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General News

Conduct of Public Officers Bill a futile pursuit, AG can't prosecute his own! - OSP laments

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

The Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP) has raised serious concerns about the long-awaited Conduct of Public Officers (CoPO) Bill, suggesting it will be ineffective unless revised. Director of Strategy, Research & Communication at the OSP, Samuel Appiah Darko, criticised the bill's potential impact, warning that, as currently drafted, it risks becoming another "white elephant" in Ghana's legal landscape.

Speaking at an "Election and Anti-Corruption" forum in Accra yesterday, Darko voiced apprehension over the bill's lack of enforceability and the possible inefficiency it would introduce. "Ghana is a country that has so many laws.

But we don't have efficient laws," he stated. As a representative of the OSP, Darko expressed reluctance to see the bill enacted without amendments, arguing that it would add little to Ghana's anti-corruption efforts.

One critical issue highlighted by Darko is the bill's allocation of corruption-related offences to the Attorney-General's office, bypassing the OSP. This approach, he suggested, could hinder the OSP's ability to independently prosecute

corruption cases.

"We say we are worried that the Attorney-General is sometimes conflicted and unable to prosecute his own," Darko remarked, emphasising that the bill, as it stands, undermines the very role of the OSP. The Conduct of Public Officers Bill, which has been in legislative development since 2008, is designed to strengthen asset declarations, tackle conflicts of interest, and enforce a code of conduct for public officials.

Despite President Akufo-Addo's assurances to civil society organisations (CSOs) that the bill would be passed before the end of his term, it has yet to be finalised. The Cabinet has maintained that existing laws suffice in regulating public officials, but CSOs and many citizens insist the bill is essential for a more robust anti-corruption framework.

A coalition of CSOs, including the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), OccupyGhana, and the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), has called for swift government action on the bill. The coalition argues that the prolonged delays indicate a lack of political will to address corruption comprehensively.

Legal and Governance Policy Analyst at CDD-Ghana, Nicholas Opoku,

pointed out that the bill's current form does little to strengthen existing regulations, highlighting deficiencies in transparency, asset verification, and the definition of public officers.

According to Opoku, the weaknesses in the current anti-corruption framework stem from gaps in the 1992 Constitution and Act 550, which governs asset declarations by public officials. He has urged the government to address these shortcomings to boost transparency

and accountability in the public sector.

For now, CSOs continue to push for amendments that would empower the OSP and improve enforcement mechanisms. They warn that without significant changes, the bill's passage would do little to alleviate public distrust in Ghana's anti-corruption efforts, potentially leaving the OSP hamstrung in its mission to uphold integrity in public office.



Kissi Agyebeng, Special Prosecutor

I am fully dedicated to ensuring peace in this nation - Speaker

By **Amanda Cartey**

Speaker of Parliament, Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin has reaffirmed his dedication to preserving peace in Ghana as the nation approaches the 2024 elections.

During a visit by the Ghana National Council of Private Schools (GNACOPS), Speaker Bagbin assured the delegation that his commitment to national peace takes precedence over any political interests.

"I'm more than committed to the peace of this nation," Bagbin stated

to the GNACOPS team, which included teachers and students from private schools across Ghana. The delegation, led by GNACOPS National Executive Director Obenfo Nana Kwasi Gyetuah, encouraged the Speaker to use his influential role to support peace and stability during Ghana's electoral process. They praised Bagbin for his achievements and for exemplifying peaceful coexistence as a fundamental principle of democracy.

In a statement released by Parliament's Media Relations Directorate, it was highlighted that

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Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament



General News

I am fully dedicated to ensuring peace in this nation - Speaker

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GNACOPS views Speaker Bagbin's role as critical in safeguarding peace before, during, and after the 2024 elections. They urged him to inspire peaceful conduct among citizens and political figures alike. Speaker Bagbin assured the

delegation of his dedication to fostering free, fair, and peaceful elections. He highlighted initiatives launched under Ghana's 30 Years of Parliamentary Democracy Celebrations, including a seminar in Tamale aimed at underscoring the

importance of peace.

