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# General News

## 20,000-capacity trade fair centre to open next year - Bawumia promises

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia has announced that the Ghana Trade Fair Convention Centre (GTFCL), currently under construction in La, Accra, will be completed by September next year.

During a site inspection on Monday, Dr. Bawumia highlighted the significance of the facility, describing it as a transformative project for Ghana's tourism and creative arts sectors. He emphasized that the state-of-the-art venue, which will accommodate up to 20,000 people, is poised to become one of the largest convention centers in the region.

"This is a much-needed project. For a long time, successive governments have been unable to execute this particular initiative," the Vice President said. "We believe that some of the key pillars for the growth of this economy lie

in tourism and the creative arts. With a 20,000-capacity exhibition centre—nearly ten times the capacity we currently have—this facility opens new avenues for exhibitions, conventions, and conferences, which is a booming global market."

Dr. Bawumia stressed that Ghana's ambition to position itself as a hub for conventions, conferences, and creative arts requires the necessary infrastructure to sustain growth. He expressed confidence in the project's timeline, stating that the facility would be completed within eight months.

The Vice President also shared his aspiration to return as President to officiate the grand opening of the centre upon its completion. He reassured the creative arts community that the project would address their longstanding challenges, particularly the lack of large-scale venues. "This exhibition centre

will provide the infrastructure needed to support creative arts and tourism. Initiatives like December in Ghana and Beyond the Return will flourish, creating numerous opportunities to grow the economy," he added.

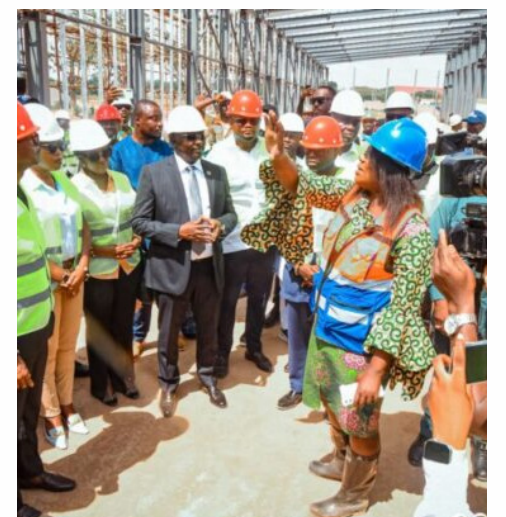
The GTFCL redevelopment project has not been without controversy. In 2020, properties at the old Trade Fair Centre were demolished to make way for the new facility. The GTFCL justified the demolition, stating that tenants had been properly notified.

According to a press statement, "The GTFCL had informed all tenants about the redevelopment project, issuing the mandatory six-month notice on July 10, 2018, to vacate the site by December 31, 2018."

Among the affected tenants were Universal Labels & Packaging Co. Ltd and Colour Planet, a printing company owned by journalist

Raymond Archer. Archer claimed to have invested approximately \$10 million in equipment, which was significantly damaged during the demolition.

Despite the past challenges, Dr. Bawumia remains optimistic about the impact of the new convention centre, expressing excitement about the economic and cultural opportunities it will create for Ghana.



Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia at Trade fair, site inspection

## Recalling parliament few days to elections a waste of taxpayer's money – NDC MPs petition Speaker

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Minority Leader, Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, has called on the Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, to disregard a petition from the Majority in Parliament seeking an emergency recall after the Speaker indefinitely adjourned the House.

The Majority Leader, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, had formally petitioned Speaker Bagbin to reconvene Parliament to address unresolved legislative business. In his letter, Afenyo-Markin invoked Standing Orders 57(3) and 58(4), emphasizing the urgency of recalling Members of Parliament to deliberate on critical matters.

Speaker Bagbin adjourned the House indefinitely on Thursday, November 7, after several New Patriotic Party (NPP) Members of Parliament failed to attend the session. This followed an earlier recall on October 22, which was triggered by an NPP petition

under Article 112(3) of the 1992 Constitution and Order 53 of Parliament's Standing Orders. Despite the October recall, proceedings on November 7 were stalled when the Business Committee, chaired by Afenyo-Markin, failed to meet to outline the agenda.

