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General News

We will continue to broadcast our intervention during fire incidents to correct bad reputation - GNFS

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) has pledged to continue broadcasting its rescue and intervention efforts during fire outbreaks and accidents as part of a strategy to rebuild public trust and address negative perceptions about the Service.

Speaking to Accra-based JoyNews, ADO1 Alex King Nartey, the Public Relations Officer of the GNFS, acknowledged the negative public image that the Service has faced over the years. He stressed that one of their key approaches is to engage the public more actively and showcase their role in rescue missions.

“Many people have had negative perceptions about the Fire Service. One strategy we are adopting is to involve people in what we do and to use public broadcasts as a way of dispelling rumours and misconceptions,” he explained.

According to ADO1 Nartey, broadcasting fire incidents and accidents serves as a public service announcement, allowing people to better understand the GNFS’s role in such situations.

He elaborated, “There might be

a fire or an accident somewhere, and people might draw their own conclusions. Broadcasting these incidents can bring someone’s attention to the fact that there is a situation and help people appreciate our interventions.”

He further noted that the GNFS is typically the first agency called upon to assist during accidents, especially when lives are at risk.

“Whenever there is an accident, the first point of call is the Fire Service to aid in any rescue mission,” he emphasized, underscoring the critical role the Service plays in ensuring quick responses to emergencies.

However, ADO1 Nartey also addressed the recent criticism the Service faced after sharing images of victims from a tragic car accident at East Legon on October 12. The images, which showed the charred bodies of two young girls, were met with public outrage. In response, the GNFS issued an apology for the distress caused.

“We apologise for the gory pictures. That was not our intention. We respect the dead and their families,” he said.

Reiterating the Service’s role during

accidents, he pointed to the East Legon incident, explaining that while the police maintain law and order, the GNFS is responsible for retrieving victims from accident scenes. “It’s our job to rescue people and hand them over to the police,” Nartey added.

The tragic East Legon accident involved a collision between a Jaguar SUV, driven by 16-year-old Elrad Salifu Amoako, and a 4x4 Acura vehicle. Both vehicles caught fire upon impact, leading to the deaths of 12-year-olds Justine Agbenu and Maame Dwomoh.

The police have since identified the victims and arrested Elrad’s parents,

Bishop Elisha Salifu Amoako and Mouha Amoako, who are assisting with investigations.

The PRO emphasized that the GNFS will continue to broadcast its interventions during fire incidents and emergencies.

“The person’s life might be fading away, so the quicker you call us, the faster we can respond,” he noted, urging the public to appreciate the critical nature of their work.

The GNFS remains committed to correcting any misconceptions and maintaining transparency with the public through their broadcasts.



Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS)

Speaker declares NDC majority in historic ruling, 3 NPP seats now vacant

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin has delivered his ruling on a petition calling for the removal of four sitting Members of Parliament (MPs).

Speaker Bagbin on Thursday, October 17, declared vacant the seats occupied by Cynthia Morrison (Agona West), Kojo Asante (Suhum), Andrew Asiamah (Fomena), who sided with the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and Peter Kwakye Ackah (Amenfi Central), who run on the ticket of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) during the 2020 elections.

These individuals have filed to contest as independent candidates in the upcoming December elections.

In his ruling, Speaker Alban Bagbin, after extensive reading, emphasized that if Article 97 (1)(g) of the 1992 Constitution were meant to apply only to a future parliament, it would have been redundant, as the MPs in question would have already completed their current parliamentary term.

The Speaker further clarified that the previous instance where former Speaker Prof. Mike Oquaye expelled

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Alban Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament

General News

Speaker declares NDC majority in historic ruling, 3 NPP seats now vacant

- Continued from page 2

the Fomena MP from Parliament based on the NPP's notification of the MP's decision to go independent, was not binding on him or any other future Speaker.

Bagbin concluded that since the notice of polls had officially confirmed that the four MPs were contesting as independent candidates, they no longer had the right to retain their seats in the current parliament. Consequently, he declared their seats vacant.

Their removal was spearheaded by former Minority Leader Haruna

Iddrisu, who invoked Article 97 (1)(g) of the Constitution, which mandates that MPs who contest as independent candidates must vacate their seats.

Majority Leader Alexander Afenyo-Markin responded to the matter by filing a legal challenge at the Supreme Court to prevent the Minority's bid. Afenyo-Markin contested the Speaker's ruling, however, Ato Forson lauded the Speaker "for standing firm."

Ato Forson is now the Majority Leader whereas Afenyo-Markin

is the Minority Leader. Presently, Andrew Asiamah ceases to be the Second Deputy Speaker in Parliament after losing the Fomena seat. Prior to the ruling, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) held 137 seats, while the NPP had 138. With the successful motion, the NDC now has a parliamentary majority with 136 seats while the NPP has 135 seats.