Additionally, he introduced the "Democracy Cup," a football competition designed to promote national unity through Ghana's favorite sport.

"The foundation of life is peace," Bagbin remarked, commending GNACOPS for instilling these values in young students and underscoring their role as future leaders of the nation.

Institutional Suppliers to picket Ministry of Education over unpaid contracts

By Amanda Cartey

The National Association of Institutional Suppliers (NAIS) has announced a two-day demonstration at Ghana's Ministry of Education, scheduled for November 20 and 21, to demand a clear commitment on settling unpaid contracts.

The Association, which represents businesses providing goods and services to schools and other institutions, claims members have yet to receive payments for supplying school uniforms and house dresses dating back to the

2022-2023 academic year.

NAIS members, who are owed arrears from past contracts and full payments for the current 2023-2024 academic year, say repeated efforts to engage the Ministry have yielded minimal progress.

As frustration grows, NAIS issued a formal notification to the Ghana Police Service's Accra Regional Commander, outlining their intention to picket.

In a letter dated November 12, NAIS stated, "we are left with no choice but to serve this formal notice of our intention to picket at the premises of the Ministry of Education from

20th to 21st of November, 2024, to ensure a clear plan for settling all unpaid contracts is presented."

The Association also voiced concerns over reports that its members may be excluded from future contracts involving school uniforms and house dresses. NAIS argues that such a move would undermine the government's local content policy, jeopardizing local jobs, skill development, and the textile and fashion industries.

The Association contends that supporting local suppliers is essential to fulfilling Ghana's

industrial growth objectives, which the government has pledged to back. NAIS advocates for the interests of suppliers who provide essential goods to public institutions, and it has been vocal about fair business practices, timely payments, and promoting local content.

As it prepares for the upcoming protest, NAIS hopes its demonstration will prompt the Ministry to establish a clear timeline for payment, benefiting not only the suppliers but also the broader Ghanaian economy.



National Association of Institutional Suppliers (NAIS) members

General News

NAFCO and Lamens Investments accused of distributing expired rice to Senior High Schools

By *Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

A parliamentary probe led by the Member of Parliament (MP) for North Tongu, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, has revealed troubling allegations involving the supply of expired, repackaged rice to Senior High Schools (SHSs) across Ghana.

According to Ablakwa, Lamens Investments Africa and the National Food Buffer Stock Company (NAFCO) altered labels on over 15,000 50kg bags of expired rice, concealing critical expiry information before delivering the potentially hazardous supplies to schools.

This rice, originally packaged with clear expiry dates, was reportedly rebranded in bags lacking expiration information and distributed to Senior High Schools (SHSs) across Ghana, raising serious concerns about the health risks posed to students. According to reports, Bolgatanga Girls' Senior High School in the Upper East Region and Presbyterian Boys' Senior High School in Accra, which serves as a central distribution point for SHSs in Greater Accra, received the repackaged rice.

Mr. Ablakwa revealed that, despite warnings from school administrators, the rice was still delivered to the institutions. In a Facebook post, he shared that the Ashanti Regional Office of the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) was alerted to the unauthorized rebranding on December 20, 2023, after receiving a tip from a concerned Ghanaian citizen.

"This unauthorized re-packaging was shockingly being carried out at the storage facility of the National Food Buffer Stock Company (NAFCO) in the Ashanti Region. When FDA officials acted on the alert, it emerged that a similar alert had been received by the Ashanti Regional Police Command, and the command had promptly moved in to close the storage facility. The FDA and the Ashanti Regional Police Command then commenced investigations into the matter," he stated.

