



Election 2024: GAF to guard 1,000 hotspots, skip polling stations, and act only on police request

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General News

Police offer cash rewards of up to GHC20,000 for tips on election disruptions

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The Ghana Police Service (GPS) has announced a cash reward system to incentivise citizens to report activities that could disrupt the upcoming 2024 general elections.

The initiative, unveiled by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, promises rewards ranging from GH¢1,000 to GH¢20,000 for credible tips. A toll-free line, 0800311311, has also been activated to facilitate anonymous reporting.

The IGP, speaking at a meeting with the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) in Accra, stressed the importance of collaboration between the public and the security services to maintain electoral peace.

“If you find it difficult to bring the information one-on-one, a toll-free number, 0800311311, has been introduced for that purpose,” he stated. This measure is part of the broader strategy by the Elections Security Taskforce, chaired by Dr. Dampare, to ensure a smooth electoral process.

The Taskforce, comprising members of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF), Immigration Service, Fire Service, and other security agencies, is preparing for any potential challenges. Brigadier General K.D. Hagan of GAF assured that the military would only intervene upon

police request and at identified flashpoints.

He remarked, “We shall not be there but only at identified flashpoints or hot spots, and we will not intervene until Police asks us to assist.”

This announcement comes amid heightened concerns about electoral violence, following past incidents and growing political tension. Security experts have emphasised the need for comprehensive

measures to safeguard the elections. The collaboration between police, military, and civil society is seen as a critical step toward ensuring public confidence in the process.

UTAG National Secretary Professor Eliasu Mumuni commended the police for involving academia in discussions about election security and pledged the association’s support for peaceful polls.

Meanwhile, military representatives

have underscored their readiness to address disruptions if necessary. Lt. Col. Jacob Cudjoe of the Achiase Jungle Warfare School has warned of decisive action should law enforcement be overwhelmed.

However, his remarks about physical measures to handle troublemakers have sparked criticism from civil society, including Adib Saani, a security analyst, who described such comments as inappropriate for a democratic nation.



IGP Dr. George Akuffo Dampare met the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) in Accra

EC assures credible special voting on December 2

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana has expressed its readiness to conduct the special voting exercise slated for Monday, December 2, ahead of the December 7 polls.

The exercise taking place in 328 special voting centres is exclusive to members of the security agencies, media, and electoral officials who have applied and been processed to cast their ballot.

In an engagement with the National Security Task Force, led by the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Dr George Akuffo Dampare, the EC Chairperson, Jean Mensa, said, “We are confident that we will have a successful special voting arrangements on Monday. We have adequate supply of ballot papers, indelible ink and the various forms that may be necessary, and the biometric verification devices are in place for a smooth and seamless special voting exercise.”

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Dr George Akuffo Dampare (right), Head, National Election Task force, with Jean Mensa, Chairperson, Electoral Commission

General News

EC assures credible special voting on December 2

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"We stand in readiness. We are ready to conduct a peaceful, credible, transparent and fair elections on December 2 and December 7," Jean Mensa added.

The individuals who have registered can verify their participation on the website of the Commission, Jean Mensa stated. However, the special voter list on the EC's website is inaccessible, per checks by The Independent Ghana.

Reacting to safety concerns, Dr Dampare, on behalf of the National Election Task Force, indicated that the security officers will work with the Commission to have a successful exercise. "We are clear in our minds on all the issues that you need and want us to address so that that aspect will be successful. We will work with you and your technical team to firm up," the IGP said.

A little over 900,00 new voters have been added to the voter register

ahead of the polls. The finalised voter register has been disseminated to the various political parties, according to the Commission.

Ballot papers for most regions and all registers have already been dispatched to the 16 regions, except for the Northern, Bono, and Bono East Regions. The ballot papers for the aforementioned regions are in the custody of the security services via the police armories.

The EC has introduced voter

education initiatives, including aid memoirs at polling stations, to address potential challenges during the election.

