government has offered assistance through its diplomatic channels. "Ghanaians without travel documents are encouraged to contact the Embassy of Ghana in Cairo, Egypt, or the Ghana Honorary Consulate

in Beirut, Lebanon, to obtain Emergency Travel Certificates," the ministry's statement added.

This evacuation notice follows a series of warnings by international governments and organisations

as the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah worsens. Ghanaians in Lebanon have been urged to prioritise their safety by following the government's advice and evacuating as soon as possible.



File Photo

Nana Kwame Bediako unveils financial expert Maryam Issaka Kriese as running mate for 2024 election

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Independent presidential candidate Nana Kwame Bediako, also known as Cheddar, has announced Dr. Maryam Issaka Kriese as his running mate for the upcoming December 7 election.

Bediako, the leader of the New Force, made the announcement during a press briefing in Kumasi on 5th October 2024, highlighting her financial expertise and leadership credentials.

Bediako emphasised Dr. Kriese's significant contributions to Ghana's financial sector, particularly during her time as Senior Manager at the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC).

"As Senior Manager at the Securities & Exchange Commission, Ghana, she helped shape the nation's financial landscape through strategic oversight of investments, licensing of capital market operators, and the development of critical regulations," Bediako stated.

Dr. Kriese has also been active in financial education, playing a key role in training market operators and educating investors. This, according to Bediako, places her in a strong position to contribute to the nation's economic empowerment if elected.

Dr. Maryam Issaka Kriese is not only an experienced financial expert but also a respected academic. She has lectured at both the University of Ghana Business School and the University of Professional Studies, Accra, sharing her knowledge in finance with students.

She holds a doctorate in finance, an MBA, and additional qualifications in Islamic Finance and ERP systems, making her a versatile figure in the financial world.

A devout Muslim and a women's rights advocate, Dr. Kriese has also gained recognition for her

activism, further enhancing her appeal as a candidate who can drive both economic and social reforms.

Nana Bediako's New Force movement has been gaining traction in recent months, particularly among Ghanaians frustrated with the dominance of the two major political parties. The Bediako-Maryam ticket offers voters a fresh alternative, with a focus on financial inclusion and economic stability.

"Whether it's reshaping policies, advancing financial education, or

contributing to groundbreaking research, she stands as an indomitable force driving both Ghana and Africa towards financial inclusion and economic resilience," Bediako said, highlighting the qualities that make his running mate a valuable addition to his team.

As the 2024 election campaign intensifies, the Bediako-Maryam team is expected to tour the country, presenting their vision for change and economic reform to voters.



Nana Kwame Bediako, Leader of New Force, on the right, Dr. Maryam Issaka Kriese, running mate of New Force, on the left

General News

CODEO deploys 100 observers nationwide to ensure transparent elections ahead of Dec 7 polls

By Persis Roberts

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) has stationed 100 Long-Term Observers (LTOs) across all 16 regions of Ghana to monitor the pre-election environment leading up to the presidential and parliamentary elections on December 7, 2024.

The observation mission began on October 1 and will continue until December 4, 2024. The LTOs will focus on monitoring activities at the constituency level, including the roles of key stakeholders such as the Electoral Commission (EC), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), National Peace Council (NPC), political parties, security agencies, civil society organisations, traditional leaders, and the media.

A statement from CODEO, signed by its National Coordinator Albert Kofi Arhin, highlighted that the observers would track incidents of electoral misconduct, including intimidation, vote buying, harassment, and violence. The aim of the mission is to promote peaceful and transparent

elections.

Before deployment, the observers underwent a two-day training workshop held in Koforidua and Kumasi. The training was designed to equip the LTOs with the necessary skills to carry out their duties effectively.

Director of Policy Engagement and Partnerships at the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Dr. Kojo Asante, emphasised the importance of long-term observation.

He stated, "Our long-term observation mission is essential in promoting transparency and building public confidence in the electoral process. By deploying observers months before election day, we can identify potential and emerging issues and hotspots early and work with stakeholders to address them for a free, fair and credible election."

Mr. Arhin reaffirmed CODEO's commitment to safeguarding Ghana's electoral integrity. "CODEO's commitment to electoral integrity in Ghana spans decades,

and it's through the dedication of citizen observers like yourselves that we've been able to make significant contributions to our democratic process," he noted.

Frederick Adu-Gyamfi, Director of Programmes and Operations at CDD-Ghana, also urged the LTOs to approach their duties with accuracy and honesty, while prioritising their personal safety. "Your personal safety is paramount—always prioritise your well-being and adhere to the safety protocols we've outlined," Adu-Gyamfi cautioned.

