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# General News

## Recalled Coca-Cola products with excessive chlorate levels not in Ghana - FDA assuages fears

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) has assured the public that the unsafe Coca-Cola products recalled by the manufacturing facility in Belgium are not available in Ghana. Coca-Cola Belgium recently withdrew certain soft drinks from the European market after excessive levels of chlorate were detected in bottles and cans at one of its manufacturing facilities in Belgium.

This clarification comes after claims suggested that the affected products, which bear production codes 328 GE to 338 GE and were recalled between November 23 and December 3, 2024, had found their way into the country. However, in a press statement issued on January 29, the FDA explained that these products, which were recalled in Europe, are not sold in Ghana.

The products in question, including bottled Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Tropicana, Minute Maid, canned Appletiser, Coca-Cola Zero Sugar, Diet Coke, and Sprite Zero, had production codes between 328 GE and 338 GE, which are located at the base of the cans.

"The affected products were recalled across Europe due to the presence of high levels of chlorate," the FDA statement read. "However, all Coca-Cola products available in Ghana are imported from authorized countries such as Algeria, Liberia, South Africa, Tunisia, Nigeria, the UK, the USA, and Canada. These products are fully approved for sale in Ghana."

The FDA further reassured the public

that locally produced Coca-Cola items adhere to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and are properly registered.

In a statement on Tuesday, Coca-Cola confirmed that specific batches of Coca-Cola, Fanta, Sprite, Minute Maid,

and Fuze Tea were recalled in Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The company also mentioned being in contact with authorities in a few other European countries, including France, Germany, and Great Britain, where a small quantity of the affected

products had been shipped.

The FDA's clarification is intended to alleviate concerns and confirm that the safety of Coca-Cola products in the Ghanaian market remains uncompromised.



Coca-Cola

## YEA must move from sanitation issues to become an innovation hub for the youth – George Opare Addo

By Amanda Cartey

Minister for Youth Development and Empowerment, George Opare Addo, has called for a reimagining of the Youth Employment Agency (YEA), urging that it be transformed from a program primarily focused on sanitation-related jobs to an innovation hub aimed at empowering young people.

During a recent working visit to the agency, Mr. Opare Addo emphasized that YEA should evolve into a center

for nurturing ideas, providing financial support, and equipping youth with the necessary resources to contribute meaningfully to the country's development.

"I believe YEA is bigger than just putting people out there to sweep. It is bigger than simply addressing sanitation issues. YEA should become an innovation hub, where ideas are generated, funding is sought, and resources are provided, so that young people can make significant

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George Opare Addo, Minister of Youth Development and Empowerment

# General News

## YEA must move from sanitation issues to become an innovation hub for the youth – George Opare Addo

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contributions to the development of this country,” he stated.

The minister further underscored the importance of President John Mahama’s commitment to youth empowerment, noting that the establishment of a dedicated ministry for youth aligns with the president’s vision for sustainable growth and development among young people.

“And this is exactly what the vision of His Excellency stands for. President Mahama wants to empower people, which is why he established a ministry solely focused on youth development and empowerment. The

key word here is empowerment,” Mr. Opare Addo said.

He emphasized that true empowerment goes beyond simply developing young people; it is about equipping them with the skills and resources to thrive independently and meaningfully contribute to the nation’s progress.

“Just developing the people and not empowering them means nothing. We must focus on how we can empower our youth, so that when they move on from us, they are able to stand on their own and play a meaningful role

in the development of this country,” he added.

As part of his vision, Mr. Opare Addo has vowed to champion a comprehensive policy framework aimed at transforming youth development in Ghana, describing it as one of the most ambitious and transformative initiatives in the country’s history.

He further emphasized that his vision centers on reshaping the mindset of young people and equipping them to actively contribute to the progress of Ghana.

“The Ghana we want requires the active participation of the youth, who make up the majority of the population. Resetting Ghana means re-engaging the youth, reorienting their minds, and building a future that we can all be proud of,” he stated during his recent vetting by the Appointments Committee of Parliament.

Mr. Opare Addo’s vision signals a bold step toward not only addressing youth employment but also empowering young Ghanaians to drive national development in innovative and sustainable ways.

## Govt to terminate \$1bn Pwalugu Dam contract after engaging A-G - Agriculture Minister

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Minister for Food and Agriculture, Eric Opoku, has revealed that the government intends to terminate the contract for the Pwalugu Dam project, initially launched by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) administration.

Speaking to journalists following a three-day tour of various departments and agencies under his ministry, Mr. Opoku emphasized the need for a revised plan to ensure the successful completion of the project.

“We will terminate that contract immediately. We’ll cancel the Pwalugu contract, seek a new contractor, secure funding, and then promptly ensure the execution of the project,” he stated.

Addressing concerns regarding potential judgement debt implications, the minister assured that the Attorney-General’s Department would be consulted to thoroughly investigate the matter before any official termination.

“Before we proceed with termination, we’ll refer the case to the Attorney-General’s Department for their advice. However, we are committed to ensuring the Pwalugu project moves forward, and I can assure you that it will be a flagship project for President John Mahama in the North,” he added.