The latest petition marks the fourth emergency recall request by the NPP this year. However, Members of Parliament from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) have expressed concerns over reconvening just days before the general elections. They argue that such a move would disrupt campaign activities and negatively impact legislative productivity.

"With barely eleven days to the elections, a recall at this time will only exacerbate the unresolved stalemate that has persisted in recent times," a memo from the NDC caucus stressed. "We must avoid anything that could disturb

the peace of our country and the stability of our democracy. Instead, let us prioritize the conduct of credible, peaceful, free, and fair elections at this stage."

The Minority also emphasized that reconvening Parliament at this time would unnecessarily burden the taxpayer. "We therefore respectfully urge you to reject this call in the national interest," the memo added.

Despite his opposition to the recall, Dr. Forson proposed that Parliament reconvene immediately after the December 7 elections to resolve the deadlock and address pending issues. "I propose a leadership meeting after the elections to resolve the stalemate and agree on a suitable date to recall the House to consider any outstanding government business," he suggested.

The indefinite adjournment has left several critical parliamentary matters unresolved. These include

the approval of two Supreme Court judge nominees appointed by President Nana Akufo-Addo and the consideration of tax waivers exceeding \$350 million.

Additionally, key bills remain pending, such as the Architects Registration Bill 2024, the Economic and Organised Crime Office (Amendment) Bill 2024, the Vaccines Development and Manufacturing Bill 2024, and the Environmental Protection Agency Bill 2024. Notably, the Environmental Protection Agency Bill was finalized during the 5th meeting of the 4th session of the 8th Parliament on October 16 but awaits further deliberation.



Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, Minority leader

# General News

## GES embarks on a 16-day activism to check gender-based violence in SHSs nationwide

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The Ghana Education Service (GES) has officially launched a 16-day campaign aimed at tackling gender-based violence (GBV) in Senior High Schools (SHS) across the country.

The initiative, which focuses on creating safe spaces for both students and teachers, was inaugurated on Tuesday under the theme "Safe Spaces, Empowered Voices: Ending Sexual Harassment in Our Schools."

Cynthia Bosomtwe, a policy advisor and consultant for IPA Ghana, who chaired the event, emphasized that a comprehensive approach is necessary to eliminate GBV in schools. She called for advocacy, programs, policies, and regulations to be put in place to protect individuals, particularly

women and girls.

"These regulations should aim at protecting the rights of individuals, especially women and girls. In Ghana, SGBV against women and girls is common in our homes, communities, and schools," Bosomtwe stated. She further urged, "We need to rise up" to address the pervasive issue.

In his opening remarks, Steven Abamfo, the Greater Accra Regional Director of Education, shed light on the far-reaching effects of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) within educational environments. He highlighted how such violence strips individuals of their dignity and creates an unsafe learning environment. "It affects not only the individuals directly involved but also the entire school community by creating

an atmosphere of fear," Abamfo added.

The campaign comes on the heels of alarming findings from a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Girls Excellent Movement (GEM). The report, titled Sheltered Yet Exposed, details the prevalence of sexual assault among female students in SHS from 2019 to 2021. According to the report, a staggering 51.9% of female students experienced sexual assault during this period. The report also shows that 54.3% of the victims were aged between 17 and 22, while 45.7% were between the ages of 11 and 16.

The perpetrators of these assaults varied, with friends being the most common offenders at 24%, followed by family friends (12%), schoolmates (12%), teachers

(10%), and strangers (9%). The report also highlighted that beyond sexual assaults, female students in SHS endure other forms of gender-based violence, including physical assault, bullying, verbal abuse, and harassment.

The launch of the campaign was attended by development partners, including the National Teaching Council (NTC), UNICEF, and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), who are all working together to address this critical issue in Ghana's education system.



