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General News

Fire destroys ballot boxes in disputed Ablekuma North election

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

A fire erupted early Tuesday at the Kwashieman Cluster of Schools in Accra, destroying several ballot boxes from the contested Ablekuma North constituency. The blaze began in the school's library, temporarily used to store election materials following the December 7 polls.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing thick smoke and flames engulfing the building shortly after the fire started.

The Ghana Police Service, in collaboration with the Ghana National Fire Service, has initiated an investigation into the incident. Authorities have pledged to identify and prosecute those responsible, urging the public to remain calm

and support the ongoing efforts.

The fire coincides with heightened tensions over the parliamentary race in Ablekuma North, one of 12 constituencies with disputed election results. An Electoral Commission officer (EC) initially declared Ewurabena Aubynn of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) as the winner but the Commission later reversed the decision, labeling the declaration invalid. Nana Akua Owusu Afriyie of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) also claims victory.

The EC had ordered a recount for Ablekuma North and four other constituencies, with plans for a re-collation of votes before the fire incident. The EC and party representatives have yet to

announce how the recount will proceed following the fire.

Meanwhile, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) has filed a lawsuit to block the re-collation process across the five constituencies, including Ablekuma North, arguing

that their candidates have already been declared winners.

The destruction of ballot boxes in the fire adds complexity to the ongoing electoral disputes. Authorities are under pressure to ensure a transparent resolution to maintain public trust in the democratic process.



Kwashieman Cluster of Schools

Ghanaian males accounted for 63% of drowning incidents in 2022 - WHO

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Ghana recorded 52 drowning fatalities in 2022, with males making up 63% of these deaths, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ghana Navy.

The findings underscore a clear gender disparity, as females accounted for 37% of drowning incidents. Experts attribute the higher male fatalities to increased involvement in water-related activities, such as fishing, boating, and swimming, often without adequate safety measures like lifeguards or life jackets.

The WHO data also highlights age-related risks. Young adults between 15 and 29 years recorded the highest proportion at 33%. Individuals aged 30 to 49 years accounted for 25%, while children aged 5 to 14 years made up 17%. Notably, 12% of drowning victims were children under 4 years, reflecting their heightened vulnerability.

While Ghana has some drowning prevention initiatives, such as regional lifejacket policies, critical measures like water safety education in schools and community rescue training remain limited. The lack of flood risk management strategies further exacerbates the issue.

Globally, drowning remains a

significant public health issue. The first-ever Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention by the WHO details progress made in addressing drowning fatalities worldwide. The report notes that the global drowning death rate declined by 38 percent between 2000 and 2021. However, more than 300,000 fatalities were still recorded in 2021, underscoring the severity of the problem.

Regional disparities remain stark. While the WHO European Region saw a 68 percent decline in its drowning death rate between 2000 and 2021, the WHO African Region experienced only a 3 percent drop over the same period. With a drowning rate of 5.6 deaths per 100,000 people, Africa has the highest rate globally, yet only 15 percent of countries in the region have a drowning prevention strategy compared to 45 percent in Europe.

The WHO warns that if current trends persist, drowning could claim over 7.2 million lives, mainly children, by the year 2050. Alarmingly, over 30 people are estimated to drown every hour, with nearly half of these fatalities occurring among individuals under the age of 29 and a quarter among children under 5 years.

The report underscores that most

drowning deaths are preventable through the implementation of WHO-recommended interventions, including: installing barriers to restrict child access to water; providing safe play areas for pre-school children away from water; teaching school-aged children swimming, water safety,

and safe rescue skills; training communities in rescue and resuscitation techniques; raising public awareness on drowning risks; enforcing regulations for safe boating, shipping, and ferry operations; and improving flood risk management strategies.



File Photo



General News

ECG tracking illegal connection with new installation of metres in Kumasi

By Amanda Cartey

The Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) is taking steps to combat illegal power connections in Kumasi by installing new prepaid smart meters.

These advanced meters, launched in the Ashanti East Region, are designed to replace the old prepaid and postpaid systems used in homes and businesses.

