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# General News

## Ghana boosts security with 430 new police officers as election nears

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

As Ghana approaches its December general elections, security has received a substantial boost with the addition of 430 newly graduated police officers to the Senior Officer Corps, enhancing the country's law enforcement capabilities.

Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia officiated the commissioning ceremony, marking this intake as the largest in the history of the Ghana Police Academy.

The graduating cohort, known as Police Academy Cadet Course 53, comprises 305 men and 125 women, surpassing the Academy's previous record of 344 officers. Dr. Bawumia praised the officers and urged them to uphold their new roles in safeguarding peace and stability during the election period.

Recognizing Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, he expressed confidence in Dampare's vision for the Ghana Police Service.

"I am proud to stand side by side

with such a visionary leader who continues to set the pace...on course to make the Ghana Police Service the reference point for excellence in Africa and beyond," Dr. Bawumia stated.

Interior Minister Henry Quartey and other senior officials also attended the event, where Cadet Officer Achiburi Issah was honoured as the Overall Best Cadet Officer. The addition of these officers aims to bolster security operations across polling centres nationwide. In his recent statements, IGP Dr. Dampare highlighted the importance of

these new officers in ensuring a secure election environment and urged all political stakeholders to cooperate fully with law enforcement. "This security boost will play a pivotal role in securing all polling centres across the nation," he said, reinforcing the police's dedication to a high-calibre security presence at each centre.

The call for increased security presence comes as the nation recalls the loss of several lives in electoral violence during the 2020 general elections. The Ghana Police Service/National Elections

Security Task Force (GPS/NESTF) has faced ongoing calls for accountability and regular updates on unresolved cases related to 2020's violence. Families of the victims and human rights groups have urged for swifter investigations and transparency in the judicial processes of these cases.

As Ghana moves closer to election day, the recent graduates are expected to play a vital role in enhancing public safety and maintaining order, which authorities hope will deter potential disruptions at the polls.



430 officers were commissioned into the Senior Officer Corps of the Ghana Police Service

## Public health compromised as veterinarians face threats in meat inspection

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Public health in Ghana faces potential threats as veterinarians report challenges and safety risks associated with meat inspections, shedding light on pressing issues in food safety and veterinary work environments.

President of the Veterinary Medical Technologies Association of Ghana (VEMTAG) and a veterinary technologist at the Veterinary Services Directorate, Emmanuel Eshun, described the pressures veterinarians encounter due to economic implications and

opposition from stakeholders whose financial interests are often at odds with public health standards.

Eshun highlighted the tension, particularly in cases where veterinarians have to condemn animals found to carry diseases like tuberculosis (TB). He noted that condemning an infected animal worth around GHC15,000 leads to "significant financial loss," which triggers "opposition from the people we are dealing with," he told The Independent Ghana.

Dr. Yayra Durapah from the University of Ghana's Veterinary

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Slaughterhouse

# General News

## Public health compromised as veterinarians face threats in meat inspection

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School of Medicine corroborated Eshun's statements, detailing the personal safety risks faced by veterinarians.

"You could be maimed or stabbed if someone notices that you are standing in the way of his or her livelihood at the detriment of other people. So there are real challenges. Sometimes it is difficult for those who work there," Durapah remarked.

These issues underscore the need for public awareness regarding the work veterinarians perform. Eshun emphasised the importance of transparency in sharing veterinary findings to enhance public understanding, though he acknowledged the risks of causing fear.

"We must actively share our findings and demonstrate the evidence to foster public understanding," he noted. However, he cautioned that outbreaks like avian influenza, if publicised, could create panic, especially among farmers and consumers, complicating veterinarians' communication efforts.

The conditions of some meat processing facilities also raise concerns. In 2021, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) closed down a long-standing abattoir in Avenor, citing unhygienic conditions that had worsened over two decades.

Environmental health officers reported that despite repeated calls for renovations to meet basic health standards, improvements never

materialised.

Further complicating the situation, Eshun pointed to inadequate animal care practices in Ghana that promote the spread of zoonotic diseases—illnesses that can transfer from animals to humans. He cited a lack of vaccinations and proper housing as contributing factors, adding, "Insufficient animal care, including the lack of vaccinations and proper housing, fosters conditions ripe for zoonotic disease transmission."