File Photo

## Sunon Asogli Power Plant resumes full capacity after emergency funding from govt

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Sunon Asogli Power Ghana Limited has confirmed the resumption of operations at its 560-megawatt power plant after a temporary shutdown caused by financial constraints involving the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG).

In a statement, the privately owned energy company attributed the resumption to emergency funding provided by the government. The shutdown had drawn attention to the persistent financial difficulties within Ghana's energy sector, particularly ECG's overdue payments to Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

Sunon Asogli halted operations in September 2024, citing ECG's unpaid debt of \$259 million. Between January and September 2024, only 22.6% of invoices were settled through the Cash Waterfall Mechanism, while the debt increased by 23%.

ECG is currently indebted to nine IPPs, which supply power to supplement the state-owned Akosombo plant's output. These IPPs include Sunon Asogli, Aksa

Energy, Amandi Energy, Cenit Energy, Cenpower Generations, Early Power, Karpowership Ghana, Meienergy, and Trojan Power.

In its statement, Sunon Asogli expressed gratitude to Finance Minister Mohammed Amin Adam, Energy Minister Herbert Krapa, and Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia for their roles in securing the funds necessary to restore operations.

"We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Minister for Finance, Mohammed Amin Adam, and the Minister for Energy, Herbert Krapa, for their intervention to release emergency funding to address our critical financial need. We would like to commend H.E. the Vice President for his intervention in ensuring the payment to us for our return to operation," the statement read.

The company also noted its submission of a Restructuring Terms Sheet to the Ministry of Finance and ECG in August, expressing optimism about its finalization. The terms are aimed at enhancing stability and reliability within Ghana's energy sector.

Sunon Asogli urged ECG to fulfill its obligations under the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) to prevent future disruptions. The company acknowledged the impact of the recent shutdown on power supply across the country, pledging to maintain steady operations moving forward.

"We deeply regret the impact of our shutdown," the statement said.

The plant's return to operation is expected to relieve pressure on the national grid and improve electricity availability nationwide.

Meanwhile, ECG's Acting Managing Director, Ing. Asamoah

David, attributed the debt crisis to fluctuations in the foreign exchange market. He explained that forex shortfalls result in significant financial losses, complicating timely payments to IPPs.

"Each month, just from forex, we lose about \$37 million. If payments were made in cedis, this debt issue would not exist. However, when I pay in cedis, banks must convert to dollars, and delays in the process, coupled with rising dollar rates, often result in further shortfalls," he stated.

Ing. Asamoah assured that ECG is making every effort to resolve payment challenges and stabilize the energy sector.



Sunon Asogli Power Plant

# General News

## Explore alternative power sources for EV rollout - UNDP to govt

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Consultant for the Energy Commission, Dr. Godwin Kafui Ayetor, has called on the government to prioritize alternative power sources to support the country's rollout of electric vehicles (EVs), citing challenges with Ghana's EV charging infrastructure.

Speaking at a public forum organized by the Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC) on November 21, 2024, in Kumasi, Dr. Ayetor expressed concern over Ghana's reliance on the national grid, emphasizing its vulnerability to power fluctuations. He advocated for incentives to encourage private sector investment in renewable energy-powered charging stations to reduce dependence on the grid.

"The current reliance on the

national grid is unsustainable given the frequent power fluctuations. Incentivizing the private sector to invest in renewable energy-powered charging stations will ensure a more reliable and sustainable EV infrastructure," Dr. Ayetor stated.

Highlighting the limited infrastructure, he noted that Ghana has only seven charging stations, all situated in Accra, leaving other regions without access and hindering the widespread adoption of EVs.

Dr. Ayetor urged regulators and government agencies to develop a comprehensive framework for strategically placing charging stations across the country. He proposed mapping out key locations in cities like Accra to improve coordination and accessibility.

His remarks come in the wake of concerns raised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Energy Commission (EC) about the infrastructure needed to support Ghana's EV rollout. These concerns were outlined during a joint event where the Market

Opportunity Study on Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in Ghana was presented.