In addition to observing electoral activities, CODEO called on all

political parties to conduct their campaigns responsibly. They emphasised the importance of issue-based discourse and urged politicians to avoid inciting violence or promoting ethnic divisions.

The Coalition also encouraged the EC to maintain transparency by providing accurate and timely election-related information.

CODEO plans to keep the public informed through bi-weekly press releases, summarising the key observations reported by the LTOs as the election date approaches.



Albert Kofi Arhin, National Coordinator, CODEO

"How can a former protest leader oppose protests?" - Akufo-Addo denies partisan arrest of anti-galamsey protesters

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

President Nana Akufo-Addo has firmly denied allegations of partisan interference in the recent arrest of 53 anti-galamsey protesters.

In an interview with France 24 on October 4, 2024, Akufo-Addo stressed that the arrests were not an attempt to suppress dissent but were tied to the conduct of the individuals during the demonstration.

Responding to accusations of politically motivated arrests, the president reiterated his respect for peaceful protests, asserting that such actions are a legitimate form of democratic expression.

"I am not responsible for jailing people in Ghana. The courts in Ghana are independent institutions, and they have been so through the Fourth Republic,"

Akufo-Addo stated. He explained that the behaviour of the protesters led to their arrest and prosecution by the authorities, distancing the executive branch from the legal process.

The protest was organised to raise awareness about the environmental damage caused by illegal mining, known locally as galamsey. Ghana's rivers and forests have been severely impacted by this illicit practice, which has become a major political issue. Akufo-Addo acknowledged the gravity of galamsey's environmental consequences but insisted that demonstrations must remain lawful and peaceful.

He also questioned how a leader whose political career was rooted in protests could be against such forms of expression. "How can a president whose political career was aided by leading protests have

problems with protests?" he asked. Akufo-Addo urged protesters to collaborate with authorities in finding long-term solutions to the galamsey crisis.

The president also touched on regional security issues during the interview, expressing disappointment over the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from the Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS) following recent coups in these countries.

The arrest of the anti-galamsey protesters has sparked debates in Ghana about civil liberties, environmental protection, and the role of the judiciary in political matters, with the government standing by its position on the need for peaceful and responsible activism.



Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana



General News

Fuseina Fuseini crowned Ghana's Most Outstanding Teacher for 2024

By Persis Roberts

A teacher at Madina SDA Basic School in the Greater Accra Region, Fuseina Fuseini, has been named Ghana's Most Outstanding Teacher for 2024.

This accolade was presented during the Ghana Teacher Prize ceremony, held in Kumasi on October 6, 2024, in celebration of World Teachers' Day.

The event, themed "Valuing Teacher Voices: Towards a New Social Contract for Education," focused on the role of educators

in shaping the nation's education system. Teachers were encouraged to actively participate in discussions about the future of education in Ghana.

Fuseini, a 47-year-old teacher with over a decade of experience, attributed her success to her commitment and innovative teaching methods. Speaking to the media, she encouraged other educators to stay committed to their duties.

"I want to encourage all teachers across the country to also put in

their best by adopting innovative ways of improving teaching and learning outcomes," she said.

The Ghana Teaching Council, the body responsible for organising

the awards, recognized Fuseini for her significant contributions to improving learning outcomes at her school.



Fuseina Fuseini, Ghana's Most Outstanding Teacher

Mpox cases in Ghana surge to 230, GHS tags coastal areas as hotspots

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Ghana Health Service (GHS) has announced a rise in suspected monkeypox (mpox) cases, following the confirmation of an infection in the Bia West District of the Western North Region last week.

The first confirmed case of 2024, involved a 15-year-old boy whose diagnosis was verified by the National Public Health and Reference Laboratory on October 1. Since then, suspected cases have risen sharply, with over 200 cases reported across nearly 90 districts nationwide, according to the GHS.

Speaking at a media briefing, Dr. Dennis Odae Laryeh, Deputy Director in Charge of Surveillance at the GHS, confirmed this development during a media briefing, noting the increase in mpox cases throughout the year.

"Yes, our surveillance system has been looking out for mpox, and the 230 cases we've seen this year, in fact, the numbers have gone up, and the numbers we've seen so far are just from 2024," Dr. Laryeh explained.

Dr. Laryeh also highlighted the potential risk in Ghana's coastal regions, particularly in districts bordering Ivory Coast, which has also reported mpox cases. He noted that although Accra had been a hotspot in previous

outbreaks, the current concern is more widespread.

"Accra was a hotspot, but this is just one case that has been found in one district. I would say there may be some districts of concern. If you look at the fact that Ivory Coast has recorded quite a number of cases, we could say that the districts bordering Ivory Coast may potentially be areas where we could see cases or higher numbers," he said.