Whenever a vacancy occurs in Parliament, the Clerk to Parliament is expected to notify the Electoral Commission in writing within seven days after the vacancy occurs, and

a by-election shall be held within thirty days after the vacancy occurs.

However, there would be no by-election despite the vacant seats as Article 112 (6) of the 1992 constitution directs that "a by-election shall not be held within three months before the holding of a general election."

Meanwhile, the NPP Members of Parliament have vowed not to step into the chamber until the matter before the Supreme Court is addressed.

EC to announce presidential results at all regional collation centers ahead of final declaration

By Amanda Cartey

The Electoral Commission (EC) has revealed that the results of the December 2024 presidential election will first be announced at each of the 16 regional collation centers before a final declaration is made at the national headquarters.

This update came from the EC's Deputy Chairman for Corporate Services, Dr. Bossman Asare, during the launch of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers' (CODEO) 2024 Election Day observation and post-election activities.

Dr. Asare added that all political parties have agreed to this new approach, with their representatives present at polling stations and collation centers to oversee

He explained, "For every constituency, there will be someone assisting with the collation process, and the same applies at the regional level. Under CI 127, regional collation is part of the structure for presidential elections. After results are compiled at polling stations, they will be sent to constituency collation centres, and from there, forwarded to the regional collation centres. At each regional centre, we will announce the presidential results."

He emphasized that the change aims to enhance transparency by

allowing voters to track results region by region throughout the process.

Dr Asare also mentioned that a similar approach was successfully implemented during the 2020 elections.

He further expressed confidence in the 2024 election process, noting that the collation centres will be spacious and will only admit accredited observers and media

personnel.

The Electoral Commission (EC) has announced the locations of polling stations for the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections.

In a statement dated October 10 and signed by Samuel Tetteh, the EC's Deputy Chairman for Operations, it was revealed that there will be a total of 40,647 primary polling stations, including 328 set aside for special voting.

Additionally, the Electoral Commission shared information about the printing of notices of poll and ballot papers in a communiqué on Wednesday, October 9.

This announcement faced strong backlash, especially from the National Democratic Congress (NDC), leading to a meeting with other political parties on Thursday, October 10.



Dr. Bossman Asare, EC's Deputy Chairman for Corporate Services

General News

Compensating farmers affected by dry spell not an election ploy, each to receive GH¢1K - Agric Minister

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Minister of Agriculture Bryan Acheampong has refuted allegations that the government is providing GH¢3,000 to each of the 800,000 farmers affected by the recent dry spell in northern Ghana.

These claims, initially raised by Minority Leader Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, suggested that the government was disbursing GH¢3,000 per farmer as a politically motivated strategy to gain favour before the December 7 elections.

Dr. Forson argued that these payments were intended to compensate farmers for their losses during the prolonged dry season while also attempting to sway their votes.

However, during a parliamentary session on Wednesday, Acheampong firmly countered these assertions, clarifying that the government is actually providing GH¢1,000 per farmer.

“We have not said anywhere that we are giving GH¢3,000 to any farmer... In my press conferences from the beginning, I mentioned that we are going to give GH¢1,000 per farmer,” the minister stated.

He elaborated further that the relief package is designed to supply subsidised agricultural inputs, particularly fertilisers, to support the sustainability of farmers’ operations during this challenging period.

“If you can identify very vulnerable farmers in your constituency, we are allocating fertilisers to you to give to these very vulnerable farmers,” he said adding:

“We have not said anywhere that we are giving GH¢3,000 to any farmer. In my press conferences from the beginning, I mentioned that we are going to give GH¢1,000 per farmer.” The minister further explained that the relief package is designed to supply subsidised agricultural inputs, particularly fertilisers, to support the sustainability of the farmers’ operations during this challenging period.

“If you can identify very vulnerable farmers in your constituency, we are allocating fertilisers for you to distribute to them,” he added.

Earlier this month, the government announced plans to provide food grants, agricultural inputs, and poultry support to assist farmers impacted by the extended dry spell that affected the country from June to August 2024.

These initiatives aim to ease the challenges faced by farmers in eight regions severely affected by drought.

During a press briefing on October 1, the Minister for Food and Agriculture detailed the government’s intervention efforts, and revealed that food grants would be allocated to 800,000 farmers who experienced substantial crop losses.

The distribution of these grants will focus on farmers located in the

Northern, Upper East, North East, Savannah, Upper West, Bono, Bono East, and Oti regions.

At that time, he had emphasised that these essential food supplies are intended to help alleviate the adverse effects of the drought.

“From October 10th, eight hundred thousand farmers in the eight affected regions will begin receiving food grants,” he stated.

