

## ‘I won’t depend on politicians’ - Asantehene reaches out to World Bank for Kumasi’s devt

Page 7



## Appointments Committee vets Ato Forson, 2 other appointees today

Page 5



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# General News

## Mahama cuts down ministries from 30 to 23 to reduce govt expenditure

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

President John Dramani Mahama has announced a reduction in the number of ministries under his administration from 30 to 23, a move aimed at streamlining governance and enhancing efficiency across various sectors.

This decision was formalized on January 9 through an Executive Instrument, in accordance with Section 11(3) of the Civil Service Act, 1993 (P.N.D.C.L. 327).

The newly established ministries are as follows: Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Health; Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Energy and Green Transition; Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Sports and Recreation; Office of the Attorney-General and Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources; Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology, and Innovations.

Others include the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology; Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment; Ministry of Works, Housing, and Water Resources; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Creative Arts; Ministry of Labour, Jobs, and Employment; Ministry of Food and Agriculture; Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture; and the

Ministry of Trade, Agribusiness, and Industry.

This restructuring, part of the government's efforts to reduce expenditure, has led to the merging of several ministries. Notably, the National Security Ministry, Public Enterprises Ministry, Parliamentary Affairs Ministry, Railway Development Ministry, and Ministry of Information have been dissolved. To facilitate the changes, the Civil Service (Ministries) Instrument, 2021 (E.I. 12) has been officially revoked.

The decision has sparked mixed reactions among political commentators and policy analysts. Some have welcomed the reduction, viewing it as a positive step toward reducing government spending, while

others remain skeptical about its long-term impact.

Bright Simons, Vice President of IMANI Africa, commented that the reduction from 30 to 23 ministries appears more as a response to public sentiment than genuine reform. He emphasized that the thousands of workers in the collapsed ministries are likely to be redistributed rather than removed from the government payroll, which could undermine the intended cost-saving objectives.

Legal practitioner Prof. Stephen Kwaku Asare praised the reduction but raised concerns over the use of an Executive Instrument to implement such significant structural changes. He argued that this approach could set a precedent for future administrations

to make arbitrary adjustments without sufficient parliamentary oversight.

Meanwhile, the Communication for Development and Advocacy Consult (CDA Consult) has recommended that President Mahama consider further reforms by abolishing the Regional Minister portfolio. The organization suggests that this move would enhance governance efficiency, foster national growth, and strengthen existing decentralization structures.

President Mahama's ministry reduction policy continues to generate debate as stakeholders assess its potential impact on public administration and fiscal discipline.



*John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana*

## Don't fail your constituents who defended you with their lives - Speaker charges new MPs

By **Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**

Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, has urged newly elected Members of Parliament (MPs) to prioritize addressing the pressing challenges faced by their constituents and the nation.

He reminded the MPs of their duty to honor the sacrifices made by the electorate who entrusted them with leadership.

Speaking at an orientation session for first-time MPs, Speaker Bagbin

underscored the significant responsibility lawmakers carry in safeguarding the future of the citizens they represent. He emphasized that many constituents have devoted their lives to supporting the political ambitions of their representatives and deserve committed service in return.

"You are a role model. The lives of so many people depend on you. Don't fail them. This is what touches my heart. As you go around, you recollect how

- *Continue on page 3*



*Alban Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament*

# General News

## ***Don't fail your constituents who defended you with their lives - Speaker charges new MPs***

*- Continued from page 2*

people are fighting for you, not just during the elections, but even today in the villages, defending you with their lives. And you are here, taking it easy and toying with their future.”

“It is not fair at all, and the Almighty God himself will not bless you because you don't need that blessing. And it is

true. Whatever you sow, you reap. So, don't think that you do good for any other person. You do it for yourself,” he advised.

The 9th Parliament of Ghana, inaugurated on January 7, 2025, welcomed 115 first-term legislators alongside 156 continuing MPs and

four returning members, making up the 276-seat chamber.

The first sitting saw the election of Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin as Speaker, with Bernard Ahiafor and Andrew Asiamah Amoako elected as First and Second Deputy Speakers, respectively.

Following the inauguration, Parliament suspended its first meeting until January 21, 2025, to allow for the vetting of ministerial nominees and an orientation workshop aimed at equipping the new MPs with essential knowledge on parliamentary procedures and their legislative responsibilities.

## **NIB Director threatens lawsuit against ORAL member over illegal El Wak land acquisition claim**

*By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

The legal representation of Nana Attobrah Quaicoe, the Director-General of the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB), has refuted allegations that their client contacted the Operation Recover All Loot (ORAL) Committee in relation to the return of a state land parcel allegedly acquired unlawfully.