The Pwalugu multipurpose dam project, initiated by the previous NPP government in 2019, was secured under a \$993 million contract. It was

designed as a hybrid energy system, combining 60 MW of hydropower with 50 MW of solar power to manage excess water from the Bagre Dam, mitigate recurring flooding issues in northern Ghana, and improve irrigation systems.

Despite an initial target for completion in 2024, the Ghana Irrigation Development Authority (GIDA) has reported that, while \$12 million has been allocated for initial

preparations and site development, actual construction has yet to begin.

The project was set to include the construction of a Roller Compacted Concrete dam with a height of 168 meters above sea level near the Pwalugu Bridge on the White Volta River. The proposed reservoir would span 262 square kilometers, while a powerhouse with two Kaplan turbines would have an installed capacity of 60 megawatts. The plan also included a

50 MW solar power plant, a 20-meter high water weir, and a canal network designed to irrigate approximately 25,000 hectares of land.

As the government moves forward with a revised strategy, the future of the Pwalugu Dam project remains pivotal to addressing northern Ghana’s flooding and irrigation challenges.



Eric Opoku, Minister for Food and Agriculture

# General News

## Renaming FWSC into a Bureau key to fairer wage negotiations – Labour Minister-designate

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

**L**abour, Jobs, and Employment Minister-designate, Rashid Pelpuo, has suggested renaming the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC) to the Bureau of Remuneration and Productivity, arguing that the change would better reflect the organization's true purpose and the goals of labor negotiations.

During his appearance before Parliament's Appointments Committee on Thursday, January 30, Mr. Pelpuo explained that the proposal was inspired by a suggestion from a labor activist. After careful consideration, he expressed his belief that the name change would more accurately align with the commission's role in balancing worker productivity

with fair compensation.

"We should consider renaming it the Bureau of Remuneration and Productivity. By framing it this way, we capture the true essence of the commission. It should focus on the fact that, yes, I have produced, but I must also earn something in return. How much have I produced, and how much will I earn? That alignment is crucial for effective negotiations," Mr. Pelpuo said.

The minister-designate also emphasized his commitment to working with the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC) to ensure that workers' productivity is fairly reflected in their compensation. He highlighted the importance of listening to the concerns of workers, stating that understanding and empathizing

with their needs are critical to addressing labor-related issues.

"A key factor in addressing labor issues is to listen to workers, appreciate what they are asking for, and offer solutions. I believe I have the composure to do this. To listen, empathize, and help them understand the broader context. That's why I support the idea of renaming the commission," he added. He also credited seasoned labor activist, Mr. Gabby, for suggesting the name change.

Dr. Pelpuo further stressed the importance of fostering gender equality in the workplace, advocating for equal access to opportunities for all individuals. He reaffirmed his commitment to addressing the challenges within Ghana's labor market and driving

economic development through strategic collaborations with the private sector.

To combat unemployment, Dr. Pelpuo discussed plans to create a Labour Market Information System. This system would provide a comprehensive list of job openings and available talent, facilitating smoother connections between employers and job seekers. He also called for greater support for the private sector, proposing the provision of incentives such as better access to financial resources and investment opportunities to encourage job creation and economic growth.

"We will encourage the private sector to maximize production, and we will support them in doing so," Dr. Pelpuo assured.



Rashid Pelpuo, Labour, Jobs and Employment Minister-designate

# General News

## I'll amend laws to incorporate noise pollution; audit land degradation - Murtala

By Amanda Cartey

Minister-designate for Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation, Ibrahim Murtala Mohammed, has pledged to take significant steps to address noise pollution in Ghana by incorporating it into the country's environmental laws.

During his vetting by the Appointments Committee on Thursday, Mr. Murtala responded to concerns about noise pollution, noting that the current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) law does not adequately address the issue.

"If you check the EPA law, it seems to me that there isn't any aspect of noise, if you like, pollution in it. That is something I would want to take a second look at. If there can be an amendment, perhaps in the new law, we can incorporate noise pollution into that act. I think that would go a long way in addressing the problem," he said.

He emphasized that effectively tackling noise pollution would require collaboration with key stakeholders, including traditional authorities, local government institutions, and the chieftaincy.

In addition to addressing noise pollution, Mr. Murtala announced plans to conduct a nationwide audit of land degradation. This initiative forms part of broader efforts to combat environmental destruction and formulate more effective policies.

He referenced a World Bank-funded project conducted by the EPA and his ministry, which assessed the extent of environmental damage in Ghana. The findings revealed significant damage to water bodies and forests, with the economic impact estimated at around 10% of the country's GDP.

Mr. Murtala believes that a comprehensive national audit would provide concrete data to guide interventions, moving away from the current reactive approach.

"So, what I intend to do is conduct an audit of the environmental degradation in this country. If we have an audit done, then we have concrete data to work with. Right now, it seems like we're engaged in firefighting. We cannot specifically say what level of destruction galamsey and other human activities have caused to our environment. So, the first thing I want to do is to see if we can have a national audit to determine the extent

of environmental damage, using the data from the World Bank and EPA-funded study," he explained.