In addition to these food grants, the government plans to support farmers nationwide by distributing fertilizers, seeds, and other essential

agricultural inputs to help farmers recover from the drought and prepare for the upcoming farming season.

Poultry farmers, who have also been impacted by rising feed costs, will benefit from the distribution of 30,000 metric tonnes of poultry

feed and vaccines.

Acheampong noted that the government will collaborate with poultry farmers’ associations to ensure that support reaches all regions of the country.

The prolonged dry spell, exacerbated by unexpected drought-like conditions, has caused significant crop losses and raised food security concerns nationwide.

In response, the government has also enacted a temporary ban on grain exports and allocated GH¢8 billion to support affected farmers and stabilise the food supply.

To further bolster food security, the government is utilising the ECOWAS Grain Reserve and partnering with private sector suppliers to increase the availability of grains in the domestic market.



Bryan Acheampong, Agric Minister



General News

SHS freshers to resume on October 30th - GES

By Amanda Cartey

The Ghana Education Service (GES) has issued the academic calendar for both Basic and Senior High Schools nationwide for the 2024/2025 school year.

According to a statement released by the service, all first-year students in single track and transitional schools, along with returning students in single track institutions, are scheduled to return on Wednesday, October 30, 2024.

This indicates that incoming students, who are awaiting their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results and SHS placements, are expected to commence school on the same date. GES further explained that the adjustment in reopening dates is aimed at aligning the school calendar to begin in September 2024.

"The academic year begins on Wednesday, 30th October, 2024 for all Senior High Schools. Please note that the current first-year students in transitional calendar schools will end their 2023/2024 academic

year on Monday, 28th October, 2024 and be promoted to Form Two (2) to continue with the new academic year immediately.

"Incoming first-year students for single track and transitional schools will also begin school on Wednesday, 30th October, 2024. Additionally, all continuing students in single track schools will re-open for the new academic year on Wednesday, 30th October, 2024," part of the statement read.

It added, "This re-opening date aims to ensure that the school calendar starts in September next year and paves the way for our final year students to write their 2025/2026 WASSCE in May/June."

The 2024 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) began on Monday, July 8, 2024, and concluded on Monday, July 15, 2024. Nearly 570,000 students sat for the exam at over 2,000 centers. However, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) announced that the total number of candidates registered for the 2024 BECE had decreased compared to 2023.

In a press statement issued on Friday, July 5, WAEC's Corporate Affairs Department reported that a total of 569,095 candidates, comprising 282,648 males and 286,447 females from 19,506 schools, registered for the 2024 BECE.

"This figure represents a decrease of

5.29% compared to the 2023 entry figure of 600,900," the statement read.

The council also highlighted that "this year's figure for private candidates [1,366] is lower by 25.7% compared to the 2023 entry figure of 1,839."



SHS Freshers reporting to school

Fear of dumsor looms as Sunon Asogli halts operations over ECG's \$259m debt

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Sunon Asogli Power (Ghana) Limited has closed its 560MW power plant after Electricity Company of Ghana's (ECG) failed to honour a \$259m overdue payment, severely impacting the company's operations.

In a statement released on Wednesday, Sunon Asogli revealed that although the company chose not to invoice ECG for idle capacity, the debt has risen by 23% from January to September 2024, with only 22.6% of invoices paid through the Cash Waterfall Mechanism during that time frame.

"Sunon Asogli Power (Ghana) has over the years been very considerate in its dealings with ECG and the government, and, unlike other

independent power producers, has not even invoiced ECG for accrued idle capacity charges, the statement reads and explain further:

"Despite this, ECG owes Sunon Asogli a net (excluding fuel) receivable amount of \$259 million as of the end of September 2024. Our debt has grown by 23% on the net balance, between January 2024 and September 2024 and only 22.6% of the invoices for the period have been paid by ECG from the Cash Waterfall Mechanism."

The company expressed concern about the impact of the shutdown on the national power supply and emphasised the lack of alternatives available and has urged the Ministry of Finance to intervene and facilitate a solution that would allow for a quick resumption of its operations.



File photo

General News

Anti-LGBTQ+ case: Court gives Speaker of Parliament 7 days to file statement of defence

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Supreme Court has granted a seven-day extension for the legal team representing Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin to submit their defence in the case brought by Richard Sky regarding the anti-LGBTQ bill. Both the Speaker and the Attorney General, named as defendants, failed to meet the initial deadline for filing their defences.

This legal challenge stems from a suit filed by journalist and legal practitioner Richard Sky on March 5, 2024, contesting the constitutionality of the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, commonly referred to as the anti-LGBTQ+ bill.

Sky argues that the bill infringes on several provisions of the 1992 Constitution, including fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Speaker Alban Bagbin has been

implicated in the case, particularly concerning the fiscal impact analysis of the bill.