According to ECG's General Manager for the region, Mr. Asomani Wiafe, the new meters can detect tampering and other unauthorized activities that have been draining the company's revenue.

At an unveiling event at the Manhyia District office in Kumasi, Mr. Wiafe explained that electricity theft remains a major challenge for ECG. Emphasizing that the upgraded meters would help reduce power losses and improve revenue collection for the company.

"In the past, we utilized various meter types that were not of the intelligent digital variety. We are now transitioning to digital technology, in line with Vice

President Dr. Bawumia's directive. All our apparatus are now digital, rendering them more efficient and precise," he remarked.

ECG has already began the replacement of outdated meters in the Manhyia District as part of its phased rollout across Kumasi. Mr. Wiafe called on the public to support the initiative, assuring them that the new meters would work in their favor by ensuring more efficient power usage.

The Project Manager, Mrs. Tamara Asomani Wiafe, explained that the new meter would benefit both customers and the company managing the power system.

"This intelligent prepaid meter boasts special functionalities that aid ECG in identifying tampering and the installation of unauthorized meters. It also offers convenience to customers as they can purchase prepaid credit via their mobile devices without the need to visit a vendor. There are other codes available for customers to monitor the units consumed and the remaining balance on the meter.

The most advantageous aspect is that credit can be purchased even when outside one's region or the country, thanks to its intelligent connectivity to the systems," she explained.

She also dismissed claims that the new smart prepaid meters were difficult to use or too expensive, offering explanations to clear up these concerns.

Adding that, the new meter will

help consumers save more money, debunking concerns about its fast rate and high usage costs.

She said its features are perfectly suited to a well-organized wiring system, and with proper wiring and grounding, there will be no meter malfunctions.

She assured that customers will be provided with the necessary education to help them understand how the system works.



ECG Personnel

Bawku conflict: Death toll reaches 35 after latest killings

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Two individuals have been killed in separate incidents in Bawku, adding to the rising toll of deaths in the area amid an ongoing chieftaincy dispute.

The first victim, Moro Aziz, a mentally ill man from the Gozesi area, was found dead near the Bawku cemetery after reportedly wandering there. The second victim, Kasim, was killed in Daduri while attempting to relocate to another area.

These latest deaths bring the total number of lives lost in Bawku to 35 since the chieftaincy conflict was revived in October. However, the circumstances surrounding the two recent killings have not been confirmed as related to the ongoing dispute.

Bawku has faced a fragile security situation since the chieftaincy crisis reignited on October 25, 2024, following the return of Alhaji Seidu Abagre, a rival chief installed by the Nayir. A curfew imposed by

authorities remains in place, but tensions in the area persist.

The conflict, rooted in disagreements over traditional leadership, had de-escalated during

2023 but has recently resurfaced, sparking concerns about the safety of residents and the ability to restore lasting peace.

Law enforcement agencies continue

to investigate the incidents while urging the public to remain calm and cooperate with security measures.



File Photo

General News

Channel election security concerns to IGP - Defence Minister tells parliament

By Amanda Cartey

Defence Minister, Dominic Nitiwul has advised Parliament to direct all concerns regarding security during the 2024 general elections to the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Dr. George Akuffo Dampare. This comes as a response to issues raised by the Minority on Monday, December 16, over reported deaths of two individuals during the polls. He explained that the National Elections Security Task Force, led by the IGP, was specifically mandated to oversee election security and is therefore responsible for answering questions on any lapses or incidents that occurred.

“On the day and after elections, it was the National Elections Security Task Force led by the Inspector General of Police that was in charge of security, and so if the Speaker thinks or the House thinks that they want to call the election security to come and brief this House, it cannot be ministers or government appointees, because they have no

role,” Mr. Nitiwul expressed. Adding that, the Executive should not oversee security during elections, as it would conflict with the principle of impartiality.

“And in fact, it was good that the Executive was not in charge of security. It has always been like that because you cannot be a judge of your own court. It is wrong. And so that is why if you are calling somebody, it can only be the IGP and his team,” the minister said.