The accusations, made by ORAL Committee member Martin Kpebu, claimed that Mr. Quaicoe had agreed to relinquish the land in exchange for the committee ceasing further actions against him. These assertions were made during a TV3 appearance on the “Keypoints” show, where Kpebu

implicated Mr. Quaicoe in dealings involving government land.

In response, the legal team, represented by KUDZE, KUDZE@LAW, issued a statement on behalf of Mr. Quaicoe, describing the allegations as “contrived, false, and without any basis.” The statement categorically denied that Mr. Quaicoe had engaged with any member of the ORAL Committee, including Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, on matters related to state land.

Furthermore, the statement clarified that Mr. Quaicoe neither owns nor holds any illegally acquired government land, directly countering Kpebu's claims. “Mr. Quaicoe is

committed to transparency and legal processes, and the accusations levied against him are entirely baseless,” the statement read. It added that the allegations appeared to be part of an effort to damage Mr. Quaicoe's reputation.

The legal team urged the public to disregard these false statements, which they believe are intended to harm their client's standing. They also demanded a retraction from Martin Kpebu, warning that failure to do so could result in legal action to protect Mr. Quaicoe's name and rights.

The statement concluded with a firm reaffirmation from the legal team, led by Saviour Quarcoo Kudze,

emphasizing their commitment to defending Mr. Quaicoe's integrity and ensuring that the truth prevails.

Background on ORAL Committee

The Operation Recover All Loot (ORAL) Committee was established by former President John Dramani Mahama on December 18, 2024, with the primary objective of recovering unlawfully acquired state assets, particularly those obtained under previous administrations. The committee, led by Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, is tasked with promoting accountability in government dealings and restoring public trust in the management of state assets.



**Martin Kpebu, ORAL Committee member**

# General News

## Food crisis in SHSs: Govt to meet CHASS, other stakeholders today

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The government is set to engage with the leadership of the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS) and other key stakeholders today to address the ongoing food shortages affecting several Senior High Schools (SHS) across the country.

Reports of food shortages in multiple senior high schools have become widespread, prompting CHASS to call on parents and guardians to provide additional food supplies for their children.

Former Ranking Member on the Education Committee and Member of Parliament for Builsa South, Dr. Clement Apaak, has assured the public that efforts are underway to resolve the issue.

He disclosed that the Chief of Staff, Julius Debrah, has already begun consultations with the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Chief Director

of the Ministry of Education regarding the crisis.

“We are constrained, but even so, I can tell you that the Chief of Staff, Julius Debrah, has held a meeting with the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service and the Chief Director of the Ministry of Education on this very matter. I can also state authoritatively that, on Monday, the Chief of Staff is going to meet with the leadership again. In the background, we’ve been doing a lot to try and address the immediate challenges even as we look towards implementing the policy proposals that were presented to Ghanaians during the election campaign,” Dr. Apaak stated.

Dr. Apaak reiterated the Mahama administration’s commitment to the Free SHS policy, emphasizing that the government remains focused on ensuring its success.

“We are not oblivious and we are not sleeping; we are working. Ghanaian parents and the good people of this

Republic should rest assured that John Mahama is going to deliver on his promise to sustain and improve it,” he affirmed.

The National Food Suppliers Association has also cited a lack of a clear payment plan as the reason for its inability to supply food to the

affected schools.

The association further expressed concerns over whether the current administration would honor agreements made by the previous government regarding the supply of food to SHSs.



SHS Dining Hall

## World Bank pledges \$30m for Ghana’s irrigation systems devt

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The World Bank has committed to providing \$30 million to close the funding gap for the Food Systems Resilience Programme (FSRP), aimed at improving irrigation farming and increasing agricultural productivity in Ghana.

The announcement was made on January 11, 2025, by Ousmane Diagana, the Regional Vice President for Western and Central Africa, during his visit to the Kpong Irrigation Scheme and Kpong Left Bank Irrigation System sites in Ghana.

“There’s a \$30 million funding gap to see the full completion of this project. We’re a long-standing partner for Ghana in every area, and we will be happy, of course, to consider adding financing if necessary. So, this is absolutely possible,” Mr. Diagana said. The pledge is part of the World Bank’s broader efforts to address food security and resilience across the region. Currently, Ghana’s

irrigable land remains significantly underutilized, with only about 1.6% of its land equipped with irrigation, compared to the regional average of 13.9%.