An intercepted FDA report, signed by its Ashanti Regional Head John Laryea Odai-Tettey, disclosed that Lamens Investments Africa and NAFCO, upon realizing that the best-before date for Moshosho Rice was approaching in December 2023, started repackaging the rice from its original yellow 50kg bags into new white bags labelled "CEDAO ECOWAS Regional Food Security Reserve."

The new packaging omitted expiration dates, contravening the General Labelling Regulation, LI 1541, as well as obscuring the country of origin. Originally from India, the rice was deceptively labeled as a Ghanaian product, misleading consumers to believe it was a locally-sourced item.

"This illegal re-packaging was carried out without FDA's approval as required by law. The National Food Buffer Stock storage facility had neither been licensed for storage or re-packaging contrary to the Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851). It was determined that the NAFCO storage facility had no qualified or trained person to supervise its activities," the report revealed.

Mr. Ablakwa also detailed that Lamens Investments Africa Ltd admitted guilt and initially agreed to an administrative fine of GHS100,000. The FDA received GHS50,000 as a 50% deposit on January 5, 2024. However, an intercepted memo from the Ashanti Regional FDA dated December 29, 2023, indicated that the FDA's original intention was to impose a fine of GHS150,000, dispose of the rice, and halt all repackaging activities immediately. Despite these efforts, intense political pressure allegedly forced a reduction of the fine and halted the FDA's original course of action. Mr. Ablakwa claimed that Lamens Investments has since refused to pay the remaining fine.

In a separate intercepted letter dated December 21, 2023, Superintendent J.J. Boye from the Ashanti Regional Police Command wrote to the FDA's Regional Director to request assistance with examining the repackaged rice. Mr. Ablakwa

shared that an "order from above" arrived before FDA test results were received, demanding that the repackaged rice be distributed to schools. Consequently, the contaminated rice reached schools on February 2, 2024, a mere four days prior to receiving official clearance.

"Shockingly, even before the test results would arrive from FDA-Accra, a reckless order came from above that the re-packaged rice be distributed to Senior High Schools," Mr. Ablakwa remarked, adding, "The expired and contaminated repackaged bags of rice were already distributed to schools on the 2nd of February, 2024 — some four days prior."

Mr. Ablakwa accused the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) of shielding those involved from accountability. He claimed that Alhaji Hanan Abdul-Wahab, NAFCO's CEO and NPP Parliamentary Candidate for the Pusiga Constituency, along with NAFCO's Board Chairman Henry Nana Boakye, who serves as NPP's National Organizer, received "full protection" amid these allegations. Additionally, he alleged that Lamens Investments Africa Ltd, a company incorporated in 2020 without a proven track record, was single-sourced for the contract.

The legislator expressed deep concerns about the health impacts on students, citing risks of food poisoning, exposure to carcinogens,

and microbial infections. "Considering that the Moshosho rice expired in December 2023 and that distribution to schools was carried out in February 2024, coupled with the fact that these food items are stored over several months before they are completely consumed in dining halls, we can only imagine the levels of contamination by the time the students consumed the entire quantities," he added.

He further emphasised that per Act 851, General Labelling Regulation, LI 1541, individuals involved in mislabeling or misbranding food products violate Ghana's Public Health Act and should face prosecution. Mr. Ablakwa demanded the immediate arrest of Lamens Investments Africa Ltd's directors and urged sanctions against NAFCO's management for allowing unregistered storage facilities to operate.

"The Ministry of Education must be probed for their conduct in this despicable affair — not only for supervising this rot which severely endangers the health of SHS students but also their reported role as alleged by FDA officials that they piled undue pressure to get the FDA to back off," he continued.

In a pledge to pursue justice, Ablakwa said, "We shall not rest until justice is done in this matter." Both NAFCO and Lamens Investments Africa have yet to respond to the allegations.



Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, MP for North Tongu



General News

Macron honours Akufo-Addo with top French award “Grand Officier de la Légion d’Honneur” in Paris

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, has been conferred with the prestigious title of Grand Officier de la Légion d’Honneur by the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron.