On July 4, 2024, Bagbin's counsel presented new information regarding the financial implications of the bill, complicating the legal proceedings further. Bagbin's lawyer, Raphael Banaangman, filed a motion for an extension of time, asserting that their failure to submit the defence was not a sign of disrespect toward the court. He urged the court not to penalise his client for this delay.

Lawyers from the Attorney General's office explained that they could only file their statement of defense after Parliament had included the fiscal impact analysis of the bill.

In contrast, Richard Sky's legal team did not oppose the bail application but wanted to clarify that they were not responsible for any delays in the case's resolution. After the proceedings, Paa Kwesi

Abaidoo, representing Richard Sky, emphasised to the media that the memoranda of issues could only be submitted after the defences had been filed.

He stated, "At the ordinary sitting of the Supreme Court on July 17, 2024, my contention was upheld by the Supreme Court that until the defendants filed their statement of the case, we, the plaintiffs, will not be in a position to distil issues

for the filing of a memorandum of issues.

"You will agree with me that this morning's application by the first defendant was to the effect that they have not filed and require some extension of time to file, meaning that the delay is not orchestrated by us and so I don't know why someone should give the impression that it is us [the plaintiffs] delaying the process."



Supreme Court of Ghana

Agenda 111: Akufo-Addo to commission at least 10 hospitals by end of 2024

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Fatima Abubakar, the Minister for Information, has announced that President Akufo-Addo is expected to inaugurate no less than ten hospitals under the Agenda 111 initiative by year's end.

Agenda 111 is a health initiative launched by the Ghanaian government aimed at enhancing the country's healthcare infrastructure by constructing 111 new hospitals across various districts.

Speaking on the progress and current status of the project, the Information Minister announced that at least ten out of the one hundred and eleven hospitals would be commissioned by the end of this month, October 2024 before the upcoming 2024 general elections.

Abubakar noted that several hospitals have been completed citing the government's commitment to meeting its deadline.

"Indeed, the Agenda 111 hospitals will be commissioned before the 2024 elections. The President will be commissioning at least 10 of them in two weeks, by October 30," she stated.

The Information Minister stated that although several hospitals are approaching completion, only those that are fully finished will be inaugurated.

"We have about 30 hospitals nearing completion, but we will only commission those that are fully ready and can begin delivering healthcare services immediately."

The Minister also noted that the Agenda 111 initiative has now expanded to Agenda 114 due to the creation of additional districts.

The original plan was to build 111 hospitals, but we have had to add more to cater to the newly established districts," she added.



Fatima Abubakar, Minister for Information

General News

Joana Gyan Cudjoe Saga: NDC seeks Court Order to prevent EC from printing ballot for Amenfi Central

By **Amanda Cartey**

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) has filed an injunction application seeking to stop the Electoral Commission (EC) from printing parliamentary ballot papers and notices of poll for the Amenfi Central constituency.

The action is in response to the EC's recent disqualification of Joana Gyan Cudjoe, the NDC's parliamentary candidate for the Amenfi Central Constituency in the Western Region.

A statement signed by the EC's Deputy Chair in charge of Operations, Samuel Tettey, on October 10, explained that the disqualification followed a petition to the EC, which cited a pending interlocutory injunction preventing the Commission from recognising Mrs. Cudjoe as the NDC's parliamentary candidate.

The NDC contends that since the disqualification case is still in court, the EC's decision to print ballot

papers would undermine the legal process and violate the rights of their candidate.

In the application, the NDC has asked the court to issue an order preventing the EC from printing or distributing any ballot materials for Amenfi Central until the legal issues surrounding Cudjoe's

disqualification are fully resolved.

"Take notice that Counsel for the Plaintiffs/Applicants ('Plaintiffs') herein will move this Honourable Court for an order of interlocutory injunction to restrain the Defendant from printing the ballot papers and notice of poll for the 2024 Parliamentary elections in Amenfi

Central until the final determination of the substantive suit, based on the affidavit grounds, and for any other order(s) the court may deem appropriate," states the writ.

This situation adds further complexity to the NDC's campaign in the constituency as election day draws near.



Joana Gyan Cudjoe, NDC's parliamentary candidate for the Amenfi Central Constituency

"Thank you for your sacrifice" - NAPO to Domestic Debt Exchange Programme bondholders

New Patriotic Party's (NPP) vice-presidential candidate, Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh, also known as NAPO, has thanked bondholders for their willingness to participate in the government's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP).

His comments came after approximately 95% of bondholders agreed to new terms, which include the introduction of new maturity periods, with bonds now maturing between 2027 and 2038.

This agreement played a critical role in restructuring the country's domestic debt, a key step toward economic stability.

During an interview with Accra-based media on Wednesday, NAPO commended bondholders for what he called their significant sacrifices, which he said were instrumental in aiding the country's economic

recovery efforts.