The GHS has initiated a public health investigation into the

outbreak and will notify the World Health Organization (WHO) as part of its coordinated response. Health authorities are urging the public to remain vigilant and follow recommended preventive measures to contain the spread of the virus.

Ghana has faced recurring mpox outbreaks, with significant surges in cases reported in 2022 and 2023.

In 2022, 116 cases were confirmed across 14 of the country's 16 regions, resulting in four fatalities.

The virus primarily affected individuals aged 16 to 39, though children were not spared, with one tragic case involving a 13-day-old infant.

Mpox is caused by the monkeypox virus (MPXV), part of the Orthopoxvirus genus, which includes viruses such as smallpox and cowpox. Symptoms include painful rashes, swollen lymph nodes, fever, headaches, muscle aches, and fatigue. Although many people recover fully, some cases can become severe.



Mpox patient

General News

Education Ministry proposes testimonials and transfers to combat escalating indiscipline in SHSs

By Persis Roberts

Education Minister Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum has introduced stringent measures to address growing concerns about indiscipline in Ghana's Senior High Schools (SHSs).

During the 2024 Ghana Teacher Prize awards ceremony in Kumasi, the minister laid out a plan that includes the mandatory use of testimonials for university admissions and the appointment of deans of discipline in SHSs to enforce school rules.

Dr. Adutwum's remarks follow a tragic incident at O'Reilly Senior High School in Accra, where a student was fatally stabbed in a confrontation with a fellow student. The situation has renewed concerns about student behaviour, with teacher unions and the public calling for stricter enforcement of discipline in schools.

Addressing the audience, Dr. Adutwum emphasised the government's zero-tolerance stance on indiscipline. He stated, "A note of caution to all students: there should be no tolerance for indiscipline in our schools, and

there will be zero tolerance for indiscipline in our schools."

He further revealed that the government is working closely with the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS) and other key stakeholders to introduce policies aimed at curbing student misconduct. Among these proposals is the introduction of opportunity transfers, allowing school authorities to move students with persistent disciplinary issues to other institutions.

The minister highlighted that a student's behaviour in SHS would impact their future academic and professional opportunities, with a testimonial on character becoming a requirement for tertiary education.

"We are going to be working with tertiary institutions, colleges of education, nursing training colleges, universities to ensure that when you are moving from high school to the university, you will provide a testimonial. You will have to secure a reference letter talking about your character. So if you go on a rampage and disrupt

property, that ends your career," he cautioned.

In addition to the testimonial requirement, Dr. Adutwum underscored the role of deans of discipline, a new position being created to oversee the enforcement of discipline in schools.

"We have begun with the appointments of deans of discipline. That is a good start," he noted, adding that these deans will work closely with school authorities to ensure compliance with rules and regulations.

He reiterated that indiscipline would not be tolerated and warned that students who cause disturbances, destroy property, or

engage in violent behaviour could face severe consequences.

"Indiscipline will not be tolerated anywhere in our schools... if you are proving to become a nuisance at Adisadel, we will give the school the right to do an opportunity transfer. You'll be sent to another school," he said.

The minister's speech comes at a critical time, as the Ghana Education Service (GES) has already set up a committee to investigate the O'Reilly Senior High School stabbing and explore additional measures to restore discipline in SHSs across the country.



Yaw Osei Adutwum, Education Minister

GNAT vows to proceed with nationwide strike against galamsey despite Akufo-Addo's plea

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) has confirmed its resolve to go ahead with the planned nationwide strike against illegal mining, also known as galamsey, scheduled for October 10.

This comes despite President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's request for patience during a critical meeting with Organised Labour on October 3, 2024.

General Secretary of GNAT, Thomas Musah, reaffirmed the union's position in an interview on October 4, stating that the strike will proceed as planned.

He reiterated GNAT's commitment to Organised Labour's demands for more decisive action against

illegal mining, which has caused extensive environmental damage and contamination of Ghana's water bodies.

"Organised Labour, we have all agreed, and that is what GNAT is standing by; we agree that there should be a state of emergency on illegal mining," Musah stated. He explained that the government's appeal for more time to address the issue did not include concrete steps or a clear timeline, making it impossible for GNAT and other labour unions to retreat from their planned protest.

The government's long-term proposals to tackle illegal mining include declaring a state of emergency in affected areas, revoking mining licences in forest

reserves, and establishing special courts to prosecute galamsey offenders.