The award ceremony was held in Paris yesterday, after an official working lunch between President Macron and President Akufo-Addo to deepen the bond between the two countries.

The Grand Officier de la Légion d’Honneur is one of the highest ranks within France’s Légion d’Honneur, an order of merit established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte. It is awarded for outstanding military and civil service to the nation. Conferred by the President of France, it is one of the most revered symbols of French appreciation and respect.

The outgoing West African president was honoured for his role in strengthening Ghana’s relations with France, paving the way for increased cooperation on critical issues such as economic growth, climate action, education, and cultural exchange.

France’s relations with Ghana, which are historically less strong than

with the Francophone countries of West Africa, have been growing in recent years, particularly with the presidential visit in 2017.

France and Ghana consult one another on West African security and political issues. The two countries are also in contact in the framework of the United Nations Security Council, where Ghana has been a non-permanent member since 1 January 2022, notably concerning the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine.

In January 2021, President Nana Akufo-Addo attended, alongside French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian, the inauguration of the Embassy of France in Accra, just after his inauguration for a second term.

The Ghanaian President also visited Paris in November 2021, on the sidelines of the Paris Peace Forum. He was also present, as Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, alongside the French President and the European Council President, Charles Michel, during the announcement of the reorganisation of the French counter-terrorism disposition in West Africa.

In October 2022, President Akufo-Addo received an honorary doctorate from Paris-Panthéon Sorbonne University, in the

presence, notably, of Minister of State Chrysoula Zacharopoulou. He also met the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Catherine Colonna.

According to the Ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, as of January 2023, more than 70 French companies are currently present in Ghana, with investment stock of €1.3 billion, making it the seventh-largest destination for French foreign direct investment in Africa and the fourth-largest in ECOWAS. The largest investment in the country is that of Bolloré, in partnership with Maersk, for the Tema seaport expansion project.

The Agence Française de Développement (AFD, French Development Agency) has an office in Accra and is active in various fields

in the country, primarily through non-sovereign loans. The AFD has financed structural projects, like the Kumasi-Bolgatanga electrical line, which has enabled many Ghanaians to receive electricity, particularly in rural areas.

This line, tied in with the electrical interconnection between Ghana and Burkina Faso, was inaugurated by President Nana Akufo-Addo in October 2022. The AFD is also active in the north-west of the country in the development of irrigation networks, to help Ghanaian farmers improve yields. By providing several banks with the SUNREF credit line (€30 million), the AFD helps many SMEs finance investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.



President Emmanuel Macron (L), President Akufo-Addo (R) and wife Rebeca Akufo

Low public sector salaries stalling Ghana’s anti-corruption efforts - Dr Kwame Jantuah

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

A prominent member of the Convention People’s Party (CPP), Kwame Jantuah, has raised alarm over the role that low public sector wages play in perpetuating corruption in Ghana.

Speaking at the Election and Anti-Corruption Forum at the Movenpick Ambassador Hotel in Accra on November 14, 2024, Jantuah argued that insufficient salaries among public servants are one of the key drivers of unethical behaviour in government institutions.

Jantuah explained that when public sector salaries are too low, employees are more likely to seek alternative sources of income, often through corrupt practices.

“My salary isn’t enough; it doesn’t suffice for my expenses. A businessman walks in and offers something, would I not take it? That has to be addressed,” Jantuah stated. The politician also highlighted other contributing factors to the ongoing corruption problem, including political patronage, weak

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Dr Kwame Jantuah, Member of the Convention People’s Party (CPP)

General News

Low public sector salaries stalling Ghana's anti-corruption efforts - Dr Kwame Jantuah

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legal frameworks, and the lack of transparency in procurement processes.

"The culture of political patronage; do we not see it today? We have to discuss it and go deep into it. The weak legal framework within our anti-corruption institutions and the question of their ineffectiveness. Ain't they all sitting in the room here? Do we not hear of them? Are they strong enough to handle

corruption? They are not," he added. Jantuah also raised concerns about the lack of transparency in government procurement, which he believes incentivises politicians to seek power for financial gain.