He emphasised that the voluntary participation of bondholders in the DDEP was crucial, particularly in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and foreign bondholders.

"What we have to know is that if we hadn't met the DDEP bondholders, our economy, that has now picked up wouldn't have been possible... If they hadn't agreed for us to exchange their 95% bonds, we couldn't have gone through the restructuring process with the IMF, and the foreign bondholders would have not followed for us to achieve this result

They saw that the average Ghanaian has suffered, so they felt compelled to support Ghana's economy," he said.

The vice-presidential candidate believes that the bondholders' sacrifice did not help the

government but benefited all Ghanaians. He also emphasised the importance of dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that concerns are addressed moving forward.

The DDEP, launched by the government in 2022, is aimed to restructure the country's

unsustainable debt by offering lower-interest, longer-term bonds in

exchange for existing ones, a move that faced strong resistance from individual bondholders, financial institutions, and labour unions. But it was deemed essential for securing a \$3 billion IMF bailout and stabilising the economy.



Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh, NPP vice-presidential candidate



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Business

Petrol and diesel prices jump across main suppliers with average hike of GHS14 per litre

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Several Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) across the country have raised the prices of petroleum products at their service stations.

Market leader Goil, as of Thursday October 17, is charging GH¢14.49 for petrol, an increase of 7.89 percent, while its diesel is priced at GH¢14.90 which is more than a 4 percent rise compared to its previous price of October 9.

Allied Oil meanwhile, is charging GH¢12.73 per litre for petrol GH¢13.73 for diesel, as of Wednesday, marking a slight increase from the prices noted at the beginning of the month.

Not to be outdone, Shell has hiked its petrol to GH¢14.72 per litre, reflecting a 7 percent increase from the initial pricing window of the month of October. Its diesel prices have risen by 4.45 percent standing

at GH¢14.99 per litre.

Also joining in is Star Oil, the second-largest oil marketing firm, which is selling its petrol at GH¢13.99 per litre, more than a 7 percent rise from its earlier pricing and its diesel at GH¢14.19, which is up by 3.42 percent.

Reports from JoyBusiness indicate that further price adjustments from more OMCs are anticipated in the coming days.

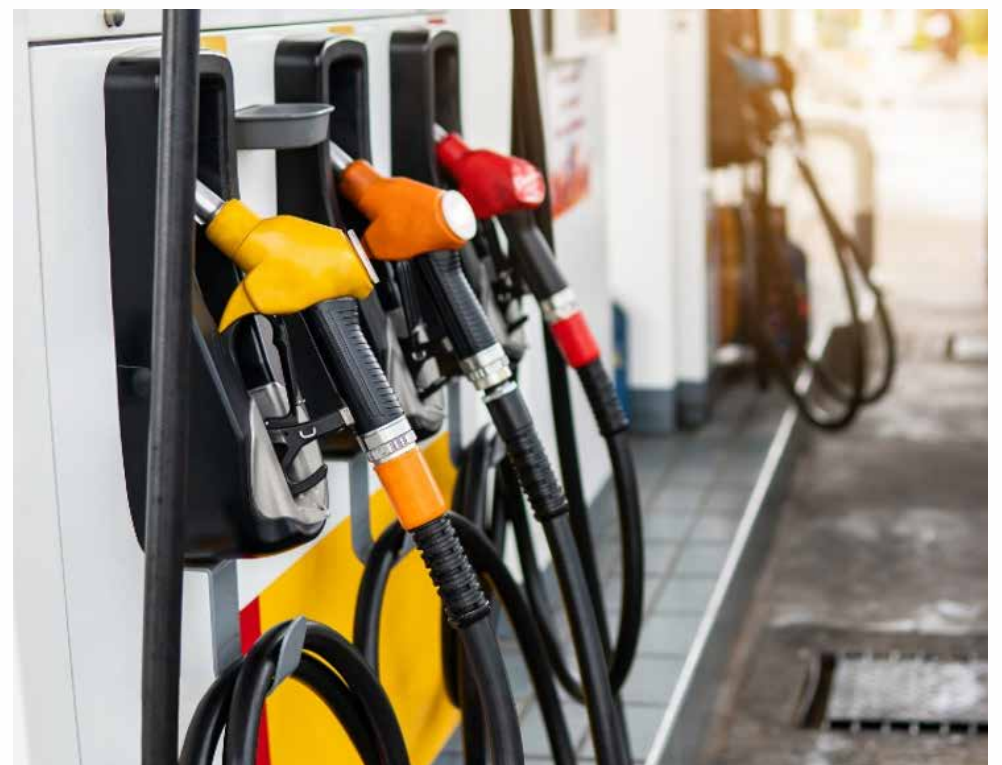
Some reports indicate that petrol has experienced the most significant price increase among major oil marketing firms, with average price rises of over 7 percent, while diesel saw increases of more than 4 percent per litre.