On security issues, Dr Dampare assured Ghanaians of a peaceful election process. He stressed that "we'll do all it takes to ensure that this country continues to be at peace with itself. We will protect every Ghanaian, and we will protect every stakeholder in this election."

Election security: GAF to guard 1,000 hotspots, skip polling stations, and act only on police request

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) has announced its operational plans for the 2024 general elections, scheduled for December 7. The military will focus on maintaining security at over 1,000 high-risk areas identified as potential hotspots for disturbances.

However, GAF personnel will not be stationed at polling stations, according to Brigadier General Kwaku Dankwa Hagan, the head of operations, training, and peacekeeping.

Speaking to the media, Brigadier General Hagan clarified that the Ghana Police Service will oversee election security at polling stations, with military intervention limited to instances where police require support.

He further assured the public that GAF's presence would uphold impartiality and professionalism, aiming to protect the integrity of the electoral process.

"We are mindful of the fact that some sections of the population are apprehensive of military personnel taking part in the election. I want to clarify that the election is primarily being handled by the Ghana Police Service and other security services under the Ministry of Interior.

"They are the people you will be seeing at over 40,000 polling stations. You will not see military personnel like me at a polling station.

"So please be rest assured that we shall not be there. However, we have identified with the police service and the Electoral Commission about more than 1,000 flashpoints and possible hostile areas, and we are going to have personnel there.

"We will not intervene in anything until the police service has a request or asks us to assist," he said.

He highlighted that comprehensive security plans are in place to protect the integrity of the electoral process and ensure the safety of voters, reaffirming the GAF's commitment to impartiality and professionalism.

He emphasized that the military's

primary role is to support peace and stability throughout the election period.

Concerns have been raised over the involvement of military personnel in the upcoming December elections. Security analysts have warned that deploying armed forces or national security operatives to polling stations could create an atmosphere of intimidation, potentially discouraging voter participation.

The flagbearer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Dramani Mahama, has also urged the government to respect the distinct roles of each security agency to prevent unnecessary tension.

He stressed the importance of maintaining the Electoral Commission's (EC) neutrality, as this is crucial for fostering public trust and ensuring voter confidence. Mahama also reassured the public, encouraging everyone to participate in the elections with confidence.

"No weapons should be allowed near polling stations or collation centers," Mahama insisted. He reiterated, "Election security falls under the Ghana Police Service, led by the Inspector General of Police. Therefore, no military or armed national security operatives should be deployed to polling stations or collation centers," he added.



Ghana Armed Forces personnels

General News

Interpol nabs 1,006 in Ghana, 18 other African nations, revealing \$193m in cybercrime losses

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

A coordinated effort across 19 African countries, including Ghana, has led to the arrest of 1,006 suspects involved in widespread cyber fraud schemes.

Operation Serengeti, led by INTERPOL and AFRIPOL from 2 September to 31 October, disrupted 134,089 malicious networks and uncovered over \$193 million in global financial losses, as outlined in INTERPOL's 2024 Africa Cyber Threat Assessment Report.

During the operation, more than 35,000 victims were identified, and the cases have been linked to nearly USD 193 million in financial losses worldwide.

In Angola, authorities arrested 150 individuals and seized 200 computers and over 100 mobile phones, thereby dismantling a global criminal network running a virtual casino in Luanda that targeted Brazilian and Nigerian gamblers. The operation, which promised commission-based incentives for recruiting new members, defrauded hundreds.

Eight individuals, including five Chinese nationals, were apprehended in Senegal for operating a USD 6 million Ponzi scheme that defrauded 1,811 victims. A search of their residence revealed over 900 SIM cards, USD 11,000 in cash, electronic devices, and identification documents belonging to their victims.

In Cameroon, a group that operated a scheme that generated over USD 150,000 in membership fees was arrested for trafficking victims from seven countries to operate a deceptive multi-level marketing scheme. Victims were required to pay membership fees and were promised jobs or training, only to be held captive and forced to recruit others to secure their release.