"Is it not a challenge? Do people not fight to be ministers or whatever to get posts because of procurement?" he asked.

In response to these challenges, Jantuah proposed a comprehensive

approach to tackling corruption. He announced that the CPP would organise a national anti-corruption summit within the first 90 days of their tenure in parliament, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens.

"During the first 90 days in parliament, the CPP will hold a corruption summit which will engage all stakeholders, including the people, because in most cases,

they are left out," he said.

By linking the need for anti-corruption reforms to tangible issues like wage policy and institutional effectiveness, Mr. Jantuah argued that Ghana's approach to combating corruption must evolve to address the deeper, structural motivations behind the problem.

Over 200 wooden structures saved in massive fire outbreak at Circle Odawna

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

A rapid response from the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) saved over 200 wooden structures from a fierce fire that erupted on Thursday morning at Circle Odawna in Accra. Despite the firefighters' efforts, the blaze destroyed about 15 structures used for both homes and businesses before being brought under control.

The GNFS team acted swiftly to control the flames, arriving on the scene within five minutes, according to Assistant Division Officer (ADO1) Alex King Nartey of the GNFS Public Affairs Department.

"Fortunately, our team at Circle, just a few minutes away from the scene, got there in good time in about five minutes," Nartey stated. Positioned near the Odawna gutter, the fire posed a significant challenge due

to limited access for the firefighting trucks. Unable to approach the flames directly, firefighters parked near a warehouse to combat the blaze from a safer distance.

"The unfortunate thing was that because the fire was just at the edge of the Odawna gutter, it was difficult for them to get access to the place. The fire tender couldn't get to the scene," Nartey explained. Firefighters focused on controlling

the spread to save adjacent buildings, managing to shield both wooden structures and nearby warehouses from further destruction. "We were able to salvage over 200 wooden structures and the adjoining warehouses," Nartey added.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation, leaving the affected community in shock as they survey the damages.



Circle Odawna fire outbreak



General News

Library Authority plans 407 new libraries by 2030 to expand education in Ghana

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Ghana Library Authority (GhLA) has announced plans to construct 407 public libraries across the country by 2030, in a sweeping effort to strengthen Ghana's educational infrastructure. This initiative aligns with the Authority's 2018-2030 strategic plan aimed at expanding public library access, especially for underserved communities.

According to CEO of the Ghana Library Authority, Hayford Siaw, Ghana currently has 133 public libraries, 72 of which were built under the current administration. Siaw detailed the library expansion's progress, noting,

"In 1981, we had 36 public libraries. Fast forward to 2017, and we increased the network to 61. Now, under the strategic plan, we have added 72 new libraries, managing a total of 133."

The GhLA has seen notable growth in library resources, with book collections increasing from fewer than 400,000 to nearly two million volumes.

"Books on the shelves, which had once dwindled to fewer than

400,000, now approach 2 million in our public libraries," Siaw added.

Digital advancements have also been prioritised, with the GhLA introducing a mobile app for virtual library services. Additionally, over 1,000 computers have been distributed across libraries, and internet access has been extended to almost half of these branches, aligning with the government's digital transformation agenda.

Library visits have surged from

around 350,000 in 2016 to nearly 1.8 million annually, with approximately 80% of visitors being children under 18.

"We used to record around 350,000 visits annually in 2016 and 2017, but today we are almost at 1.8 million visits," Siaw said, reflecting the increasing demand for library resources.

The Ghana Library Authority traces its origins to 1949 under the Gold Coast Ordinance CAP 118 and was

restructured in 1998 under Act 562, transforming the Ghana Library Board into the current Ghana Library Authority.

Mr. Siaw emphasised the importance of well-equipped libraries in supporting Ghana's free education policy, underscoring the government's commitment to broadening educational opportunities through accessible library services.