However, Musah expressed dissatisfaction with the government's delay, stressing the urgency of the crisis. "What's the definition of more time? With people dying, what will happen to them? We must make a decision—it's a matter of life and death," he emphasised.

The planned strike has garnered significant public attention as Ghanaians grapple with the devastating consequences of galamsey. Many see the strike as a critical push for immediate action to stop the environmental destruction caused by illegal mining, which has endangered

water sources, livelihoods, and public health.

As the strike day approaches, it remains to be seen whether GNAT and Organised Labour's demands will prompt faster government intervention or lead to prolonged unrest between stakeholders.



Thomas Musah, General Secretary, GNAT



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Business

Ghana must stick to reform agenda – IMF cautions as elections approach

By Persis Roberts

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged the Ghanaian government to continue implementing its reform agenda to fully restore macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability, especially in light of the upcoming 2024 elections.

Although recognising Ghana's progress in restructuring its debt, the IMF emphasised that the country must stay on course with the reforms.

The IMF's remarks were made after a staff team, led by Mission Chief Stéphane Roudet, visited Accra from September 24 to October 4, 2024. The visit was part of discussions around the third review of Ghana's three-year program under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF), which was approved by the IMF Executive Board in May 2023, amounting to SDR 2.242 billion (US\$3 billion).

Roudet noted, "The IMF staff and Ghanaian authorities have reached a staff-level agreement on the third review of Ghana's economic program under the Extended Credit Facility arrangement. This staff-level agreement is subject to IMF Management approval and Executive Board consideration."

Should the IMF's Executive Board approve the agreement, Ghana will receive an additional SDR

269.1 million (US\$360 million), bringing the total disbursement under the program to SDR 1,441 million (US\$1.92 billion).

The IMF acknowledged that Ghana's economic performance has been satisfactory so far, meeting key targets by the end of June 2024. Economic growth in the first half of 2024 was higher than anticipated, driven by sectors such as mining, construction, and information and communication. However, Roudet highlighted concerns over the ongoing drought in the northern regions, which could negatively affect agricultural output and put pressure on food prices.

Despite these challenges, the Bank of Ghana has pledged to maintain a tight monetary policy to curb inflation. "Inflation has continued to decline," Roudet confirmed, while acknowledging that the dry spell could impact price stability in the second half of the year.

The Ghanaian government has made significant strides in restructuring its debt. Following a successful domestic debt restructuring in 2023, the country is now preparing to restructure its Eurobonds. Additionally, Ghana reached an agreement with its Official Creditors Committee under the G20 Common Framework in June 2024.

The IMF emphasised that the

government must continue its efforts to secure agreements with external commercial creditors to ensure consistency with the program's parameters. "The authorities are committed to pursuing good-faith efforts to reach an agreement with other commercial external creditors," Roudet said.

The mission also focused on discussions around enhancing the sustainability of the energy sector, as well as measures to strengthen revenue collection and expenditure controls, particularly as the December 2024 elections approach. The IMF highlighted the importance of protecting the most vulnerable groups through social protection programs amid the country's economic challenges.

"The government's policy response should help mitigate these risks," Roudet added, referring to the impact of the drought and the pressures on food prices.

Despite some emerging risks, the IMF remains optimistic about Ghana's fiscal outlook. The country is expected to achieve a primary surplus of 0.5% of GDP by the end of the year, despite the spending pressures caused by the drought and the energy sector challenges.

The external sector has also seen improvements, with strong exports—particularly gold and oil—and higher remittances contributing to the accumulation of international reserves beyond program targets.

IMF staff met with key officials, including Finance Minister Dr. Mohammed Amin Adam and Bank of Ghana Governor Dr. Ernest Addison, as well as representatives from various government agencies. The team also engaged with other stakeholders to discuss the country's progress and challenges in implementing the reform agenda.



IMF Logo

Ghana defers bilateral debt payments to 2028

By Persis Roberts

Ghana has postponed the repayment of its debt to Official Bilateral Creditors until 2028, as part of ongoing efforts to manage the country's debt burden.

The announcement was made by Finance Minister Dr. Mohammed Amin Adam during a press briefing in Accra on Thursday, October 3, 2024. This comes after the country completed its \$13 billion external debt exchange, which includes Eurobonds.

In his statement, Dr. Adam confirmed that Ghana would resume payments to Eurobond

holders in the next two weeks, but at reduced levels due to lower interest rates and principal reductions under the new terms of the debt exchange.

"By the 98 per cent we've achieved, we've all consented to the exchange, but the actual exchange will take place over the next two weeks, and once we exchange, it means that we can start servicing our debts," Dr. Adam said.