Kenyan authorities uncovered a significant online credit card fraud operation responsible for USD 8.6 million in losses. The criminals manipulated banking system security protocols to run fraudulent

scripts, transferring stolen funds via SWIFT to businesses in the UAE, Nigeria, and China, as well as to regulated digital asset institutions across multiple jurisdictions. Nearly 20 suspects have been arrested in connection with the scheme.

Also, Nigerian authorities detained a man accused of running fraudulent online investment schemes, amassing more than USD 300,000 by promising high returns on cryptocurrency investments via messaging platforms.

According to INTERPOL, information provided by participating countries including Rwanda, Mauritius and Mozambique, of ongoing cases fed into 65 Cyber Analytical Reports that were produced to ensure actions on the ground were intelligence-led and focused on the most significant actors.

"Private sector partners, including Internet Service Providers, also played a vital role by sharing intelligence, supporting analysis and disrupting criminal activities. They provided on-site support and offered round-the-clock remote assistance to patch vulnerabilities and secure critical infrastructure for the participating member countries," INTERPOL noted.

Valdecy Urquiza, Secretary General of INTERPOL, has bemoaned the increasing volume and sophistication of cybercrime attacks, indicating that it "is of serious concern" due to the movement from multi-level marketing scams to credit card fraud on an industrial scale.

"Operation Serengeti shows what we can achieve by working together, and these arrests alone will save countless potential future victims from real personal and financial pain. We know that this is just the tip of the iceberg, which is why we will continue targeting these criminal groups worldwide."

Ambassador Jalel Chelba, AFRIPOL's Executive Director said although his outfit has facilitated key arrests and deepened insights into cybercrime trends, "our focus now includes emerging threats like AI-driven malware and advanced attack techniques."

Operation Serengeti was carried out with funding of the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the German Federal Foreign Office and the Council of Europe.

On a global scale, an operation involving law enforcement from 40 countries, territories and regions

has ended with the arrest of over 5,500 financial crime suspects and the seizure of more than USD 400 million in virtual assets and government-backed currencies.

The five-month Operation HAECHI V (July - November 2024) targeted seven types of cyber-enabled frauds: voice phishing, romance scams, online sextortion, investment fraud, illegal online gambling, business email compromise fraud and e-commerce fraud.

INTERPOL also issued a Purple Notice during Operation HAECHI V to warn countries about an emerging cryptocurrency fraud practice involving stablecoin. Member countries were alerted to the "USDT Token Approval Scam" which allows fraudsters to access and control victims' cryptocurrency wallets.

The two-step approach first lures in victims using romance baiting techniques, instructing them to buy popular Tether stablecoins (USDT Tokens) via a legitimate platform. Once the scammers have gained their trust, the victims are provided with a phishing link claiming to allow them to set up their investment account.



File photo

General News

Electric buses in Accra to bypass traffic with contraflow system

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Accra's new electric buses are set to revolutionize urban transportation with a contraflow system designed to bypass traffic congestion. This strategy, introduced by the Greater Accra Private Transport Executive (GAPTE) in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, will allow electric buses to travel against the usual flow of traffic during peak hours.

The Managing Director of GAPTE, Charles Abban, explained that the system would utilise underused lanes on roads during peak directional traffic. For instance, as commuters travel toward the city centre in the morning, the opposite lane which is typically less congested, will be allocated to the electric buses.

Mr. Abban noted, "The deployment of the EV buses may not be effective if the buses are not moving faster than the ordinary traffic... So, we have designed a contraflow concept. We are going to take one lane of the other side and allow the EV buses to move contra and get to the city center faster and efficiently." This was developed in collaboration with

the Department of Urban Roads, the Ministry of Transport, and the Police Motor Traffic and Transport Department (MTTD).