Hayford Siaw, CEO of the Ghana Library Authority

K.T. Hammond calls for jail term for NDC's Avedzi Klutse over alleged physical assault

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

A tense exchange between two members of Ghana's Parliament has escalated, with K.T. Hammond, the Minister for Trade and Industry and MP for Adansi Asokwa, calling for a jail sentence for James Klutse Avedzi, the opposition MP for Ketu North, following an alleged physical altercation.

The incident, reportedly captured on video and shared on the social media platform X, has sparked widespread reactions.

According to Mr. Hammond, Mr.

Avedzi physically pushed him multiple times during a heated encounter near the Grand Arena, while MPs from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) were staging a boycott of New Patriotic Party (NPP) members. Hammond described the incident as a deliberate attempt by Avedzi to embarrass him publicly.

"You are my friend; we get along very well. I'm older than you, why were you pushing me? You just wanted me to fall so you would embarrass me. You planned to embarrass us... We are human beings; we are not children," he said during an

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K.T. Hammond, Minister for Trade and Industry and MP for Adansi Asokwa

General News

K.T. Hammond calls for jail term for NDC's Avedzi Klutse over alleged physical assault

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interview. Hammond also claimed that more than 20 other NDC MPs had joined in the altercation, with one reportedly pulling on his jacket, which left his shirt exposed.

He has since filed a report with the police, requesting charges of assault against Avedzi, insisting that every push should count as an individual

offence.

"Let him go to the police station so he would see that we don't... You are not a child," Hammond said, adding, "I want him to be jailed. He should be jailed for about six months, but I can't tell the number of months he would be given." The altercation reportedly took place on November 7, 2024, and follows a string

of incidents that have strained relations between MPs of opposing parties.

Hammond, speaking to the media at the Supreme Court on November 12, reiterated that MPs must exhibit respectful conduct, stating, "We are human beings in that Parliament and must exhibit human instincts.

We are not animals to exhibit animalistic instincts."

The footage of the incident has generated significant discussion online, with many Ghanaians expressing differing views on the conduct of their elected officials. The police are expected to review Hammond's report as they determine the next steps in the case.

I never said I will empower Fulanis to destroy farmlands - Bawumia

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The New Patriotic Party's (NPP) presidential candidate, Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, has dismissed recent claims that he would enable Fulani herdsmen to damage Ghanaian farmlands if elected.

Addressing residents of Ejura Sekyedumase on Wednesday, Dr. Bawumia described these claims as "mere propaganda" spread by the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) to instil fear and discredit his leadership.

Dr. Bawumia reiterated his commitment to the rule of law,

assuring the public that his administration would not tolerate any lawlessness, including destruction of farmlands by any group.

"Now the NDC is running propaganda that my reign will permit Fulanis to destroy the farmlands, but that will never happen," he stated. "The law will deal with each and everybody. So please don't listen to such propaganda that we will allow the Fulani to destroy your farmlands."

Dr. Bawumia, who has familial connections to the Fulani community, emphasised that anyone breaking the law, regardless

of their background, would face consequences. He urged the community to focus on the broader goals of economic development, pledging to bring improvements to Ejura Sekyedumase if elected.

"They will be arrested if they are caught. We are bringing development with benefits to the town. Give me the power, and you will testify to that," he added.

As part of his campaign, Dr. Bawumia has laid out an agenda focused on boosting economic growth, creating jobs, expanding digital infrastructure, and enhancing public services.

His proposed policies include tax reforms to attract investment, infrastructure development across sectors like roads and healthcare, and free tertiary education for persons with disabilities.

Dr. Bawumia's vision extends to sustainable mining, gender equality, and national security, with plans to strengthen Ghana's borders and adopt advanced technology for crime prevention.

His goal, he stated, is an inclusive and sustainable growth strategy that would uplift the lives of all Ghanaians.



Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice President of Ghana



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Business

Kotoka Airport runway set for daily six-hour shutdown in two-year repair project

By Amanda Cartey

Starting March 2025, Kotoka International Airport (KIA) in Accra will close its runway daily for six hours to undergo crucial repairs, according to the Ghana Airports Company Limited (GACL).

The runway will be unavailable from 11:00 PM to 5:00 AM local time, impacting nighttime operations for airlines serving the airport. The repair project is expected to last two years, concluding in March 2027.

Primary carriers affected by the closure include Royal Air Maroc, Turkish Airlines, Allied Air Cargo, and Ethiopian Airlines. Each airline is reportedly making arrangements

to adjust operations to align with the runway's revised availability.

GACL's notice, dated October 23, 2024, and signed by Managing Director Yvonne Nana Afriyie Opare, was circulated to airlines, informing them of the schedule for the planned runway overlay work. The company pledged to provide a comprehensive project timeline and establish contacts for coordination as the start date approaches.

Meanwhile, Air France has suspended its direct flights between Paris and Accra. Analysts link this decision to low passenger demand following the airline's withdrawal from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—countries experiencing

strained relations with France due to recent military takeovers.

Previously, Air France operated a three-times-a-week service

between Paris and Accra, with a layover in Burkina Faso, but political changes in the region have led to adjustments in the airline's West African routes.



Kotoka Airport

Cashew farmers 'fight' for producer price increment amid 3.33% surge in cocoa price

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Cashew farmers in Wenchi, a town in the Bono Region, are calling on President Nana Akufo-Addo to direct the Tree Crop Development Authority (TCDA) to establish a minimum producer price for raw cashew nuts (RCNs) ahead of the December 7 general election.

This appeal comes on the heels of a recent 3.3% increase in the price of cocoa, raising hopes among cashew producers for similar consideration.

Currently, raw cashew nuts are priced at GH¢8.21 per kilogram, according to cashew farmers. They argue that setting a fixed minimum price for the 2024-2025 season would provide stability and confidence for all stakeholders in the cashew sector.

Led by National Chairman Nana Adu Boampongsem V, cashew farmers voiced their concerns in a meeting with journalists in Wenchi.

"If the minimum producer price for cashew is fixed before the election on December 7, it will be binding for the next government irrespective of the political party that will form the government," Nana Boampongsem stated, adding that exchange rates

and international market trends should factor into the price decision.

He further warned, "Currently, the cost of producing cashews has multiplied, and if the TCDA does not consider all the necessary indicators before fixing the price, it will adversely affect us, the farmers."

The farmers also expressed frustration that beyond forming the TCDA, the government has yet to deliver on its promises to support cashew growers. "We have heard that other tree crop farmers have received some support from the government, but those of us cultivating cashews have not had anything," Boampongsem remarked, urging the TCDA and the government to assist in reaching a production target of 400,000 metric tons of cashews over the next four years.

Secretary of the farmers, Yahaya Bellu, added that the government should permit foreign buyers to purchase directly from farms or cooperatives if local buyers do not pay the official minimum price. He noted that cashew farmers are watching closely and will weigh their options in the upcoming election if their concerns remain unaddressed.

The farmers' demands follow the recent price boost for cocoa, which saw President Akufo-Addo increase the cocoa producer price from GH¢3,000 to GH¢3,100 per 64kg bag for the 2024/2025 season.

This adjustment, set at GH¢49,600

per tonne, was aimed at aligning with market realities and providing greater support to cocoa farmers. Some observers believe the timing of this adjustment was meant to bolster voter support for the ruling party in the December election.



Cashew



International

Strengthening Liberia's capacity to detect and manage epidemics through genomic sequencing and bioinformatics

Source: WHO

With support from the World Health Organization (WHO), the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) and the Ministry of Health concluded a residential hands-on in-country training on genomic sequencing and bioinformatics at the National Public Health Reference Laboratory (NPHRL) from 29 September to 19 October 2024 in Margibi County.