Many OMCs attribute these hikes to the rising costs of crude oil and finished petroleum products on the international market, as well as recent fluctuations in the cedi's value.

Interestingly, crude oil prices in the international market have seen a decline over the past two days. On October 17, Brent Crude was priced between US\$73 and \$99 a barrel, a considerable drop from over \$80

per barrel in recent weeks.

Energy expert Benjamin Nsiah shared with JoyBusiness that he expects prices to remain stable or potentially decrease slightly in the coming months.



Fuel pump station

Big jump in 2024 cocoa yield, COCOBOD CEO attributes boost to rehabilitated farms

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty

The rehabilitation of 74,813 farms covering 67,385 hectares has heavily contributed to the improvement and increased productivity of the country's cocoa yield, which stood at 1408kg per hectare in 2024—a big jump from 450kg in 2016.

Announcing the news at a press briefing, Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Joseph Boahen Aidoo outlined the extensive measures that have been implemented in the cocoa sector since 2017, aimed at boosting yields and supporting farmers.

“Rehabilitation of 74,813 farms (67,385 hectares), boosting yields from 450 kg/ha in 2016 to 1,408 kg/ha in 2024, alongside training and extension services for farmers to adopt improved agronomic practices,” Mr Aidoo said.

He explained that COCOBOD had registered 792,954 cocoa farmers,

alongside mapping 1.24 million hectares of cocoa farms. This effort has allowed for better resource allocation and streamlined payment processes, ensuring that farmers receive timely and transparent payments for their produce.

To address ongoing challenges in cocoa production, COCOBOD has also intensified the Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme, which involves replanting diseased and unproductive farms. So far, 44,480 farms covering 40,150.40 hectares have been successfully rehabilitated and are ready to be handed over to their owners. These rehabilitated farms are expected to significantly contribute to the revival of Ghana's cocoa sector in the coming years.

In addition to rehabilitation efforts, COCOBOD has distributed millions of cocoa seedlings and introduced mechanisation initiatives such as motorized pruners, which have helped to enhance farm efficiency and improve tree health.

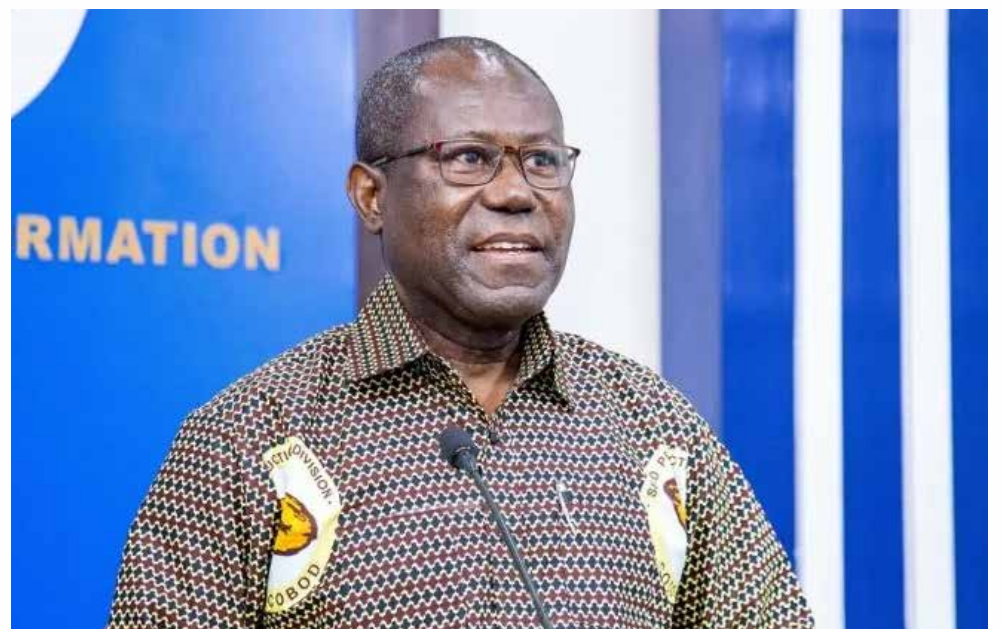
In August this year, Mr. Aidoo

acknowledged that COCOBOD had to revise its cocoa production forecast for the 2023/2024 season, reducing it from 810,000 metric tonnes to 650,000 metric tonnes. He attributed this shortfall to unfavourable weather conditions in the southwestern part of the country, which impacted production negatively.

Meanwhile, the COCOBOD has

highlighted the introduction of the Living Income Differential (LID) in 2019, a government initiative aimed at improving the earnings of cocoa farmers. The LID requires buyers to pay an additional US\$400 per ton of cocoa on top of the floor price.