The plan will initially cover major routes, including Ashaiman-Accra, Oyibi-Accra, and Accra-Amasaman. Managing Director of Metro Mass Transit Limited, Albert Adu Boahen,

noted that supporting infrastructure, such as charging facilities, is being deployed across the city to ensure seamless operations. He added that the initiative is expected to cut operational costs by 40%, promising lower fares for commuters and more reliable services.

The new buses form part of a

broader effort to modernise Ghana's transport system while reducing dependence on fossil fuels. With high fuel costs and frequent vehicle breakdowns plaguing public transport, these electric buses are expected to provide a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative.



Newly acquired electric buses

Let your actions speak louder than your words - IGP urges politicians ahead of Dec polls

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Inspector General of Police George Akuffo-Dampare has urged political parties to align their actions with their words.

He emphasized that signing an agreement should not be a mere formality but a genuine pledge to honor the terms of the pact through their actions.

During the signing of the peace pact, the IGP commended the political parties for their cooperation throughout the election preparations, acknowledging their collaborative efforts toward ensuring a peaceful process.

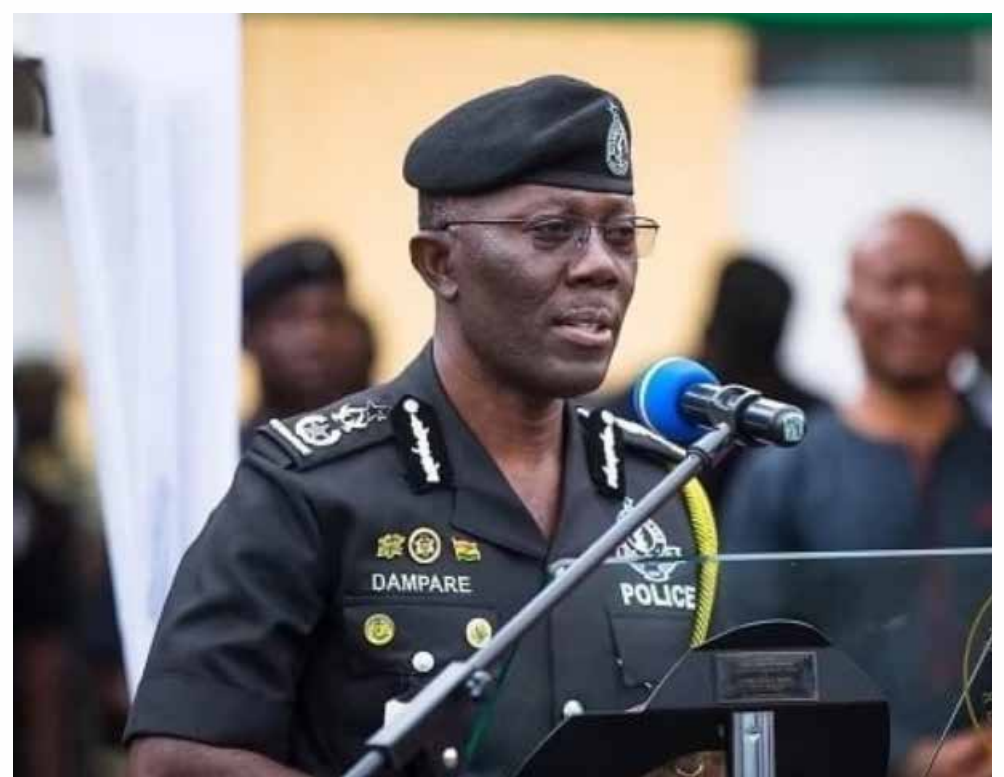
"...Let us make sure the cooking is

complete, and when we are eating it we will eat comfortably to the glory of God and also for the benefit of the generation that will come after us, so let us finish hard by doubling our efforts so that at the end of the day our actions will speak louder than our talks" he said.

The IGP emphasized that ensuring peace does not end with signing the pact but requires continued efforts to maintain calm and stability before, during, and after the 2024 elections.