He added that while Eurobond payments would resume shortly, "the servicing of the debt owed to Official Bilateral Creditors has been postponed until after

2028."

The Finance Minister explained that the government is taking steps to build buffers for future debt repayments. This includes increasing the revenue-to-GDP ratio to 18 percent and growing the country's Sinking Fund, which is designed to manage debt repayment over time.

"With increased revenue, our capacity to pay back our debts is going to be enhanced," Dr. Adam said. He noted that amendments to the Fiscal Responsibility Act were being prepared for Parliament, which would help limit new debt

accumulation.

The completion of the Domestic Debt Exchange Program (DDEP) and the external debt restructuring, including the Eurobond exchange, is expected to bring relief to Ghana's economy. Dr. Adam emphasised that the restructuring efforts would strengthen the cedi against major currencies like the dollar and improve the country's credit rating.

"With this development, Ghana is likely to get positive upgrades, and when you get upgrades, the international community and investor confidence in your

Continued on page 9



Business

Ghana defers bilateral debt payments to 2028

Continued from page 8

economy increases," he stated. The Finance Minister also highlighted that increased foreign investment could strengthen the cedi by boosting the inflow of foreign exchange.

Ghana's external debt restructuring has been a crucial

part of its strategy to stabilise its economy following the suspension of debt payments in December 2022. At the time, the government halted payments on Eurobonds, commercial term loans, and bilateral debts to prevent further economic deterioration.

As part of its restructuring process, Ghana sought assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under a \$3 billion Extended Credit Facility. The program, approved in May 2023, aims to restore macroeconomic stability and ensure long-term

debt sustainability.

By deferring bilateral debt payments and focusing on revenue growth, the government aims to maintain fiscal stability while balancing the pressures of debt servicing and economic recovery.



Dr Mohammed Amin Adam, Finance Minister

International

Burkina Faso plans to withdraw some mining permits - Junta leader says

By Reuters

Burkina Faso plans to withdraw mining permits from some foreign companies and will seek to produce more of its own gold, junta leader Ibrahim Traore said on Saturday, without specifying which permits could be cancelled.

"We know how to mine our gold and I don't understand why we're going to let multinationals come and mine it," Traore said in a radio address to mark two years since he seized power in a coup.

"In fact, we are going to withdraw mining permits," he said. He did

not specify which permits or provide further detail.

Gold is the main export of the West African country, where frustration over a long-running security crisis helped bring the junta to power in 2022. Since then, it has severed longstanding ties with Western allies and sought closer relations with Russia.

London-listed Endeavour Mining, Australia-based West African Resources, Russia's Nordgold, and Canada's Orezone Gold Corporation operate in Burkina Faso. Operations have been

complicated by growing insecurity. Despite the junta promising to contain groups linked to Al Qaeda and Islamic State, the country saw a severe escalation of deadly

attacks in 2023, with more than 8,000 people reportedly killed, according to U.S.-based crisis-monitoring group ACLED.



Ibrahim Traore, Burkina Faso Leader

Rwanda begins vaccination drive to curb Marburg virus outbreak

By Aljazeera

Rwanda has begun a nationwide vaccination campaign in response to a deadly outbreak of the Marburg virus, which has claimed 12 lives since it was first detected on September 27, 2024.

The government is focusing on healthcare workers and close contacts of confirmed cases as it battles to contain the spread of the virus.

Health Minister Sabin Nsanzimana announced the vaccination drive during a press briefing in Kigali, stating, "The vaccination is starting today immediately."

The health ministry has identified 46 confirmed cases of the virus, with 29 patients currently in isolation. More than 400 individuals who were in contact with infected persons are under surveillance.

The Marburg virus, which is similar to Ebola, is a highly lethal disease that can have a fatality rate of up to 88% without treatment. Symptoms include fever, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, and in severe cases, massive blood loss.

The virus is believed to originate from fruit bats and spreads through contact with bodily fluids of infected individuals or

contaminated surfaces. There is no authorised vaccine or treatment for Marburg, making the current vaccination efforts vital in curbing the outbreak.

Minister Nsanzimana emphasised the importance of protecting front-line healthcare workers, saying, "We believe that, with vaccines, we have a powerful tool to stop the spread of this virus." Rwanda has

received shipments of the vaccine from various sources, including the Sabin Vaccine Institute.

This is the first time Rwanda has experienced a Marburg outbreak, but the virus has been recorded in several other African countries, including Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Ghana. Rwanda's swift action and vaccination strategy aim to prevent a further spread of

the virus within its borders and beyond.

The government continues to investigate the source of the outbreak, while health authorities ramp up efforts to manage the situation in hospitals and treatment centres across the country.



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