The World Bank estimates that Ghana has 1.9 million hectares of land suitable for irrigation, but only 1.6% of this land is currently irrigated. This is considerably lower than the West and Central Africa average of 13.9%, which impacts the country’s agricultural productivity and food security.

Mr. Diagana emphasized the critical role of agriculture in job creation and income generation, stating that “no country can develop without investing in its agriculture.”

He also praised the progress of irrigation projects in Asutwaa and Kpong, noting that a productivity rate of six tonnes per hectare is a promising practice.

Additionally, Mr. Diagana highlighted

Ghana’s strategic location, which makes it a key access point to neighboring countries. He reassured that the World Bank would continue supporting efforts to expand irrigation projects aimed at improving food resilience and security.

Mr. Osei Owusu Agyeman, the Project Coordinator for the FSRP, explained that the project adopts flexible and sustainable approaches to help vulnerable households, farmers, and communities better cope with the challenges and uncertainties of food production and distribution.



File photo

# General News

## Appointments Committee vets Ato Forson, 2 other appointees today

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

The Appointments Committee of Parliament, chaired by Bernard Ahiafor, will commence the vetting of ministers-designate today at 9:00 a.m., following the nomination of three key ministers by President John Dramani Mahama.

The nominees scheduled for vetting include Dr. Cassiel Ato Baah Forson, Minister-designate for the Ministry of Finance; John Abdulai Jinapor, Minister-designate for the Ministry of Energy; and Dr. Dominic Akuritinga Ayine, Minister-designate for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General.

Dr. Forson, nominated for the Finance Ministry, previously served as Deputy Finance Minister under the former National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration. He is an economist, chartered accountant, and tax practitioner with extensive expertise in public finance, macroeconomics, fiscal and tax policy, and business management.

His academic credentials include

a PhD in Finance from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and Master's degrees in Taxation and Economics from the University of Oxford and KNUST. He also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from London South Bank University.

John Abdulai Jinapor, the nominee for the Ministry of Energy, brings vast experience in energy economics and finance. His academic qualifications include a Master of Arts in Economic Policy Management, an MBA in Marketing, and a Master of Science in Development Finance from the University of Ghana. Additionally, he holds a Master of Science in Energy Economics from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Finance and Financial Law from the University of London.

Dr. Dominic Akuritinga Ayine, the Minister-designate for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, is a seasoned legal expert with previous service as Deputy Attorney General. His legal expertise is expected to

strengthen the administration of justice in Ghana.

These nominations are being considered at a critical time, as the Ghana Grid Company Limited (GRIDCo) has indicated the urgent need for US\$89.90 million to avert a potential power crisis and sustain the country's energy generation capacity.

Regarding further appointments, President Mahama has assured the public that his full cabinet will be announced by January 24, addressing concerns about the pace of his ministerial appointments. This assurance follows criticism from Minority Leader Alexander Afenyo-Markin, who described the President's gradual approach to forming his government as "tot-tot."



Dr. Cassiel Ato Baah Forson, Minister-designate for the Ministry of Finance

## Ejura Police station torched over death of suspect in custody; security presence intensified

By **Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**

Tensions in Ejura flared last Saturday when residents stormed the Ejura Police Station, set it on fire, and forcibly removed the body of a suspect who had died in police custody.

The incident follows the arrest of the suspect, who was detained on the evening of January 10, for an alleged theft.

The Ghana Police Service provided details of the events in a statement issued on January 11, indicating that the suspect, who had been in custody while investigations were ongoing, began feeling unwell

around 2:20 am on January 11.

He was immediately taken to the Ejura Government Hospital for medical treatment but tragically passed away later that morning. Before his body could be transferred to the morgue for preservation and an autopsy, some community members, angered by his death, attacked the police station.

The mob set fire to the station and forcibly took the body. Efforts to de-escalate the situation, including discussions with local leaders, helped bring the unrest

- Continue on page 6



Ejura Police station set on fire

# General News

## ***Ejura Police station torched over death of suspect in custody; security presence intensified***

- Continued from page 5

under control. There were no reports of injuries, and the military was deployed to assist in maintaining peace and order. The Ghana National Fire Service also responded swiftly to extinguish the flames at the police station.

In light of the incident, a joint military and police force has been stationed in Ejura to prevent

further violence and ensure law and order. Reports indicate that the youth have abandoned the town, with the security forces now patrolling the area.