Ectoparasites, such as ticks, fleas, and mites, pose additional health risks. Eshun explained that these parasites proliferate in environments with poor animal grooming and hygiene.

"Failing to maintain regular

grooming and hygiene for animals increases the prevalence of ectoparasites, heightening the risk of diseases like Lyme disease and flea-borne illnesses," he cautioned.

These challenges point to an urgent need for better animal care practices and stronger support for veterinary professionals to safeguard public health.

The Veterinary Services Directorate, responsible for national animal health services, works to expand the livestock industry while controlling animal diseases that threaten human health. However, without increased resources and safety protections for veterinarians, Ghana's public health could remain vulnerable.

## Ghana to implement nationwide sign language curriculum from KG to SHS

By Amanda Cartey

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) has announced a groundbreaking plan to introduce a sign language curriculum across all Ghanaian schools, from kindergarten through senior high school.

The initiative, supervised by NaCCA's Director-General, Professor Yayra Dzakadzie, aims to roll out the curriculum by the end of November 2024.

Speaking with The Independent Ghana, Professor Dzakadzie confirmed that the curriculum development is progressing on schedule.

"Yes, it is true, we are developing the curriculum, and we are pretty sure that by the close of November we should have the curriculum for the deaf roll up from KG to Senior High School," he stated.

This move has been welcomed by advocates for inclusive education. Ghana's first hearing-impaired lawyer, Juventus Duorinaah, praised the decision, calling it a

step toward greater inclusivity in classrooms nationwide.

He also noted that Ghana's commitment to sign language education is ahead of many other countries. "That is good news, and we have to celebrate that. And visiting other countries, they don't have such opportunities. Ghana has moved ahead in terms of this,"

Duorinaah remarked.

Ghana's Persons with Disability Act of 2006 mandates the inclusion of special education—such as sign language and Braille—in technical, vocational, and teacher training institutions. This initiative by NaCCA will align Ghana's educational approach more closely with the provisions

outlined in Section 21 of the Act. NaCCA's planned curriculum also aligns with core educational competencies that promote communication skills. These competencies encourage learners to use language, symbols, and texts to share personal experiences and information, fostering more collaborative and inclusive learning environments.



Sign language instructor

# General News

## Current graduates lacking essential skills - HR manager warns

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

A Human Resource (HR) Manager at TG Holdings, Portia Cann, has expressed concerns about the skills gaps among recent university graduates, which she says undermines their preparedness for the intricate, ever-evolving workforce.

In an interview with The Independent Ghana Newspaper, Cann highlighted issues with the level of preparedness among interns, pointing to shortfalls in punctuality, critical thinking, and professional discipline.

According to Ms. Cann, students are often required to complete internships as part of their university curriculum, either as a course requirement or on a voluntary basis.

Ideally, these internships provide practical job exposure and an opportunity for students to offer new ideas to their host companies. However, she finds that many interns arrive without the necessary foundational skills.

"Technical skills zero, same for soft skills," she noted. "There are theoretical aspects they learn from school, but they don't have any soft

skills. The new crop of students are so green that even you have to teach them the skill of discipline, meeting timelines, and their ability to think outside the box." For her, this lack of preparation undermines the value of their internships.

Ms. Cann suggested that university curricula should focus more on practical applications rather than theory alone, arguing that the current system leaves students with knowledge gaps that affect their performance and professionalism.

"There's a huge gap between what there is and what should be," she observed. "We learn theories; practicality is zero. University is supposed to challenge your thinking and push you beyond your limits. It has shifted from practicality to theory where we learn, pass, and forget."

She also pointed out a lack of competency in basic workplace tasks, stating that many graduates struggle with writing simple memos or organising information clearly, skills she considers essential. "Our universities have failed," she added bluntly, asserting that recent graduates often leave university without the skills required to succeed

in the job market.

To address this shortfall, Ms. Cann recommended that students demonstrate competence before graduating, proposing a system that would require students to meet practical benchmarks during their internships.

She emphasised that even if internships are compulsory,

universities and companies should implement "rigorous checks" to ensure students are learning and applying essential skills during their placements.