The December 7, 2024, general elections in the country were marred by pockets of violence across the country, just as the December 7, 2020, election.

A total of 30 suspects have been arrested in Ghana for looting and causing property damage during post-election violence, Ghanaian police confirmed late Sunday.

Three individuals were shot at Kasoa in the Awutu Senya East Constituency, leaving one dead and two in critical condition.

The injured and the deceased were transported to the hospital, and the

police arrested four individuals for possessing an AK-47 assault rifle. In Nyankpala, allegations of vote buying led to the shooting of one person who was reported dead in the Tolon Constituency of the Northern Region.

Also in the Damongo Constituency, violence reportedly broke out at the Collation Centre after unidentified

thugs stormed the premises, demanding the immediate declaration of results.

The thugs, unhappy about the delay, set fire to the EC's office.

Security personnel, in an attempt to control the situation, fired warning shots, resulting in the death of one person as the bullet pierced his ribs.



Dominic Nitiwul, Defence Minister

Retain Bagbin as Speaker for 9th Parliament - Afenyo-Markin urges

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Outgoing Majority Leader of Ghana's Parliament, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, has urged the incoming National Democratic Congress (NDC) government to retain the current Speaker of Parliament, Alban Kingsford Sumana Bagbin, in the 9th Parliament.

According to Mr. Afenyo-Markin, the institutional empowerment achieved under Speaker Bagbin's leadership over the past four years has been unparalleled. He emphasized that Mr. Bagbin's background as a legislator contributed to his effective leadership, and it would not be fair to replace him with an outsider.

“Mr Speaker, the institutional empowerment you have given to Parliament is unmatched, and it is likely because we have you as speaker coming from within. Mr Speaker, I don't know whether you will be retained or if a new person will be appointed... If they decide to maintain you, I know parliament will continue to benefit.

Mr Speaker, let me commend you for the four years of your leadership

in this House. We may have had our disagreements, but it is clear that the welfare of members has been key to your leadership. Nobody can take that away from you,” he said on December 16, when the House reconvened after recess.

The Effutu legislator noted that if a change is inevitable, the next government should choose a new Speaker who is already a member of Parliament.

“But should they decide to retire you, which I know they can do, if they choose to bring in a new Speaker, that person should come from within. We don't want an outsider,” he added.

Monday's sitting, held at the Accra International Conference Centre, marked the resumption of parliamentary activities as legislators prepared to debate pending matters ahead of the current Parliament's closure.

The Majority Leader's remarks come against the backdrop of recent tensions between his group and the Speaker. The conflict emerged when Speaker Bagbin declared four parliamentary seats vacant after their occupants opted to contest

the 2024 general elections as independent candidates or under the ticket of another political party. Mr. Afenyo-Markin subsequently sought the Supreme Court's intervention, which overturned the Speaker's ruling. However, Speaker Bagbin expressed displeasure over legislators resorting to the courts for matters that could have been addressed within Parliament, cautioning that such actions undermine the reputation of the Legislature.

Alban Kingsford Sumana Bagbin, a veteran politician and former Member of Parliament for Nadowli Kaleo on the ticket of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), made history as the Speaker of the 8th Parliament of the Fourth Republic. In a tightly contested election, he secured 138 votes, narrowly defeating the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) candidate, Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye, who polled 136 votes.

Mr. Bagbin, who previously served as the Second Deputy Speaker in the 7th Parliament, has received wide recognition for his contributions to Ghana's democracy and governance. In 2021, he was honored with the

Parliamentarian of the Decade Award by the Millennium Excellence Foundation for his exceptional role in advancing national development and parliamentary democracy.

More recently, in 2024, Speaker Bagbin was bestowed with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 6th Annual Jacobs-Abbey Global Institute for Leadership Studies (JAGILS) Awards Night in Alexandria, Virginia, for his lifelong dedication to public service and leadership.

As the incoming government prepares for the 9th Parliament, Mr. Afenyo-Markin's call to retain Speaker Bagbin underscores the belief that his experience and leadership will continue to benefit Ghana's Legislature.