"It's about what you have done that has made our work easy. But the important point is the fact that the job is still not done. It's still a work

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Dr. George Akuffo-Dampare, Inspector General of Police

General News

Let your actions speak louder than your words - IGP urges politicians ahead of Dec polls

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in progress and in our traditional circle, if there's food to be cooked you cannot half cook it and start eating it.

So we have eaten it in advance

in terms of appreciating how far we have conducted ourselves as Ghanaians" he added.

The National Peace Council met with representatives from all political

parties and their presidential candidates ahead of the 2024 election today to sign a peace pact that will bind candidates to promote national unity and stability.

The event took place at the Kempinski Hotel, Gold Coast City, Accra, under the theme: Pursuing Peaceful Elections, Non-Violence and Justice.

We will complete essential matters after elections before transitioning to 9th Parliament - Speaker

By Amanda Cartey

Speaker of Parliament, Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, has expressed his determination to complete all businesses of the 8th Parliament before transitioning to the 9th Parliament.

This follows his decision to decline a request from the Majority Leader for Effutu Constituency in the Central Region, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, to recall the House to consider twenty-two (22) urgent government and public business items two days before the December 7 polls.

Speaker Bagbin stated that he is doubtful Parliament could transact these businesses within two days. He also noted that recalling Members of Parliament would disrupt campaign

activities, which he believes would not serve the national interest.

Nonetheless, the Speaker remains resolute that all parliamentary business will be addressed and completed before transitioning to the next Parliament.

"I wonder how the proposed twenty-two items could be transacted within two days. I accordingly suggest that the government prioritizes these businesses, together with others not captured by your memo, for consideration after the conduct of the General Elections on the 7th of December 2024.

The House will resume sitting after the elections to complete all essential matters before a seamless transition to the 9th Parliament of

the Fourth Republic of Ghana," Mr. Bagbin assured.

In response, Mr. Afenyo-Markin stated that he cannot compel the Speaker to reconvene the House if he chooses not to do so.

"I cannot force him. I would use constitutional means. If he shuts the door, it's up to him. But I can tell you that for the next one week, we will focus on our elections with a determined mind to win and win well for Parliament and for our flagbearer so that if they are still being difficult and acting undemocratic, we know that we have a government in waiting to implement these important policies," the Effutu MP indicated.

Historically, Parliament suspends

sittings before general elections to enable MPs to connect with their constituents and address pressing matters.

However, concerns have been raised about the potential implications of this hiatus, including a legislative backlog that could delay critical national decisions.

The Speaker has assured that pending matters will be prioritized when Parliament resumes, emphasizing the importance of continuity in governance after the electoral process.

Political analysts believe the Speaker's stance reflects a broader understanding of the need for stability and focus during election periods.



Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament

General News

Mahama, Bawumia, other political party leaders sign peace pact

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Presidential candidates contesting the December 7 elections have signed a peace pact as a sign of their commitment to ensure and uphold peace ahead of the 2024 polls, during and after.

The event took place at the Kempinski Hotel, Gold Coast City, Accra, under the theme: Pursuing Peaceful Elections, Non-Violence, and Justice.

Currently, 13 presidential candidates are officially contesting Ghana's 2024 elections.

The current vice president and flagbearer of the ruling (NPP), Mahamudu Bawumia, and former president and presidential candidate for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Mahama, are the two leading candidates in contention to win the poll.

Others include independent candidates such as Alan Kyerematen and George Twum-Barima-Adu.

Speaking at the signing of the 4th Presidential Election Peace Pact in Accra on Thursday, November 28, Jean Mensa encouraged confidence in the electoral process and emphasised the importance of a peaceful and stable environment

during the elections.

She reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to promoting peace throughout the electoral process leading up to the 2024 general elections.

Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, the flagbearer of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), made a passionate appeal to political parties, the media, and security agencies to preserve peace during and after the elections. He stressed the need for all actors to ensure peace prevails, emphasising that Ghana has always passed the test of democracy during elections.