Facilitated by a team of experts from the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research in Ghana, a total of 10 national laboratory technicians received a 2-week intensive training followed by a 1-week practice session.

Genomic surveillance plays a critical role in tracking emerging pathogen variants. It has become a fundamental global public health tool for detecting, monitoring, and responding to infectious disease outbreaks, as demonstrated by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic. During the in-country training, national laboratory scientists analyzed additional mpox-positive samples and detected another mpox strain, clade IIb.

"Before the training, we were reliant on international laboratories to identify the circulating pathogen strains. Now, we have the capability to conduct sequencing and bioinformatics analysis

in-country, enabling us to rapidly identify emerging pathogens and their geographic origins," Francis Omega Somah, laboratory technologist at the National Reference Laboratory in Liberia.

This training is a significant milestone in the integration of pathogen genomics and bioinformatics into public health surveillance, outbreak detection, and investigation, which will enhance disease control and prevention efforts in Liberia. "This is a game-changer for the country as we will now have the national capacity to sequence and characterize pathogens of epidemic prone diseases in our country. We thank WHO for this strategic investment and their continuous technical and financial support towards strengthening Liberia's capacity to detect and manage epidemics," said Dr Dougbah Nyan, Director General of NPHIL.

In 2022, WHO published a global genomic surveillance strategy to support countries in expanding their capacities. Unfortunately, 50% of Member States, including Liberia, lacked domestic sequencing capacity. To address this gap, WHO, under the AFRO HERA project, is supporting six African nations: Liberia, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Eritrea, and Togo to establish and strengthen genomic sequencing and bioinformatics capacity, thereby expanding detection and genomic surveillance of epidemic-

prone priority pathogens across the African Region. WHO has significantly invested on the continent in infectious disease and genomics surveillance.

"The most important aspect of capacity building is training the right experts. When a country has skilled professionals with the right platform, expertise, and infrastructure, they can respond swiftly and effectively to public health emergencies," said Dr. Coulibaly Sheik, WHO AFRO Lead Diagnostic and Laboratory Services Unit.

Dr. Peter Clement, WHO Country Representative, thanked the team of facilitators and WHO AFRO for supporting Liberia through the EU-funded project which will strengthen the country's laboratory systems. "By empowering local experts with the skills to conduct genomic sequencing and bioinformatics analysis, we are ensuring that Liberia is better prepared to rapidly identify emerging threats and implement timely interventions," said Dr. Peter Clement, WHO Liberia Representative.



National laboratory technicians with WHO staff during the training

Violence continues to escalate in Haiti

Source: Africa News

Tension continued to grip Haiti's capital Wednesday as violence flared again, sending panicked residents fleeing for safety.

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders reported that a mix of police and vigilantes attacked one of their ambulances, slashing tires, tear gassing medical staff and executing at least two patients.

Haitians have long lived with instability and violence, however in the past week gangs have taken advantage of a political crisis in the country to make a power grab.

On Sunday, the country's transitional council fired interim Prime Minister Garry Conille, swiftly replacing him with businessman Alix Didier Fils-Aimé.

Gangs also shot at three different planes of U.S. airlines - Spirit, JetBlue and American Airlines - landing and taking

off in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

One flight attendant was injured, and bullets riddled the Spirit airplane.

The Federal Aviation Administration restricted U.S. airlines from flying to Haiti for 30 days, though American Airlines announced it would pause flights until February.

The United Nations, also said it was temporarily suspending flights to Port-au-Prince, slashing access to humanitarian aid and personnel in the country.

It's left Haiti once again isolated from much of the world and with only a trickle of the humanitarian assistance it needs as the Caribbean nation teeters on the brink of famine.

"We call for an end to the escalating violence, to allow for safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access," U.N. spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said on Tuesday.



Gangs appear to have taken advantage of a political crisis in the country to step up attacks

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