This measure has generated over USD 1.2 billion in additional income for farmers, significantly enhancing their financial stability.



Joseph Boahen Aidoo, Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD)

International

Zimbabwe to compensate white farmers 20 years after land seizures

Source: AfricaNews

Zimbabwe says it will compensate local and foreign white farmers who lost land and property more than 20 years ago in farm seizures meant to redress some of the wrongs of colonialism.

About 4,000 white farmers lost their homes and swathes of land when the Black-majority country's then-president, Robert Mugabe, launched the often-chaotic redistribution program in 2000, which turned violent at times. Mugabe, who died in 2019, said it was aimed at addressing colonial-era land inequities after the southern African nation gained independence from white minority rule in 1980.

Compensation Plans and Payment Structures

Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube announced Wednesday at a meeting with diplomats that his government approved 441 applications for compensation

worth \$351.6 million from local white farmers and 94 applications from foreigners worth \$196.6 million, but only 1%, or \$3.5 million, will be paid in cash to local farmers who lost land. The balance, Ncube said, will be paid through the issuance of treasury bonds.

Foreigners will receive an initial \$20 million to be shared equally among the 94 claimants from Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and several countries in eastern Europe, he said.

White farmers who owned the majority of prime farmland were removed from their farms, often forcibly by violent mobs led by veterans of the country's 1970s independence war. Some farmers and their workers died or were seriously injured in the violence that included beatings and rape, according to Human Rights Watch.

The Consequences of the Land Seizures

The seizures badly impacted

commercial farming, forcing a country that was a key regional food producer and exporter to rely on assistance from donors. Zimbabwe's agriculture sector has rebounded in recent years, but recent droughts are now the main challenge.

The compensation for the local farmers is not for the land — which Mugabe's government said had been seized from Zimbabwe's Black majority under colonialism — but for infrastructure such as buildings, wells and irrigation equipment. However, foreigners covered under agreements that seek to protect the property of foreign investors will be paid for both the land and the infrastructure.

Controversial Policy Shifts and Criticism

The payments are expected in the last quarter of 2024, finance minister Ncube said. Zimbabwe has been in talks with creditors, led by the African Development Bank, since 2022 to restructure its

\$21 billion in debt, with the white farmers' compensation a sticking point.

In 2020, President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government signed a compensation deal with the white farmers. Mnangagwa, who took power in 2017 after Mugabe was forced to resign following a popular coup, has sought to engage the white farmers and has even encouraged them to apply for new pieces of land.

All farmland now belongs to the government and those occupying it can only do so under lease. However, in a major policy shift, the government announced plans this month to allow beneficiaries of the reform program to sell the land they gained, but only to "Indigenous Zimbabweans," a reference to Black Zimbabweans.

The move has attracted widespread criticism, especially because some who were politically connected became owners of multiple farms under the land redistribution that was meant to help the poor, and can now cash in.



File photo

International

Senegal becomes first African country to establish emergency medical team following WHO standards

Source: WHO

Senegal has become the first country in Africa to receive World Health Organization (WHO) classification for developing the capacity of its emergency medical team to be able to deploy and respond to health crises around the world, marking an historic milestone for the country and significantly boosting the African Region's emergency response capacity.

The classification of Senegal's Type 2 Emergency Medical Team (EMT) follows the international EMT standards. The country's EMT is now deployable within 72 hours to autonomously provide medical and surgical care to up to 2500 patients impacted by health emergencies for a four-week period across the globe, follows a rigorous six-year process. EMT2 Senegal is the 49th classified team globally, with 130 others in process around the world.

"This certification is a real turning point that reflects the dedication of Senegal's health authorities to ensuring a coordinated and rapid response to emergencies, both nationally and internationally, consolidating our position as a leader in health crisis management in Africa and beyond," said Dr Ibrahima Sy, Senegal's Minister of Health and Social Action, at the certification ceremony.

Since 2017, WHO in the African Region has provided intensive technical and financial support to the country, working closely with the Ministry of Health and Social Action, the Health Emergency Operations Centre, and Senegal's Armed Forces Health Service. During this time, Senegal has already deployed teams to respond to health crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and, most recently, Guinea. The recent establishment of the WHO Regional Emergency Hub has been instrumental in accelerating the

finalization of certification process of the Senegal EMT.

"Congratulations to Senegal for this milestone achievement that contributes significantly to the region's growing expertise in addressing public health emergencies," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti WHO Regional Director for Africa. "Emergency medical teams are a crucial set of health workforce that greatly enhances the capacity of national health systems through rapid action to save lives in times of crises."