The report analyzed Ghana's current EV charging and battery swap infrastructure, identifying significant opportunities and challenges in advancing the EV sector.



UNDP Cambodia

File Photo

## About 1,250 Ghanaians out of 30m need dialysis - NHIA

By Amanda Cartey

The National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) estimates that approximately 1,250 Ghanaians are living with end-stage renal disease, based on statistical research correlating the prevalence of 24 cases per million people within Ghana's 30 million population.

This estimate comes as the NHIA prepares to roll out free dialysis treatment for kidney patients starting December 1, 2024.

"Research has proven that out of every one million Ghanaians, 24 individuals suffer from end-stage renal disease. Using this data, it is simple to calculate that if 24 cases are recorded per million people, then a population of 30 million would yield approximately 1,250 individuals with the condition," explained NHIA Chief Executive Officer, Dr. DaCosta Aboagye, during a media briefing.

The initiative, announced by Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, aims to ease the financial strain on families by covering dialysis under the National Health Insurance

Scheme (NHIS).

Dr. Aboagye highlighted the financial implications of the policy, noting that sustaining the program will require annual funding ranging from GHC20 million to GHC57 million, depending on patient numbers.

"Parliament has approved a fee of GHC490.00 for dialysis treatment in Ghana. Multiplying this by 400 patients and by the eight sessions required per month totals GHC1.5 million monthly, or over GHC18 million annually, which we've rounded up to GHC20 million," Dr. Aboagye explained.

If patient numbers double to 800, the cost could increase to GHC40 million annually. For a scenario with 1,200 patients, the projected cost rises to GHC57 million per year.

Dialysis treatment in Ghana has become prohibitively expensive for many families, making this policy a lifeline for patients requiring the procedure. From December 1, all registered kidney patients under the NHIS will benefit from free dialysis, ensuring access to a

life-saving service that previously posed a significant financial burden.

This initiative is part of the government's broader effort to

enhance healthcare accessibility and alleviate the economic challenges faced by families dealing with chronic health conditions.



File Photo

# General News

## Ghana's transport sector driving air pollution to deadly levels - Study

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Health experts have expressed deep concern over the rising number of illnesses and deaths linked to air pollution in Ghana, with the transport sector identified as the leading contributor.

Ghana's vehicle population, which reached 3.2 million in 2022, is the primary source of the country's air pollution. Epidemiologist Dr. Reginald Quansah from the University of Ghana attributed the steady rise in pollution levels to emissions from this sector.

"Air pollution levels are consistently moving up. Several factors account for this. I think one of the things that is very obvious is emissions from vehicles," Dr. Quansah noted in a media interaction.

Older vehicles are a major driver of the problem, with over 95% of Ghana's domestic transport fleet comprising aging, high-

polluting vehicles, according to the Ministry of Transport's National Electric Vehicle Policy. These vehicles contribute to pollution levels that exceed the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended limits by a staggering elevenfold.

The health implications of this trend are dire. The WHO estimates that air pollution causes 28,000 premature deaths annually in Ghana and accounts for over seven million deaths globally each year. It ranks as the second leading cause of death and disability worldwide, after malnutrition.

The pollution is linked to a rise in respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, further straining the nation's health system. Researchers from Afri-SET, an organization focused on air quality, have deployed wearable sensors to monitor pollutants inhaled by commuters during peak travel hours.

"The uncalibrated data shows that rush hours are around 80 milligrams per cubic meter, which is not good for human health," explained Afri-SET research associate James Nimo. He noted significant pollution peaks between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m.

Desmond Appiah, Country Lead for the Clean Air Fund, called for stricter enforcement of air quality regulations.

"There's a lot more that we need to be doing to push the needle. The challenge that the clean air field faces is that the quality of the air is not seen, so we call it a silent killer," Appiah remarked.

Experts warn that without urgent action to address emissions and enforce air quality standards, poor air quality will remain a significant threat to public health, jeopardizing countless lives across the country.