Cann's concerns highlight a potential misalignment between the educational system and employer expectations, raising questions about the effectiveness of Ghana's current university training in meeting the needs of a changing job market.



University Graduates

## Govt must dialogue with bondholders over troubling debt exchange impact - NAPO

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Vice presidential candidate for the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh (NAPO), has called for open dialogue between the government and bondholders affected by the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP).

The DDEP, a government-initiated plan launched in 2022, was aimed at tackling Ghana's significant debt challenges by swapping higher-interest bonds for lower-interest, long-term alternatives.

This programme saw around 95% of local bondholders voluntarily agree to revised terms, including extended maturities and reduced coupon rates, in an effort to

aid the government's financial restructuring efforts.

In a recent media interview, Dr. Prempeh praised the bondholders' sacrifices, highlighting their role in stabilising the economy and securing the much-needed \$3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout, which was instrumental for Ghana's recovery.

He noted that without their compliance, the IMF's approval and subsequent foreign investor confidence would have been unlikely. He stated, "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 not

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Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh (NAPO), Vice presidential candidate for NPP



# General News

## Govt must dialogue with bondholders over troubling debt exchange impact - NAPO

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have followed for us to achieve this result.”

While the DDEP has been credited with saving the economy from potential collapse, it has brought financial strain to many investors who had anticipated unrestricted access to their savings.

Dr. Prempeh urged the government to ensure that the phased repayment plans scheduled to begin in 2026 proceed as planned, as bondholders are still dealing with financial instability.

In light of public concerns, he questioned the necessity that led

notable individuals, including retired Chief Justice Sophia Akuffo, to join protests demanding financial justice. For many, the DDEP’s restrictions have raised questions about financial security, as savings intended for personal use have become temporarily inaccessible.

Dr. Prempeh acknowledged the widespread hardship and described it as “deeply troubling,” calling for increased government engagement with affected citizens to address their grievances and alleviate the economic burdens caused by DDEP.

## GWL targets illegal connections in Northern and Savannah regions amid rising arrears

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Ghana Water Limited (GWL) has launched a critical initiative to recover arrears and tackle illegal connections in the Northern and Savannah Regions.

The effort, scheduled from November 1 to December 31, 2024, will focus on identifying illegal self-reconnections and removing unauthorised in-line booster pumps, part of a broader move to improve compliance with water usage regulations.

In a public statement, GWL emphasised the importance of settling outstanding debts, cautioning that customers who ignore these arrears could face service interruptions. The company advised customers to use official online platforms or designated payment points to clear their debts promptly.

“The management of Ghana Water Limited Northern/Savannah Regions wishes to inform the public and its valued customers that it will embark on a revenue mobilisation exercise,” GWL stated, adding that the move aims to ensure customers follow the established guidelines for legal water access.

This initiative comes as GWL faces mounting challenges in collecting payments. Acting Chief Manager Nana Yaw Barima Barnie recently disclosed that GWL’s Western Region alone is owed GHS 23 million in arrears. Nationwide,

GWL’s debt has reached GHS 800 million, a figure Barnie warns could disrupt the company’s ability to deliver consistent water supply.

“We depend on the bills our customers pay to sustain daily operations. With arrears reaching these levels, our operational

capacity is impacted significantly,” he said.

Barnie explained that GWL relies on payments to fund essential supplies, including imported water treatment chemicals, equipment, and fuel. He noted that customer compliance with payments directly influences the company’s

ability to maintain services.

“Ghana Water Company is not a subvented organisation, so every aspect of our operation depends on revenue from customers. If a customer pays only a fraction of their bill, it affects our ability to run efficiently,” he added.



Pipe water

# General News

## Parliament to reconvene early this month - Speaker assures

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Parliament will reconvene in early November following discussions between Speaker Alban Bagbin and a delegation from the Council of State.

This development follows the Speaker's controversial declaration of four parliamentary seats as vacant, which has altered the balance of power in favour of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) and sparked legal action from the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

On October 22, Speaker Bagbin indefinitely adjourned parliamentary proceedings after ruling that four MPs, including two independents affiliated with the NPP, could not retain their seats while running as independents in the upcoming December election.