The Member of Parliament for Ejura Sekyeredumase, Bawa Braimah, has called for an autopsy on the deceased to determine the cause of death, adding to the

growing public demand for clarity on the matter.

Barima Osei Hwedie II, the Ejurahene, expressed concerns about the negative impact of the violence on the town's reputation. "Ejura is getting a bad name due to the negative behavior of the youth in the community," he said. "This town, which has been described

as a hotspot, is preventing people from investing in the area, which could create employment opportunities for the youth."

The Ejurahene also stated that the traditional council is engaging with security chiefs and other stakeholders to find a long-term solution to the unrest and restore peace to the community.

## **Police to probe 2020/24 electoral deaths upon Mahama's orders**

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

The Office of the President, led by John Mahama, has formally petitioned the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, to launch an immediate investigation into the deaths of Ghanaians during the 2020 and 2024 general elections.

In a letter addressed to the IGP, the Office described the incidents as "a lasting scar on our democratic process," emphasizing the need for justice for the victims and their families.

The letter recommended several measures to ensure a comprehensive and transparent investigation, including the establishment of a dedicated investigative taskforce within the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) to focus solely on these cases for undivided attention and efficient handling.

It further proposed collaboration with witnesses and families, urging investigators to conduct thorough interviews with eyewitnesses, victims' families, and other relevant individuals who may provide crucial information.

Additionally, the statement called for a review of electoral security arrangements to examine the actions of security personnel deployed at the affected polling stations and determine their involvement or oversight in the tragic incidents.

The letter also emphasized the importance of forensic analysis, urging the use of advanced forensic techniques to analyze any physical

evidence from the crime scenes, including bullet casings, weaponry, and other materials.

The President's Office encouraged collaboration with electoral bodies, stating, "Work with the Electoral Commission and other relevant agencies to review reports from the 2020 and 2024 elections for additional context."

To ensure public trust, the Office of the President requested periodic updates on the progress of the investigation, stressing that it would help keep stakeholders informed and assure the public of the commitment to uncovering the truth.

Speaking at the National Muslim

Prayer and Thanksgiving event at the National Mosque in Accra on Friday, January 10, Mr. Mahama reiterated the need for justice.

"If these continue and justice is not served, then what it does is breed impunity. And that's why, as a party, we have said that we must investigate and find out what led to these killings so that we can take action to prevent such occurrences in the future."

The call comes after the deaths of approximately eight Ghanaians during the 2020 elections and about six more in the recently concluded 2024 polls. Several electorates were injured during these two electoral processes.

The Office of the President expressed confidence in the professionalism of the CID, stating, "We are confident in the competence and professionalism of the Criminal Investigations Department and trust that your efforts will yield the necessary results to bring justice to the victims and their families while preserving the integrity of Ghana's democratic process."

Meanwhile, the President has urged Dr. Dominic Akuritinga Ayine, the Minister-designate for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, to prioritize determining fair compensation for the families of those who lost their lives during the 2020 and 2024 general elections once he assumes office.



**Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, Inspector General of Police (IGP)**

# General News

## 'I won't depend on politicians' - Asantehene reaches out to World Bank for Kumasi's devt

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II has emphasized his preference for independent development efforts in Kumasi, stating he will not rely on Ghanaian politicians for the city's progress.

The Asantehene made this assertion during a courtesy visit by the World Bank Vice President for Western and Central Africa, Ousmane Diagana. He called on the World Bank to support infrastructure improvements in Kumasi, particularly highlighting the need for a mass transit system to ease congestion and boost economic activity.

He expressed concern over delays in critical interventions, including addressing excess energy costs, reviving budgetary support, and advancing the Kumasi Rapid Transport Project.

Citing one of the most important stalemate projects; the Kumasi

Rapid Transport Project, which aims to improve urban mobility and economic productivity, he criticized the bureaucracy in the political system that has crippled his dependency on politicians for development for his city, Asanteman.

In light of this, he called on the World Bank to partner with him by signing a social contract to accelerate development in the Ashanti Region. "Kumasi is the commercial hub of Ghana, but the increasing population and congestion are costing the economy dearly. We cannot continue running projects for Kumasi from Accra.

This is slowing progress. Let's own the project and implement it quickly. It has been nearly 10 years of discussions, and if this project had been implemented earlier, the benefits in terms of employment and economic growth would have been immense. I do not depend on politicians for development. so, let's have a social contract and then we

do it," he stated.

According to him, "the 28-kilometer rapid transport line from Ejisu to Abuakwa can ease this burden by facilitating the movement of goods and passengers and creating much-needed employment.