Alexander Afenyo-Markin, Outgoing Majority Leader



General News

15 NDC supporters accused of burning EC office granted GHS20,000 bail each

By Amanda Cartey

Fifteen supporters of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) accused of burning down the Electoral Commission (EC) office in Asuboi, Ayensuano Constituency, have been granted bail by the Osino District Court in the Eastern Region.

The incident took place on December 10, 2024, during a protest by a group known as Ayensuano Concerned Youth.

They were demonstrating against the declaration of Ida Adwoa Asiedu as the MP-elect for the constituency when the EC office was set on fire.

Each of the suspects, charged with arson [the criminal act of deliberately setting fire to property, typically with the intent to cause damage or destruction], was granted bail of GH¢20,000 with one surety. The decision, made by

His Lordship Salifu Bugri Ayagiba, came despite the prosecution's objections.

Detective Chief Inspector, Kamal Salifu Gumah opposed the bail, citing ongoing investigations and the risk of interference.

The defence lawyer argued that the suspects were well-known in the community and would comply with legal procedures. The court accepted this argument and scheduled the next hearing for January 14, 2025.

"The police alleged that some of the NDC members had gone to demolish the EC office at Ayensuano, so we had to come to court to help them and by God's grace, we were able to secure bail for them. We will come back to the case on January 14 2025."

He added that although the accused have been granted bail, they are

required to report to the Kibi police commander to ensure their availability.

Each of the fifteen individuals was granted bail of GH¢20,000. He further stated that the case remains

an accusation, and it is the evidence that will determine whether the individuals are guilty or not.

Thus, if the police fail to gather sufficient evidence, the case could be dismissed.



File Photo

"You can't afford to disappoint Ghanaians" - Bagbin tells Mahama

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Speaker of Parliament, Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, has urged President-elect John Dramani Mahama and Vice President-elect Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang to honor the trust Ghanaians have placed in them following their decisive victory in the December 7 elections.

Bagbin emphasized the substantial responsibility that accompanies their mandate, urging the new leadership to translate their campaign promise to "reset" Ghana into tangible actions that meet citizens' expectations.

"I applaud the president-elect, his excellency John Dramani Mahama and the vice president-elect her Excellency, Naana Jane Opoku Agyemang for scoring an emphatic victory and a heavy mandate of Ghanaians at the just-ended general elections.

I need not remind anyone of the saying that to whom much is given, much is expected. Your promise to reset Ghana has been massively endorsed by the voters, and you cannot afford to disappoint them," he added.

The Speaker of Parliament also expressed confidence that the legislature will play a pivotal role in supporting the success of the

Mahama administration.

He added that Parliament will serve as a crucial ally, ensuring that the promised reforms are carried out with transparency, integrity, and accountability.

"I trust Parliament will be a reliable partner and a gatekeeper to ensure a just delivery of that promise," Bagbin assured.

Meanwhile, Minority Leader Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson has assured Ghanaians that the incoming NDC government will honor the trust placed in them.

In a Facebook post on Monday, Dr. Forson expressed heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming support received in the 2024 general election.

He reaffirmed the NDC's steadfast commitment to serving the nation with diligence and responsibility.

"We will not betray your trust; we will serve with humility and integrity," he stated. Dr. Ato Forson emphasised that the NDC fully understands the responsibility entrusted to them and is determined to uphold it. According to him, the incoming NDC government will respect the Ghanaian people by rejecting impunity and greed while prioritising fairness, justice, and

development.

"We will work collaboratively to address the country's pressing challenges and restore confidence in leadership. We will work tirelessly to honour the trust you have placed in us," Dr. Ato Forson added. The Minority Leader also acknowledged the significant role Ghanaians played in voting for the NDC and expressed the party's resolve to remain accountable and

transparent in its governance," he added.

John Dramani Mahama is expected to assume the presidency once again on January 7, 2025, following his victory over Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia. Official results from the Electoral Commission (EC) show Mahama secured 56.55% of the votes, while Bawumia received 41.61%.



Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament

General News

ECOWAS hails Ghana's 2024 elections as model for African democracy

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Ghana's December 7, 2024, general elections have been widely praised as a significant achievement for democracy in West Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) commended the nation for conducting peaceful and credible elections, highlighting Ghana's role as a model for democratic governance in the region.

ECOWAS Chairman Bola Ahmed Tinubu lauded President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for his leadership during the electoral process.

Speaking at the ECOWAS summit in Abuja, Nigeria, Tinubu stated, "I congratulate President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and the people of Ghana for the successful election and urge all of us in the region to learn from this good democratic practice and prioritise our country's national unity to ensure the political stability of the region."

The presidential election concluded with former President John Dramani Mahama securing 56% of the vote, defeating Vice President Mahamudu

Bawumia, who received 41%. Mahama is set to be inaugurated on January 7, 2025, marking a return to the presidency after his previous tenure from 2012 to 2016.

The Electoral Commission of Ghana reported a voter turnout exceeding 60%, reflecting the level of public engagement in the democratic process. International observers, including those from ECOWAS, noted the elections were generally peaceful, while highlighting Ghana's reputation for political stability in a region often challenged by electoral disputes.

Mahama's victory also signifies a shift in Ghana's political landscape, ending the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) eight-year administration under President Akufo-Addo. The National Democratic Congress (NDC), led by Mahama, has pledged to address economic challenges, including a debt crisis that necessitated a \$3 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund earlier in the year.

Vice President Bawumia's early concession, according to these observers, emphasized the

importance of national unity and the continuation of Ghana's democratic traditions. ECOWAS leaders have therefore encouraged other West African nations to draw lessons

from Ghana's electoral process, underscoring the significance of peaceful elections in achieving political stability and fostering regional cooperation.



ECOWAS Leaders

One killed, 6 injured in clash over gold at Nyinahin

By Amanda Cartey

One person has been confirmed dead, while six others are in the hospital after a violent confrontation between miners and a group of unknown individuals at Nyinahin-Kasotie in the Ashanti Region.

Samuel Ayine, the Assembly Member for Kyekyewere, explained that on Monday, December 17, a group of armed young men showed up at a mining site, demanding gold and trying to take over the operations.

The armed group reportedly damaged the control board of an excavator and tried to seize the gold. The miners quickly alerted the local community, and people rushed to the site to stop the intruders from carrying out their plan.

The situation quickly turned violent, with gunshots causing one death and several people getting hurt. Furious locals set fire to the pickup trucks the intruders used.

The injured are being treated at the Mankranso Government Hospital, while the body of the deceased has

been taken to the morgue.

In the meantime, two people have been arrested and are being held at the Nyinahin Police Station as the

police investigate the incident.

"The police have arrested two people; the driver who drove them to the scene and another person

who sustained cutlass injuries as a result of the attack. The injured person is all at the Mankranso Hospital," he stated.



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Business

Govt records 19.75% over-subscription of Treasury Bills after election

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The government has seen a notable 19.75% oversubscription of treasury bills, just a week after President Mahama's election victory. This surge in demand for short-term government securities signals a positive shift in market sentiment, with investors expressing renewed confidence in the government's fiscal policies and future outlook. According to the Bank of Ghana's auction results, the sale of short-term government securities raised GH¢8.2 billion, with all bids accepted.

The 91-day treasury bills attracted the most interest, securing over GH¢6.74 billion, representing 82.1% of the total bids. The 182-day bills raised GH¢951.67 million, while the 364-day bills brought in GH¢508.15 million. Interest rates also saw an uptick,

with the yield on the 91-day bill rising by 17 basis points to 27.77%. The yield on the 182-day bill increased to 28.49% from 28.32% the previous week, and the 364-day bill yield rose by 3 basis points to 29.94%.

The oversubscription of treasury bills reflects growing confidence in the government's fiscal policies and signals optimism about the incoming Mahama administration's economic leadership.

The outcome of this auction serves as a favorable economic indicator, with substantial demand from both local and international investors for Ghana's short-term debt instruments.