The decision triggered a response from the NPP, which quickly filed an appeal to the Supreme Court, arguing that the Speaker's ruling

undermined parliamentary stability and breached the constitution. In a preliminary ruling, the Supreme Court granted a stay, allowing the four MPs to retain their seats pending further legal review.

The Speaker on the other hand, appealed the Supreme Court's ruling, but the Court maintained its initial stance that the MPs maintain the current occupancy of their seats.

The situation prompted the NPP to petition for Parliament's recall, highlighting the urgency of resolving the impasse.

Responding to the delegation led by Council Chairman Nana Otuo Siriboe II, Speaker Bagbin assured that Parliament would reconvene early in November. To fulfil this commitment, Bagbin will shorten his participation in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference in Australia, where he will attend as the outgoing President.

The Council of State pledged to support Parliament's leadership in finding a resolution to the ongoing legislative standoff.

The recall is expected to address the procedural and constitutional questions arising from the vacant seats, as well as the implications for the NDC and NPP parliamentary standings.

The Speaker's move comes amid broader commendations from the Council of State, who praised his contributions to democratic governance in Ghana.

The upcoming CPA Conference, slated for November 3-8, is anticipated to see Speaker Bagbin returning early to ensure Parliament resumes as promised.



Ghana's parliament

## A-G gets 7-day grace period to file statement in Anti-LGBTQ case

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Attorney-General's (AG) Department has been granted a seven-day extension by the Supreme Court of Ghana to file their statement of case in the legal dispute involving journalist Richard Dela Sky and the Speaker of Parliament.

This case centres on the contentious Ghanaian Family Values Bill also known as the anti-gay bill which has sparked significant constitutional debate. During the previous adjournment, the legal representatives for both the Attorney-General and the Speaker of Parliament were instructed to submit their filings to facilitate a prompt resolution of the case.

However, when the matter was brought before the court on Thursday, Chief State Attorney Sylvia Adusu indicated that the necessary documents from the Speaker's legal team, required for them to attach and file their statement of case, had not been submitted.

To prevent further delays in the proceedings, she requested an extension of time to file the statement of case, noting that waiting for the outstanding document would only prolong the case.

"We have an application for extension of time to file a statement of case out of time. We didn't delay

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File photo



# General News

## A-G gets 7-day grace period to file statement in Anti-LGBTQ case

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out of disrespect for the court. "We were waiting for certain documents because counsel for Parliament during a hearing in July had told the court that his attention had been drawn that the Speaker's opinion was available. So, we were hoping to get it because it was important to our case," Sylvia Adusu intimated.

"We still have not got it but have to go ahead. We have attached our proposed statement of case, and we are prepared to file it even

tomorrow," she added.

Her application received no opposition from the lawyers representing Richard Dela Sky and the Speaker of Parliament. Consequently, Justice Asare Darko approved her request, instructing the lawyers to submit their statement of case within seven days.

The plaintiff, Richard Dela Sky, is contesting the bill on constitutional grounds, claiming it infringes

upon fundamental human rights enshrined in the Ghanaian Constitution, particularly the rights to equality and freedom from discrimination.

He warned that the Family Values Bill might exacerbate discrimination against marginalised groups, especially the LGBTQ+ community, and could undermine individual dignity.

Additionally, Dela Sky seeks an order from the Supreme Court

to prevent the President from assenting to the bill, arguing that this action would contravene the constitutional protections for the rights and freedoms of Ghanaians.

The State Attorney has also emphasised the importance of the Financial Impact Analysis, asserting that it would shed light on the potential economic repercussions of implementing the bill and its compatibility with the national budget and social services.

## Akufo-Addo signs Ghana Shippers' Authority Act, 2024 into law

By Amanda Cartey

President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on Thursday signed into law the Ghana Shippers' Authority Act, 2024, a pivotal step forward for the nation's shipping and logistics sector.

Passed by Parliament in July and signed by the President on October 18, 2024, the Act grants the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA) enhanced regulatory powers over sea, air, and land transportation.

The goal is to establish a more competitive and balanced framework for commercial shipping within Ghana.