In attendance for the signing of the

peace pact, John Mahama remarked that although the NDC will protect the country's peace, the onus lies on all to play their part in safeguarding the country's peace.

"We are all too aware of the devastating consequences of electoral violence in other countries. We cannot afford to traverse that same path. As patriotic citizens, we have a collective responsibility to ensure our country remains a beacon of peace and stability in our subregion, and we in the NDC stand prepared to play our part to achieve this," he said.

His primary contender, Dr Bawumia,

also assured that, "As we head into the December 2024 polls, the 9th presidential elections in Ghana, nine days from today, I am certain of two outcomes. Ghana will win, and peace will reign."

He also added that "My plea to everybody involved in the electioneering process, including candidates, political parties, electoral officers, voters, the media, security, and the general public, is to take responsibility for ensuring peace and harmony seriously and to demonstrate that we are not reluctant Democrats."



John Dramani Mahama (L) and Mahamudu Bawumia (R)

89% of Ghanaian voters exposed to fake news ahead of crucial 2024 election - Study

By Amanda Cartey

A study by the African Center for Quality Journalism and Research has revealed that 89.2% of Ghanaian voters have encountered fake news in the run-up to the December 2024 elections. This finding raises concerns about the potential impact of disinformation on the electoral process and public trust in Ghana's democracy.

The survey, conducted between October and November 2024, sought to assess the Ghanaian electorate's knowledge of disinformation campaigns, their ability to identify

false information, and their response to encountering fake news. The report titled Disinformation Status Report of Ghana sampled 2,000 respondents nationwide.

"The findings disclosed that about 89.2% of respondents said they have encountered fake news in the media, 6.2% said they have not, and 4.6% answered 'Maybe' to the question, 'Have you encountered fake news in the media?'" the study revealed.

It also noted that most respondents, about 64.4%, ignore false information without taking action

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File photo

General News

89% of Ghanaian voters exposed to fake news ahead of crucial 2024 election - Study

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to counter it. Only 19.7% said they report fake news when encountered, while 35.6% comment on such news, and 7.6% admitted to sharing it with others.

The survey also examined the electorate's trust in various sources of information. Television emerged as the most trusted, with 37.4% of respondents selecting it as their primary news source. Online

news platforms and social media followed, trusted by 26.7% and 26% of respondents, respectively. Newspapers and information from family and friends lagged significantly, earning only 6.1% and

3.1% trust, respectively.

This highlights the varying levels of trust people place in different sources of information.

WAEC denies claims of moving headquarters to Nigeria over unpaid debt

By Amanda Cartey

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has firmly rejected reports claiming that it is moving its headquarters from Ghana to Nigeria due to an unpaid debt.

The rumors, which suggested that a GHC73 million debt was the cause of the relocation, were refuted by WAEC's Head of Public Relations, John Kapi.

He clarified that there has been

no such discussion or plans regarding the relocation of WAEC's headquarters, emphasizing that the council's base remains in Accra, as per the law that established WAEC.

"There hasn't been any discussion in this direction. So the law that established WAEC indicates that the headquarters of the WEAC will be situated here in Accra. Ever since, there has not been any change to that. So, I guess that we cannot confirm that we have not had any such discussions and there are no plans as such," he noted.

The council earlier this month, confirmed ongoing financial challenges, including delayed government payments. In particular, WAEC highlighted the risk of delaying the release of this year's WASSCE results, citing outstanding debts totaling GHC166 million required for marking and result processing.

WAEC, established by law, operates as a regional examination body across five English-speaking West African nations—Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Gambia. It

plays a critical role in administering standardized examinations and awarding internationally recognized certifications.

This year, the council recorded significant participation in its Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). The council's denial comes amid calls for sustained government support to ensure uninterrupted delivery of its essential educational services.



John Kapi, WAEC's Head of Public Relations



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Business

Development Bank and AGI partner to boost Ghana's garment and textile sector

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Ghana's garments and textile industry has found relief as the Development Bank of Ghana (DBG) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) on providing targeted financial support.