The Asantehene advocated for the decentralization of project management, urging that the project office and coordinator be based in Kumasi to enable effective stakeholder coordination.



Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II

## Halt sale, lease of state lands - Lands Commission ordered

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

President John Dramani Mahama has directed the Lands Commission to immediately cease all activities related to the sale, lease, or processing of transactions involving state and public lands.

This directive, issued through a statement dated January 10, 2025, and signed by Dr. Callistus Mahama, Secretary to the President, aims to protect state lands for the collective benefit of citizens and future generations.

"All ongoing and pending transactions must be halted without delay to facilitate a comprehensive review of the current framework governing the management of State and Public Lands," the statement emphasized.

The Executive Secretary of the Lands Commission has also been

instructed to submit a detailed report on all recent and ongoing transactions involving state and public lands to the Office of the President within 14 days of the communication.

In a related event, Lead of the Operation Recover All Loot (ORAL) team, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, has announced that ORAL swiftly intervened on Saturday morning following a distress petition from government workers occupying four bungalows behind the State House.

The bungalows were under threat of demolition by a private developer who allegedly sent thugs, claiming to have purchased the land last year.

In a Facebook post, Ablakwa stated, "President Mahama's National Security Committee has immediately moved in to protect the bungalows."

He further noted, the government workers who are staff of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Gender, Children and Social Protection have been directed not to move out of their bungalows as demanded.

Ablakwa reiterated President

Mahama's stance: "President Mahama says no government bungalow is for sale. Notice is hereby served that those faceless private developers may proceed for a refund from whoever they purportedly bought the state lands from."



Lands Commission



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# Business

## 2025 budget must remove taxes hindering business growth, job creation - Financial expert

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

**C**hief Executive Officer of Dalex Finance, Joe Jackson, has emphasized the need for the 2025 budget to focus on eliminating taxes that hinder business growth and job creation. He stated that the budget will reflect President John Mahama's commitment to partnering with the private sector to reset the economy.

"When the 2025 budget comes out, then we will see whether those taxes that have been removed are indeed growth-friendly and will create the right environment for businesses to create jobs. The 2025 budget will also show us how the government is planning to use the 24-Hour Economy Programme to assist the private sector in creating the required jobs," Mr. Jackson remarked.

He further stressed the importance of the budget setting a clear tone for the business community regarding the government's dedication to economic transformation.

"Within the context of an International

Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and a challenging economic environment, we also want to see how the private sector will be prioritized so we can deliver the jobs needed," he added.

Mr. Jackson also highlighted the significance of the budget in signaling Ghana's attractiveness to foreign investors, stating, "The budget will also send signals to investors that the government is committed to attracting the needed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to develop the economy."

President Mahama, in his inaugural speech at the Black Star Square, reaffirmed his intention to engage the private sector in efforts to reset the economy. He pledged to review and rationalize the current tax regime to address concerns raised by businesses across the country.

In his address, President Mahama assured private sector operators that Ghana is now "open for business," calling for collaborative efforts to drive economic growth and job creation.

Echoing similar concerns, the Executive Secretary of the Ghana Real Estate Development Association (GREDA), Samuel Amegayibor, welcomed the President's pledge to review the tax structure.

"President John Mahama has promised to review the current tax regime, and that should come as good news for us as real estate players. We also want the new administration to pay great attention to firmly stabilizing the cedi," Mr. Amegayibor

said.

He pointed out the recurring depreciation of the cedi as a major challenge, calling for urgent measures to stabilize the currency and bring relief to stakeholders in the built environment.

"The cedi normally comes under pressure in the first quarter of every year, and everything must be done to ensure that we witness some stability," he added.



*Joe Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Dalex Finance*

## Restricted supply projected to surge cocoa prices in 2025

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

**C**ocoa prices are expected to surge in 2025, with projections indicating a potential rise to as high as US\$9,600 per metric tonne (pmt) due to tight global supply conditions.

According to Databank's 2025 projections, "The European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), effective in early 2025, will further restrict supply availability; likely keeping prices elevated amid strong global demand for chocolate."

This forecast follows a remarkable price increase in 2024, when cocoa prices nearly doubled by mid-November, reaching US\$8,523 from an initial US\$4,916. The 73.4 percent rise was driven by supply shortages in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, exacerbated by the impact of El Niño on yields, as well as growing global demand for chocolate.

By December 2024, global cocoa prices hit US\$10.32 per kilogram,

marking a 30.73 percent increase from November and a staggering 145.2 percent rise from December 2023.