In a statement released on October 31, 2024, the GSA highlighted its strengthened capacity to promote transparent pricing, uphold service standards, and position Ghana as a key hub for global trade. This legislative milestone coincides with the GSA's 50th anniversary, emphasizing its long-standing commitment to promoting fair trade practices.

Originally established in 1974 as the Ghana Shippers' Council, the organization rebranded in 1998 to the Ghana Shippers' Authority, aligning with its expanded mission to support a thriving trade environment in Ghana.

"The Ghana Shippers' Authority expresses deep gratitude to all stakeholders for their invaluable contributions toward this legislative milestone," the GSA noted, emphasizing the role of collaboration in shaping the new Act.

To facilitate seamless implementation, the GSA has initiated a nationwide awareness campaign to inform stakeholders about their rights and obligations under the new Act.

The Authority is also collecting input for a Legislative Instrument (L.I.) that will establish the law's operational structure.

Stakeholders are encouraged to engage actively in this effort to contribute to a sustainable and resilient shipping industry.



Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana

# General News

## Railway Ministry cracks down on trackside hawking, warns of severe penalties

By *Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

The Ministry of Railway Development has issued a strong warning to hawkers selling goods on or near railway tracks, stressing that these activities not only risk lives but also disrupt train operations. The notice comes amid a renewed safety campaign aimed at safeguarding Ghana's railway lines.

In its message, the Ministry reminded the public that "hawking on the railway line is a crime," and emphasised that tracks are solely for train movement.

The statement cautioned that unauthorised presence on or near the tracks poses a major risk to life. "Do not walk on the railway line. It's dangerous and illegal; it can cost you your life," read the Ministry's warning.

Under Section 85 of Ghana's Railways Act of 2008 (Act 779), anyone who obstructs a railway line through reckless or negligent actions can face up to ten years in prison or a fine of up to 2,500 penalty units, or both. This includes not only hawkers but also any individuals whose presence interferes with safe train movement.

As part of its guidelines, the Ministry advised pedestrians to use designated crossings such as underpasses, overpasses, and official level crossings. It also warned against distractions near tracks, such as using headphones or texting, which could prevent people from noticing oncoming trains.

The Ministry's advisory extends to parents and guardians, urging them to teach children about railway safety and keep them away from tracks. "Teach children not to play on and around the railway line," the Ministry advised, noting

that children are particularly vulnerable to accidents.

Commuters were also reminded to respect safety signals, including flashing red lights, and wait for barriers to rise before crossing tracks. The Ministry's renewed efforts to boost public awareness reflect its commitment to making railway infrastructure safer and more reliable.

"Together, let's make our railway lines safer for everyone," the Ministry concluded in its public appeal.



File photo



# Business

## Govt to pay GHC36bn as interest on borrowed funds in H2 of 2024

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

**G**overnment is facing a staggering GHC36 billion interest payment on its public debt in the latter half of 2024, according to recent figures from the Ministry of Finance.

This substantial outflow adds to the GHC19 billion already paid in the first half, creating a total annual interest expense projected at GHC55.9 billion. Domestic debt takes up GHC36.9 billion of this figure, with GHC30.3 billion to be paid in cash and GHC6.6 billion in kind, while external debt accounts for the remaining GHC19 billion.

In the year's first two quarters, government interest payments reached GHC14.5 billion and GHC4.5 billion, respectively. These rising costs, coupled with additional expenditures on social benefits and subsidies, have pushed government spending past GHC101 billion in the first half of 2024 alone, bringing it closer to an annual target of GHC226 billion. Analysts suggest that these growing financial demands may affect future budget allocations in critical areas like infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

Ghana's total public debt stood at GHC741.9 billion as of June 2024,

representing 70.6% of the nation's GDP. Despite debt restructuring efforts, the government continues to borrow, adding to an interest burden that could create a cycle of dependency on further borrowing.

Since 2022, the government has pursued debt restructuring initiatives, signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with bilateral creditors, including China and France, to restructure \$5.4 billion in debt.

In a significant recent development, Ghana resumed payments on its Eurobond debt following a debt exchange agreement with bondholders, issuing a \$520 million payment that covered a \$120 million consent fee and \$320 million in previously suspended coupon payments.