As the Mahama administration prepares to take office, the strong demand for treasury bills provides a solid foundation for its economic agenda. The new government is expected to leverage this momentum

to stabilize the economy and foster investor confidence through effective fiscal measures.

With interest rates nearing 30%, Ghana's short-term securities

continue to attract significant investor interest, underscoring the importance of maintaining prudent economic policies to sustain this positive trajectory.



Ghana Cedi Notes

Kosmos Energy backs out of Tullow Oil deal negotiations

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Kosmos Energy has announced that it has backed down on plans to purchase Tullow Oil. This puts an end to earlier rumors about a possible merger that started circulating after media reports earlier this month.

The proposed all-share merger, which was first confirmed on December 12, 2024, was still in its early stages before the companies began their detailed checks.

If the deal had gone through, it was expected to significantly improve oil production in Africa.

However, in a statement on December 17, 2024, Tullow Oil's Board said they are confident in the company's future on its own.

"The Board of Tullow notes the announcement from Kosmos Energy Ltd confirming that it does not intend to make an offer for the Company following an announcement on 12 December 2024 regarding a possible all-share offer by Kosmos for the Company", the release mentioned.

Tullow Oil mentioned that it is working on improving its finances and dealing with upcoming debt payments.

This comes after progress in the Branch Profits Remittance tax issue, with a final decision expected soon. Tullow emphasized that it is focused on improving its financial health and creating value for its shareholders as it continues to

move forward on its own.

The decision to withdraw from the merger offer comes as Tullow continues to strengthen its operations and finances in the energy sector.

Despite the recent interest in being taken over, the company is committed to delivering value to its shareholders and following its own plans.



File Photo



International

800 arrested over Nigerian crypto-romance scam

Source: Africa News

Nigeria's anti-graft agency has arrested 792 suspects in a major raid on a building allegedly used as a hub for international online fraud.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) said the suspects, including 148 Chinese and 40 Filipino nationals, were detained on December 10 at the seven-storey Big Leaf Building in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital.

According to EFCC spokesperson Wilson Uwujaren, the luxury building operated as a call center targeting victims from the Americas and Europe. Fraudsters lured people through social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram, offering romance or fake investment opportunities, particularly in

cryptocurrency.

Once trust was gained, victims were pressured to transfer funds into fraudulent schemes. Uwujaren said Nigerian accomplices initially

contacted victims, while their foreign partners handled the defrauding process.

The EFCC seized computers, phones, and vehicles during the raid

and is working with international partners to investigate possible links to organized crime.



File Photo

New HIV prevention drug could reach poorest countries by 2025, says health official

Source: Reuters

A new long-acting preventive HIV drug could reach the world's poorest countries by the end of 2025 or early 2026, a global health official told Reuters on Tuesday.

The ambition is to start deliveries of Gilead Sciences' Lenacapavir on that timeline, said Hui Yang, head of supply operations at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

However, she said a lot of things need to happen first, including the injectable drug receiving regulatory approvals from authorities like the United States Food and Drug Administration and the World Health Organization.

Lenacapavir is already approved for use as a treatment for multi-drug resistant HIV, costing around \$42,250 for the first year of therapy in the United States. Clinical trials this year showed it is also very effective at preventing infection and Gilead is seeking approvals for the new use globally.

"We don't want...low and low-middle income countries to wait, to be at the back of the line," when these approvals come in, said Yang, an equality issue that has plagued

the fight against HIV for decades.

To avoid this, the Global Fund said on Tuesday it would join forces with the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), with funding from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to support affordable access to the pricey drug

in countries they work with "from day one".

The groups did not provide further details on how this may work, other than saying they aimed to reach at least two million people over three years.

Gilead signed deals in October this year with six generic drugmakers to make and sell lenacapavir more cheaply in 120 low and middle-

income countries. The move was criticized for leaving out countries, especially in Latin America.

No deal has yet been signed with Gilead or any of these generic producers, Yang said, but they will work with all the companies involved.

Gilead Sciences did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



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