The MoU also aims to promote the growth and development of the sector by fostering collaboration between key industry players. As part of the agreement, the DBG will allocate a minimum of GH¢100 million annually for the next three years.

This funding will focus on providing long-term financing and offering capacity-building support to select small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in a pilot program that will enable them to overcome growth barriers and enhance Ghana's competitiveness in both regional and international markets.

The signing ceremony was attended by DBG's Chief Executive Officer, Kwamina Duker, who represented the bank, and Dr. Humphrey Kwesi Ayim Darke, the President of the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI), who signed

on behalf of the association.

The Chief Executive Officer of DBG, Kwamina Duker, signed on behalf of the bank while the President of the AGI, Dr Humphrey Kwesi Ayim Darke, penned down his signature on behalf of the association.

Mr Duker described the partnership agreement as a significant milestone, saying it reinforced the bank's commitment to impact growth, by catalysing economic transformation and fostering a competitive private sector.

He referred to the partnership agreement as a key milestone, underscoring its role in reinforcing the bank's dedication to fostering economic transformation and enhancing the competitiveness of the private sector.

He pointed out that over the past three years, the bank has actively demonstrated this commitment by disbursing GH¢1.58 billion to SMEs across 13 regions. This initiative has benefited 500 direct MSMEs, reached 5,000 indirect beneficiaries, and contributed to the creation and sustainability of over 17,000 jobs.

The CEO further mentioned that

the bank will collaborate with 16 national institutions, emphasizing the importance of their trusted partnership in achieving their collective goals.

"We have about GH¢360.9 million for the manufacturing sector, agriculture GH¢308 million, ICT investment of GH¢26.6 million, and high-value services about GH¢684.7 million.

"We have also committed to the SDGs by ensuring that 51 per cent of DBG loans are disbursed to women-led or owned businesses, while 334 women-led businesses have received

direct funding amounting to GH¢806 million," he added.

Ghana's once-thriving textile industry has struggled to regain its former prominence in recent years.

Challenges such as the influx of foreign textiles, high import rates compared to low exports, the price competitiveness of foreign prints versus local ones, and the lack of a comprehensive policy on textile production have been identified as key factors hindering the growth of the local textile industry.



Mr Duker (left), CEO of DBG, exchanging the signed documents with Dr Darke, President, AGI

Give incentivized loans for purchase of locally assembled cars - Volkswagen CEO tells BoG

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Chief Executive Officer of Volkswagen Ghana, Mr. Jeffery Oppong Peprah, has urged the Bank of Ghana to support key players in the automobile industry by introducing incentivized loan schemes for the purchase of locally assembled vehicles.

Speaking at the launch of Volkswagen's new product in Accra on November 28, 2024, Mr. Peprah emphasized that reducing interest rates on car loans could make locally assembled vehicles more accessible.

"Currently, when you go for a loan, you are paying about 30% interest rates, which is not affordable. We are appealing to the Bank of Ghana to implement a special incentive rate for locally assembled vehicles," he stated. Car loan interest rates in Ghana are currently between 25% and 35%,

significantly higher than in countries like South Africa, where rates typically range from 10% to 15%. Mr. Peprah believes that lower rates would encourage Ghanaians to purchase locally assembled vehicles, benefiting the economy.

He also expressed support for Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia's proposed credit scoring system, which he believes would allow locally assembling car companies to offer flexible payment plans.

This system, according to Mr. Peprah, would help assess buyers' creditworthiness and facilitate salary deductions for loan repayments, enabling more individuals to afford new vehicles.

In addition, Mr. Peprah highlighted the importance of integrating Ghana's informal sector into the automobile industry to address the skills gap and

improve industry standards.

The event featured the launch of the Volkswagen Amarok, a vehicle designed for Ghana's terrain, offering enhanced safety, power, and comfort

tailored to local needs.

Key industry stakeholders attended the launch to review the new product's features and discuss its potential impact on the market.