Ghana's Finance Ministry reported a 98% participation rate in the debt restructuring program, a development that has allowed the country to schedule regular Eurobond payments beginning in January 2025, with the next payment due in July 2025. The resumption of Eurobond payments reflects Ghana's dedication to fulfilling its obligations to international creditors.

However, these payments also increase demand for U.S. dollars, potentially affecting the stability of the cedi. A weakening cedi could drive up import costs, pushing inflation higher and impacting the prices of essential goods. Businesses reliant on imports may face increased costs, which could lead to price hikes for consumers.

In response to concerns over the potential economic impacts, Finance Minister Dr. Mohammed Amin Adam expressed confidence in the Bank of Ghana's capacity to meet demand for foreign exchange.

"We should look at the current reserve position of the Bank of Ghana, and that should give everyone some comfort about its ability to meet market demand," Dr. Amin Adam stated during a press briefing in Washington, D.C., alongside the IMF and World Bank annual meetings.

As the government continues managing high debt and interest payments, Ghana's fiscal health and foreign exchange reserves will be closely watched by local businesses and international investors alike.



Dr Mohammed Amin Adam, Finance Minister

## Ghana launches its first local ride-hailing app, GoRide

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

**G**hana has launched its first locally developed ride-hailing app, GoRide, an initiative spearheaded by Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia and created in partnership with the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU).

GoRide aims to support local taxi drivers in competing with foreign-owned ride-hailing platforms by offering lower commission rates and better financial opportunities.

Speaking at the launch in Accra on October 30, Dr. Bawumia emphasised that the app's 10% commission rate will allow drivers to retain more of their income,

fostering greater financial stability.

"With a competitive commission of just 10%, our drivers are being empowered to retain their hard-earned money," he said. Dr. Bawumia explained that GoRide aligns with the government's goal to promote local business growth and keep revenue within Ghana.

GoRide is available on both Android and iOS platforms, promising enhanced convenience for customers while providing Ghanaian drivers with a viable alternative to international services. By retaining more earnings, local drivers may experience improved job security and income stability.



GoRide logo

# International

## The Democratic Republic of the Congo introduces R21 malaria vaccine

The health authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today introduced the R21 malaria vaccine into the national immunization programme, adding a crucial tool to complement existing malaria control measures to protect and save the lives of young children.

With the country having received 693 500 doses of the World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended R21 vaccines, the first phase of the rollout was kicked off in Kongo Central province targeting 173 375 children in the province's 31 health zones. WHO and partners including UNICEF, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Clinton Health Access Initiative, PATH, Breakthrough Action and SANRU – a national NGO – are supporting the health authorities to ensure effective introduction of the vaccine.

“The introduction of the malaria vaccine is an initiative that highlights the importance of combining high-impact strategic interventions to effectively combat malaria,” emphasized Dr Roger Kamba, Minister of Public Health, Hygiene and Social Welfare. I would like to express our sincere thanks to all the partners who have provided considerable support for the introduction of the malaria vaccine into our country's immunization schedule,” added Dr. Kamba.

Malaria killed more than 24 000 people and infected over 27 million, mostly children under five years of age, according to the Ministry of Public Health, Hygiene and Social Welfare 2022 report – the most recent data.

“The introduction of the malaria vaccine marks a major milestone in the country's efforts to safeguard the health and well-being of children,” said Dr Boureima Hama Sambo, WHO Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. “Together with the ongoing malaria prevention measures, and by collectively implementing

all the approaches, we can effectively protect families and our communities from this deadly disease.”

Supporting the national health authorities to prepare for the malaria vaccine rollout, WHO has provided technical guidance, health workers have been trained to ensure safe introduction of the vaccine, and public awareness and other communications outreach measures have been established. Administrative, political, religious and community leaders in Kongo Central province have also been sensitized and involved in the preparations to ensure effective ownership of the initiative.