File Photo

## We are ready to be audited - FDA on 'expired' rice scandal

By Amanda Cartey

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) has expressed its willingness to undergo audits by both local and international bodies to address allegations regarding the distribution of unwholesome rice to Senior High Schools in Ghana.

This follows claims by North Tongu Member of Parliament, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, that the Free Senior High School Secretariat supplied 22,000 bags of 50kg rice that had expired, been repackaged, and distributed to schools.

At the center of the controversy is the FDA's alleged extension of expiration dates for the rice, which was imported by Lamens Investments Africa Limited. Critics have questioned the FDA's role in ensuring the safety of the consignment.

Speaking at a press briefing, FDA Chief Executive Officer Dr. Delese Mimi Darko defended the authority's actions, stating that

all approvals adhered to strict regulations and international food safety standards.

"The FDA is open to audits by qualified local and international bodies to validate all its actions," Dr. Darko affirmed.

She explained that the FDA, like its global counterparts, follows rigorous testing protocols when extending best-before dates for food products.

"The authority, like other authorities globally, may use accepted regulatory extensions of best-before dates, following rigorous testing and compliance with storage requirements, and this is in line with international best practices," she said.

Dr. Darko further assured the public that certificates from various agencies, including India's regulatory bodies, the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate (PPRSD), and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research-Food Research Institute (CSIR-FRI), confirmed

the rice's wholesomeness before its distribution.

Meanwhile, Kwasi Kwarteng, Public Relations Officer for the Ministry of Education, refuted allegations that the rice distributed to Senior High Schools nationwide was expired. He reiterated that the FDA had declared the rice safe for consumption.

However, this is not the first time Lamens Investments has faced scrutiny. A 2021 Auditor General's report revealed that the company

previously supplied unwholesome food items to schools, including 65 bags of rice and five cartons of milk. These items, deemed unsafe for consumption during a September 2021 audit, were delivered to Prestea Hunni Valley Senior High and Technical School and Asankragwa Senior High School in March of the same year.

The FDA's commitment to transparency through potential audits aims to restore public confidence as investigations into the claims continue.



FDA Building

# General News

## Ballot papers to Northern, 2 other regions and BVDs disseminated to police armories - EC

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana has announced the dissemination of ballot papers for the Northern, Bono, and Bono East Regions to police armories.

Chairperson of the EC, Jean Mensa, disclosed during a meeting with the National Elections Security Task Force, chaired by the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, on Tuesday noted that 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.

In her submission, she disclosed that biometric verification devices (BVDs) are also being secured across the country.

“As we speak, the BVDs have been sent to over 8 regional armories and are in safe keeping there,” Jean Mensa stated on November 26, adding that all devices will be under police protection by the weekend.

Meanwhile, the EC has recruited 210,000 temporary officials, including returning officers, deputy returning officers, presiding officers, and polling assistants, for the December 7 elections. These officials are being trained extensively, with the introduction of aide memoires to guide them in their roles.

“They are undergoing extensive training for all categories of staff. This year, we have developed what we call the aide memoires, which are basic instructions on the key aspects of our work, based

on feedback from our officers on the ground and various election observation missions,” Mensa explained.

Both the EC and security officials have assured the public of a credible, transparent, and peaceful

electoral process as preparations intensify ahead of the polls.

“We will do all it takes to ensure this country continues to be at peace with herself. We will protect every Ghanaian” Dr. George Akuffo Dampare added.



Jean Mensa, Electoral Commission Chairperson

## Put in measures to prevent internet shutdown on election day - CSOs to govt, telcos

By Amanda Cartey

A coalition of over 300 civil society organizations, known as the KeepItOn coalition, has called on the Ghanaian government to maintain uninterrupted internet access before, during and after the 2024 general elections.

Addressing a press conference in Accra on Tuesday, November 26, 2024, Felicia Anthonia, Campaign Manager for KeepItOn at Access Now, presented an open letter to President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and other key election stakeholders. She emphasized that any disruption to internet services during the election period would be unjustifiable and counterproductive.