Mr. Jeffery Oppong Peprah, Chief Executive Officer of Volkswagen Ghana

International

WHO launches committee for elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B virus

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa has launched a Regional Validation Committee for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B virus, marking a pivotal moment in ensuring a healthier future for every mother and child across Africa.

The Regional Validation Committee has a crucial task of verifying the content, validity and quality of the national validation reports towards the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of the three infections.

Validating the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B is a transparent process using a set of standard criteria, processes and tools to certify that a country has achieved the elimination goals. It requires rigorous assessment at the national, regional and global levels of a set of impact and process indicators and the fulfilment of the four foundational requirements: data quality, programmes, laboratory quality, and human rights, gender equality and community engagement.

The committee - whose inaugural

meeting was held in Brazzaville on 25-26 November 2024 - comprises members from Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, the United States and Zimbabwe. The launch of the Regional Validation Committee underscores countries' commitment to effectively end the transmission of the three infections.

"The establishment of the (committee) reflects the scale of our commitment to supporting Member States and recognising their progress towards triple elimination of these significant public health threats," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

The African region has made notable progress against HIV. Over 21.3 million people are now on life-saving antiretroviral treatment, and in Eastern and Southern Africa, 90% of pregnant women receive antiretroviral therapy to protect their babies from HIV. However, this progress is not universal. In West and Central Africa (WCA) progress is slower.

The Regional Validation Committee will rigorously reviewing national

reports, identifying gaps, and supporting countries to meet the rigorous standards for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B validation. The committee will ensure that progress is measurable and impactful. More than a validation body, it will serve as a catalyst for stronger, more resilient health systems.

Guided by WHO's Framework for Triple Elimination and a tiered certification process (bronze, silver, and gold), the committee offers high-burden countries a roadmap for

progress. Botswana's silver-tier status for HIV elimination and Namibia's achievements for hepatitis B and HIV elimination are shining examples of what can be achieved with dedication and collaboration.

"The triple elimination agenda is part of our collective efforts towards ending diseases in Africa and articulates the vision and strategy for multi-disease burden reduction for the region," Dr Moeti said.

Source: WHO



WHO Regional Validation Committee

Paris seeks to renew ties with Nigeria as President Tinubu visits France

The Nigerian President Tinubu began his three-day state visit to France on Thursday in a bid to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The visit is symbolic to Nigeria's leadership as it marks the first appearance of a sitting president at Champs-Élysées in two decades.

Paris is seeking to renew its ties with Africa, especially the English-speaking countries. France has seen its influence diminish in the French-speaking countries following the coups that took place in the Sahel countries.

France is seeking to strengthen economic ties with Africa, as the visit sets up the two presidents for meetings at the "Franco-Nigerian Business Council" forum.

The forum was meant to boost the economic cooperation and investments between the two countries.

Tinubu is graced with some of the highest-ranking officials in his

government including popular business moguls like Africa's richest man Aliko Dangote.

Ties between France and the continent are beginning to falter after Niger's military junta banned the French aid group Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, or Acted, from working in the country in mid-November.

The Ministry of the Interior signed a decree withdrawing the nonprofit organization's license to operate, without providing reasons for the decision.

Niger had been the West's last reliable partner in the region in battling jihadists linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

President Macron last visited Nigeria in 2018 during the tenure of the then President Buhari. The visit to Nigeria then marked a return to familiar territory for Macron. He spent six months in Abuja as an intern at the French embassy in 2002.

Franca has been seen to be courting the English-speaking regions and countries in Africa to replace the French countries after his fallout with some of them like the Sahel countries. Macron visited several countries in Africa including Kenya and Ethiopia in 2019, South

Africa in 2021, and Nigeria in 2018.

According to the latest data, Nigeria is the leading trading partner for France in Africa followed by South Africa.

Source: Africanews



French President Emmanuel Macron (R) and Nigerian President Bola Tinubu (L)

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