However, the domestic cocoa industry in Ghana has faced significant challenges, particularly in securing funding. Inefficiency on the part of the industry regulator, Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), has been cited as a major factor. Last year, COCOBOD struggled to raise its annual syndicated loan from its usual partners, preventing local farmers from fully benefiting from the price increase.

In response, COCOBOD announced a significant cocoa price increase for the 2024-2025 season, setting the price at GH¢48,000 per tonne, equivalent to GH¢3,000 per 64-kilogramme bag. This marked a 129.36 percent increase from the previous season. However, civil society groups argued that this price, approximately US\$185 at the time, was still insufficient for the farmers.

As the industry prepares for the EU's

new deforestation regulation, the local cocoa sector faces significant challenges. The EUDR mandates that cocoa commodities entering the EU market must be traceable and proven to be deforestation-free post-December 2020. While the regulation aims to reduce environmental degradation, it imposes additional burdens on cocoa producers.

In response to these new challenges, the government has launched a

National Cocoa Management System (NCMS), which includes a Cocoa Traceability System to help meet EUDR requirements.

The system will map cocoa farms and ensure compliance with deforestation-free standards. However, the implementation of this system remains resource-intensive, posing further obstacles for local producers.



*Cocoa*

# International

## Sudan's military takes back strategic city from RSF forces

**S**udan's military and its allies have taken back a strategic city from the rebel Rapid Support Forces, officials confirmed.

The recapture of the city of Wad Medani, the capital of Gezira province, came more than a year after it fell to the RSF. Wad Medani had previously been a safe haven for displaced families in the early months of the war.

The conflict in Sudan started in April 2023 when simmering tensions between the leaders of the military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and other cities across the sprawling northeastern African country.

The conflict has killed more than

28,000 people, forced millions to flee their homes and left some families eating grass in a desperate attempt to survive as famine swept parts of the country.

It has been marked by gross atrocities including ethnically motivated killing and rape, according to the United Nations and rights groups.

The International Criminal Court said it was investigating alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The military said in a statement that its forces had entered Wad Medani early Saturday and that they were working to "clear the rebels' remnants inside the city."

**Source: Africanews**



**Sudan's military**

## Angola holds high-level meeting on Cholera outbreak

**O**n 11 January, WHO took part in a high-level meeting convened by the Minister of Health at the General Hospital of Cacuaco to address Angola's cholera.

WHO commended the Government's actions to effectively coordinate a multisector team, timely detect and respond to the outbreak including promptly sharing information with all relevant authorities in compliance with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005).

The outbreak has so far affected three provinces—Luanda, Icolo e Bengo, and Bengo—with 119 confirmed cases reported as of 10 January 2025. The first case was reported on 5th January 2025. The high level meeting brought together high level representatives, including 3 ministers, from multiple ministries, including Education, Tourism, Energy and Water, Social Communication, Higher Education, Social Affairs, Agriculture, Environment, and Territorial Administration, as well as the CEO of EPAL, Angola's national water company. Key health development partners such as UNICEF and the World Bank also participated.

The Ministry of Health presented a detailed response plan to tackle the outbreak, outlining strategies for containment and mitigation. WHO

raised concerns about the high case fatality rate, emphasizing the need for immediate and strengthened actions at both the community and hospital levels to reduce mortality rates.

Preparedness efforts in provinces not yet affected by the outbreak were commended, while the global challenge of vaccine scarcity was highlighted. WHO noted that, with many countries currently experiencing cholera outbreaks and limited vaccine doses available in the global stockpiled managed by the International Coordinating Group (ICG), it remains committed to advocating for vaccine allocations to Angola.

A feedback session followed, during which several critical issues were addressed:

WHO emphasized the importance of working with traditional leaders to encourage the use of oral rehydration solutions in communities, particularly for patients traveling to healthcare facilities.

Strengthening case management and hospital interventions was identified as an immediate priority.

The need for improved water and sanitation infrastructure including hygiene was highlighted, with EPAL

recognized as a key player in ensuring clean water access.

Since the onset of the outbreak, WHO has provided critical support, which includes assistance in risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), surveillance, case management, logistics, and documentation.

WHO reiterated their commitment together with the UN and other

partners in supporting the Government in ensuring the cholera outbreak is contained within the shortest possible time.

The meeting concluded with a brief field visit to the General Hospital of Cacuaco, allowing participants to assess the conditions and immediate needs on the ground.

**Source: WHO**



**Angola's Ministry of Health and WHO held a high-level meeting**

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