Madam Felicia cited instances in countries like Senegal and Mauritania, where internet shutdowns were reported during elections, urging Ghana to avoid following such examples.

“The undersigned members of the KeepItOn coalition urge the government of Ghana, as well as other relevant actors, to publicly assure the people of Ghana that

the Internet, including social media and other communication platforms, will remain open, accessible, inclusive and secure before, during and after the elections,” she read from the letter.

The coalition further urged telecommunications companies and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to ensure secure, high-quality, and uninterrupted internet access during the election period.

“We call upon the relevant institutions and authorities to refrain from ordering any disruption of telecommunication services, social media platforms or other digital communication platforms throughout the elections,” she stated.

Madam Felicia also appealed to telecom operators in Ghana to be transparent with the public if any technical disruptions to internet services were anticipated.

“We urge telecommunications companies and ISPs to inform the people of Ghana of any potential technical disruption during the

elections and take all reasonable steps to remedy any such disruptions likely to impact their service quality,” she added.

Clarifying the coalition’s appeal, Madam Felicia explained that the request was not meant to incite fear or panic but to emphasize the critical role of internet access in keeping citizens informed and engaged throughout the electoral process.

The call comes amid a broader trend in Africa, where governments have shut down internet services

during elections, often under the pretext of preserving national security. For instance, Mali restricted internet access ahead of a presidential run-off vote in August 2024.

Rights groups and opposition parties have frequently criticized such actions, arguing that they aim to control information flow and manipulate electoral outcomes. The KeepItOn coalition’s appeal seeks to ensure that Ghana avoids these controversies by upholding digital access and democratic integrity during its elections.



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# Business

## Review VAT on exploration, enhance security of mines - Lands Minister on boosting mining sector

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

The Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Samuel Abu Jinapor, has called for a review of Value Added Tax (VAT) on exploration and enhanced security for mining operations to maximize Ghana's benefits from its mining sector.

Speaking at the 10th Ghana Mining Industry Awards held at the Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast, Accra, Jinapor outlined three key recommendations aimed at strengthening the relationship between the government and the Ghana Chamber of Mines.

He emphasized that these measures would position Ghana as a leading mining hub while fostering sustainable development in the sector.

Jinapor highlighted the productive collaboration between his ministry and the Ghana Chamber of Mines, attributing Ghana's rise to becoming Africa's leading gold producer to this partnership.

He stated, "We have worked together, closely and in good faith,

not only to overtake South Africa as the leading producer of gold on the continent, but we have consistently increased production, reaching some four million ounces (4,000,000 oz) last year."

He further disclosed that gold export receipts had significantly bolstered the national economy, with last year's receipts amounting to \$4.67 billion as of August 2023. This year, gold receipts for the first half alone reached \$5 billion, with a projection to exceed \$10 billion by the year's end.

To sustain these achievements, the minister proposed three key actions. First, he urged the next government to prioritize the issue of VAT on exploration, describing exploration as the lifeblood of the mining industry and calling for incentives to encourage it. He revealed that while progress had been made on this issue, the current parliamentary situation had hindered its conclusion.

"I led the Chamber to make a presentation to the Economic Management Team, and we were

seriously working to review this VAT. Unfortunately, with the current situation in Parliament, it is unlikely that we can conclude this matter before the end of the year. I, therefore, strongly recommend that the next Minister takes this matter up, and it is my hope that the Chamber will collaborate with the next Minister to deal with this matter," he said.

He stressed the importance of enhancing the security of mines, noting that the growth of the industry depends on the peace of mind of its players. He highlighted efforts to train special security forces and urged the next administration to continue implementing agreed security measures.

The Minister then called for increased attention to the development of mining communities, arguing that ensuring the happiness of local communities is closely tied to the security and sustainability of mining operations.