EMTs can provide routine outpatient care, manage emergency and trauma cases, manage mass casualty incidents, outbreaks due to infectious diseases, and safely stabilize and refer patients for higher level care. In addition to clinical expertise, EMT team members are trained to work in the most challenging conditions, establishing field

hospitals that are fully self-contained, limiting demands on local resources that may already be stretched in an emergency context.

The main aim of the EMT classification, which is overseen by WHO's EMT Secretariat, is to improve the quality of care and professionalism of medical teams responding to disasters, conflicts, outbreaks and other emergencies. Populations benefit from the rapid arrival of well-trained EMTs, who support existing medical staff.

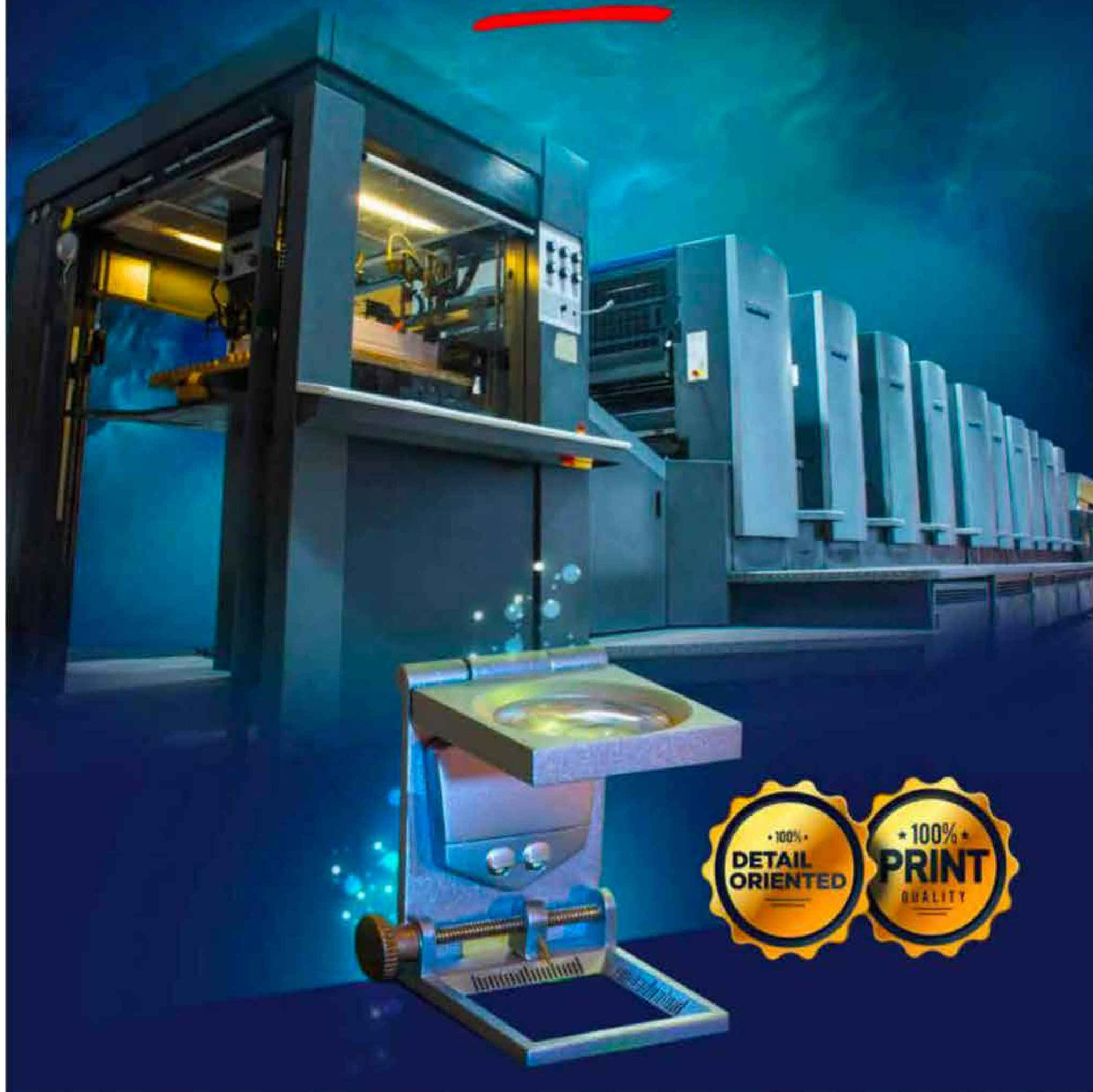
The classification is part of the wider vision encompassed in WHO's Emergency Medical Teams 2030 strategy. This envisions a world in which every country can respond rapidly and effectively to national emergencies, leveraging regional and sub-regional capacities to support vulnerable communities and others in need.



Senegal's Emergency Medical Team

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