“UNICEF is a key partner in the deployment of the malaria vaccine in the DR Congo. Thanks to our technical expertise, we have helped to build the capacity of health actors, developing appropriate management tools, and implementing effective communication strategies to promote vaccination among parents. UNICEF is committed to continuing its efforts to ensure that all Congolese children benefit from this essential protection, in line with the national vaccine roll-out plan,” said Grant Leaity, UNICEF Representative in the DR

Congo.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo becomes the 15th country on the continent that offer malaria vaccination, widening access to more comprehensive malaria prevention. Malaria is a primary cause of illness and death for African children – one child dies from malaria every minute.

“We congratulate the Ministry of Health and its partners on this introduction, particularly at a time when the country faces competing health priorities, including the response to Mpox. This development demonstrates the impact of investing in health systems strengthening to ensure countries' capacity to roll out routine immunisation and respond to health emergencies. Together, Gavi and its partners look forward to continuing to build a stronger foundation for the health and well-being of future generations in the DRC,” said Cyril Nogier, Gavi's Senior Country Director for the DRC.

The country is intensifying malaria control efforts through an ambitious 2024–2028 National Strategic Plan that aims to protect 80% of at-risk populations through a comprehensive

approach combining mass distribution of next-generation insecticide-treated nets, expanded preventive treatments for pregnant women and infants, and a pilot implementation of seasonal malaria chemoprevention.

The plan also includes enhanced vector control via indoor residual spraying and larval source management, improved case management with rapid diagnostics and artemisinin-based therapies, strengthened surveillance systems, and robust community engagement. The efforts are supported by multisectoral collaboration between health, environment and education ministries to address this critical public health challenge.

A high impact against malaria can be achieved when the malaria vaccines are introduced with a mix of WHO-recommended malaria interventions that are tailored to the local context. WHO is committed to working with countries and partners to support the rollout of malaria vaccines so more children can benefit from this additional malaria prevention tool as rapidly as possible.

**Source: WHO**



*The Democratic Republic of the Congo introduces R21 malaria vaccine*



# International

## Mozambique faces social media restrictions amid election disputes and tensions

**S**ocial media access in Mozambique has been restricted for the second time in a week, according to the global internet watchdog NetBlocks, following calls for nationwide strikes by opposition leaders over a contentious presidential election.

Tensions have escalated in Mozambique after the ruling Frelimo party, which has been in power for 49 years, won the October 9 election—a result that opposition parties and election observers claim was flawed.

NetBlocks, a London-based organization monitoring internet disruptions, confirmed that social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, were restricted. This comes after an earlier internet blackout last Friday, the day after election results were announced and following a violent crackdown on protests.

### Internet Disruptions and Election Results

NetBlocks described last Friday's blackout as a "near-total disruption to mobile internet connectivity," affecting many Mozambicans' ability to access information.

Daniel Chapo of Frelimo was declared the winner of the presidential election on October 24, with nearly 71% of the vote. Venancio Mondlane, leader of the Podemos party, took second place with 20%.

The announcement of the election results sparked protests, with opposition supporters taking to the streets. Human Rights Watch reported that at least 11 people were killed and more than 50 were injured in clashes with security forces. Police have stated that 20 people were injured and two people died but provided no further details.

### Ongoing Protests and Strike

### Calls

Mondlane, a former radio host and prominent opposition figure, has used social media to rally supporters. Despite social media restrictions, he has called for a nationwide strike from October 31 to November 7 to protest what he says are unjust election results. By Thursday, Mozambique's capital, Maputo, appeared empty, with many residents seemingly observing the strike.

Police warned residents via text messages not to participate in what they called "acts of sabotage." In a statement, the public prosecutor acknowledged that the right to protest is fundamental but warned that anyone causing "material or personal damage" would face consequences.

### Allegations of Electoral Flaws and Call for Recount

The Podemos party, which gained surprising traction in

the election, has vowed to fight for electoral transparency. Party President Albino Forquilha urged peaceful demonstrations but emphasized the need for justice. Election observers, including representatives from the European Union, have raised concerns over irregularities surrounding the election process.

Mondlane's Podemos party has appealed to Mozambique's Constitutional Court, requesting a recount. The court has since asked the electoral commission for detailed election data from six provinces and Maputo, giving officials eight days to produce the necessary documents.

With political tension mounting and social media access limited, the situation in Mozambique remains volatile as opposition leaders continue to push for transparency and justice.

*Source: AfricaNews*



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