Mr Jinapor also commended mining

companies and personalities for their contributions to the sector, assuring continued government support to create an environment conducive to successful investments. He pointed out the significant opportunities for value addition to Ghana's mineral resources, emphasizing that such initiatives would drive wealth creation.

On his part, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Chamber of Mines, Sulemanu Koney, praised Jinapor's visionary and amiable leadership, crediting him with the impressive results seen in the large-scale mining sector. He remarked that the minister's extraordinary relationship with stakeholders has already yielded fruitful outcomes.



Samuel Abu Jinapor, Lands & Natural Resources Minister

## GNPC's future uncertain as funding timeline nears expiration, reserve fund calls grow louder

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) faces significant financial uncertainty as its current funding mechanism approaches expiration. According to the 2024 semi-annual report from the Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC), the GNPC has yet to establish a reserve fund to sustain its operations after its 15-year funding timeline ends in 2026.

Since 2011, GNPC has relied on 55% of the Carried and Participating Interests (CAPI) to finance its operational expenditures. However, with just two years left before this allocation ends, the corporation risks a financial crisis unless proactive steps are taken to create an alternative funding source. At a public forum organized by PIAC in Kumasi, Technical Advisor Richard Elimah

highlighted the urgency of the situation, emphasizing the need for GNPC to prioritize creating its own reserve fund.

"We are recommending that they actualize their own reserve funding so that, once they are able to put aside some money, they will be able to build up enough revenue to support their operations," he stated. The forum, held in the Ashanti Region, aimed to engage stakeholders on PIAC's findings and discuss strategies to ensure petroleum revenues are utilized effectively.

### International Oil Companies Owe Ghana \$2.6 Million in Unpaid Fees

The 2024 semi-annual report also revealed that ten international oil companies (IOCs) owe the government over \$2.6 million in outstanding surface rental fees. Four of these companies

have ceased operations and exited Ghana without settling their debts, raising concerns about the government's ability to recover these funds. PIAC has urged the government to adopt stricter measures to ensure surface rental fees are collected during the production phase to prevent such losses in the future. "PIAC is recommending that the government take the surface rental before these companies leave the country. They should be made to pay during the course of production. This would ensure the state doesn't incur any losses," Mr. Elimah advised.

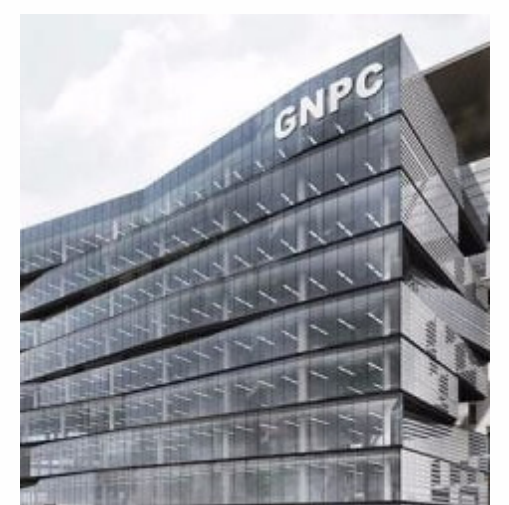
The committee also called for swift action to recover the unpaid amounts from the defaulting companies.

### Concerns Over Petroleum Revenue Allocation

Additionally, Mr. Elimah criticized

the government's failure to allocate any petroleum revenue to industrialization initiatives during the first half of the year. He stressed the importance of ensuring oil revenues are used for their intended purposes to maximize national benefits.

PIAC's engagement in Kumasi is part of its broader efforts to promote accountability and transparency in the management of Ghana's petroleum resources.



GNPC Building





# International

## Zimbabwe commits to boost domestic health financing

Source: WHO

Zimbabwe has taken a significant step towards strengthening its health system by committing to increase domestic financing through a health levy, a sugar tax, establishment of National Health Insurance and other initiatives.

This commitment was made during a three-day national dialogue on health financing, aimed at exploring sustainable strategies to improve the country's health sector which brought together key stakeholders, including government officials, healthcare providers, civil society organizations, and international experts, to discuss innovative approaches to bolstering financing to the country's health system.

Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion Deputy Minister Kudakwashe Mhangagwa announced \$10 million through the Health Levy and \$18 million through a sugar tax has been raised to date. These funds are intended to strengthen the country's health system and improve access to healthcare for all citizens.

"We will have periodical meetings between Treasury and the Ministry of Health and Child Care(MoHCC) to discuss major challenges facing the health sector, including budget utilisation, disbursements, cash support, as well as coming up with a minimum monthly health sector requirement to guide our cash flows," he said.

The country is yet to meet the Abuja Declaration target of allocating 15% of its annual budget to health, leading to a healthcare system burdened by rising costs, limited resources, and inequitable access to care. Imposing taxes on unhealthy products like tobacco and alcohol can generate additional revenue for health programmes. Countries like Vietnam and South Africa have implemented such measures with varying degrees of success.

Key issues identified during the dialogue included the need to increase public revenue allocation to healthcare, improve the predictability and stability of funding flows, and strengthen accountability mechanisms.

Collaboration with the private sector, establishing efficient cost-

recovery mechanisms, ensuring health remains a priority in national budgets, leveraging indigenous knowledge systems, and timely disbursement of health funds were some of the recommendations brought forward during the meeting.

In addition to sin taxes, levies, diaspora remittances, and climate financing, investing in preventive health programmes, expanding immunization programmes, and prioritizing allocation to primary health care and prevention of high-burden diseases were identified as some of the low-hanging fruits.

To improve service delivery, shifting from siloed approaches to consolidated management structures, implementing cost-effective quality improvement initiatives, and identifying and eliminating wastage were also emphasized. Collaborating with civil society organizations, involving communities in decision-making, investing in capacity building for health workers, promoting innovation, developing social contracting policies, and promoting regional, national, and subnational knowledge exchange

were also highlighted as important strategies.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Zimbabwe Dr Desta Tiruneh commended the government's commitment to health financing and emphasized the need for collaboration between the MoHCC, the Ministry of Finance, and Parliament to implement proposed reforms and ensure equitable access to healthcare.

He pledged WHO continued support to the government in implementing the recommendations provide during the dialogue and achieving the goal of Universal Health Coverage (UHC).



File Photo

## Over 300 irregular migrants detained in Libya after arrest in desert

More than 300 migrants have been arrested in Libya's desert by the 444 Brigade.

The powerful militia group that operates under the auspices of the Libyan army, said in a statement Monday (Nov. 25) that its patrolling commanders detained the migrants and referred them to authorities.

The group in a post on Facebook condemned smuggling and human trafficking and said its patrols would continue efforts to block smuggling routes.

The nationality of the migrants was not immediately clear.

The 444 Brigade posted satellite images of the desert and pictures of what appeared to be migrants

sitting in rows in front of armed and masked militants.

The apprehensions come as Libya remains a primary point of departure for men, women and children from the Middle East and Africa aiming to reach Europe. Many are escaping war or poverty and many employ smugglers to help them negotiate treacherous deserts and sea routes.

Roughly 38,000 people have arrived in Italy and Malta from Libya this year, according to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency.

The overcrowded boats used by migrants and smugglers are known to routinely capsize and a key priority for European leaders has been to pay North African

countries to prevent migrants from reaching the sea. But unlike in Morocco and Tunisia — where tens of thousands of migrants also attempt to pass through en route to the southern shores of Europe — fighting between rival governments in Libya has added additional challenges to migration management partnerships.

Migrant apprehensions are rarely reported in Libya, though the country's state news service LANA reported more than 2,000 arrests in July.

The oil-rich country plunged into turmoil after a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi. Since then, the country has been divided between dueling governments in the east

and west, each backed by militias and foreign powers. Human traffickers have for years benefited from the political chaos.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk in July said migrants in the country had been subjected to torture, forced labor and starvation while being detained.



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