These responses from Mr. Murtala reflect his commitment to strengthening environmental policies and addressing pressing concerns, such as the impact of galamsey and various forms of pollution, on the environment.



Ibrahim Murtala Mohammed, Minister-designate for Environment

## IFE to offer €650k-€10m co-financing grants for job-creating projects

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Facility Investing for Employment (IFE) has launched a new round of funding opportunities in Ghana, offering substantial co-financing grants ranging from €650,000 to €10 million for investment projects that create sustainable jobs.

An initiative of the German government, IFE is managed by KfW Development Bank under the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The program is well-known for providing co-financing grants to businesses and organizations focused on job creation across Africa.

The launch event, held in Accra, marked the beginning of the Call for Proposals, which is open to individuals, companies, and organizations. The application window will remain open until April 15, 2025.

Karim Gad, the Country Manager for IFE in Ghana, explained that the funding program has four categories, each with varying co-financing ratios.

Non-profit projects with no revenue can receive up to 90% funding, while revenue-generating non-profit projects can access up to 75% funding. For-profit projects that create jobs for third parties can receive up to 35% funding, and for-profit projects that create jobs within the company can access up to 25% funding.

The program is not limited to Ghana and also covers Morocco, Rwanda, and Senegal. To apply, applicants must be legally registered entities with at least three years of operation. They can apply individually or as part of a consortium.

Social protection is a core element of the IFE initiative. Roland Steinmann, IFE's Head of Social Protection, emphasized that projects combining job creation with social protection measures stand a better chance of success. The program offers additional funding for projects that go beyond basic social protection requirements, such as health insurance, unemployment benefits, accident insurance, and infrastructure improvements like kindergartens, healthcare facilities, and accessibility

for people with disabilities.

Adwoa Kwarteng Larbi, IFE's Ghana Country Focal Point, highlighted the importance of carefully reviewing the application guidelines. She noted that successful projects would need to balance job creation with improving worker welfare.

The application process is in two stages. The first stage requires submitting an online concept note via SmartME by April 15, 2025, at

17:00 CEST. Submissions made by February 28, 2025, will be prioritized. Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to submit detailed project proposals, and site visits may be conducted as part of the due diligence process.

For a project to be considered, it must meet two main criteria: it should demonstrate the potential to create jobs and there must be a clear need for the IFE grant to implement the project.



Karim Gad, IFE, Country Manager, Ghana

# General News

## Attorney-General withdraws charges against ex-BoG Governor Asiama, others

By Amanda Cartey

Attorney-General Dominic Ayine has officially moved to drop all charges against Dr. Johnson Pandit Asiama, the former Second Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana.

Mr. Asiama had been facing trial in two separate cases related to the collapse of UniBank and UT Bank. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Yvonne Atakora Obuobisa, submitted the notice of withdrawal to the trial court, signaling the end of legal proceedings against him.

“Please take note that at the next hearing of this suit, the Prosecutor, on the instructions of the Honorable Attorney-General, will withdraw all offences and/or charges against Johnson Asiama under sections 59(1), (2)(b)(ii), and (5) of the Criminal and Other Offences (Procedure) Act

(1960), Act 30,” the notice stated. Since 2020, Asiama and several co-defendants had faced charges of fraudulent breach of trust, money laundering, conspiracy, and violations of the Bank of Ghana Act. However, the Attorney-General decided to drop the charges against Asiama due to insufficient evidence.

This move follows similar developments in other high-profile cases. Former COCOBOD CEO Dr. Stephen Kwabena Opuni and businessman Seidu Agongo were also acquitted and discharged of all criminal charges brought against them by the State.

The duo had faced 27 charges in court over the past eight years, including allegations of defrauding the state by false pretenses, willfully causing financial loss to the state, and contravening public procurement laws, which they consistently denied.

Counsel for Opuni and Agongo, Samuel Cudjoe and Benson Nutsukpui, confirmed to the court that they had been served with the withdrawal notice.

In another development, the Attorney-General also dropped criminal charges against former National

Democratic Congress (NDC) National Chairman Samuel Ofose Ampofo and the party’s Communications Officer, Anthony Kwaku Boahen.

However, former Finance Minister Dr. Kwabena Duffuor, his son, and other executives still face money laundering charges, with only Asiama cleared of all accusations.



Dr. Johnson Pandit Asiama, Former Second Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana

## Constitutional review in motion as Mahama swears in 8-member committee

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

President John Mahama has officially inaugurated an eight-member committee to review Ghana’s 1992 Constitution, marking a significant milestone in shaping the country’s democratic future.

At a ceremony held at Jubilee House on Thursday, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Dr. Dominic Ayine, emphasized the importance of the committee’s task and the careful selection of its members.

“You have been carefully selected for this important work on behalf of our country. The easier part of the job is to follow the prescribed method for altering the constitution. The more challenging aspect, and I can say this without fear of contradiction, is to recommend substantive provisions to add or replace elements of the current constitution,” he said.

President Mahama further clarified that the review is not a sign of failure, but a proactive effort to refine the nation’s governance framework. “The call for constitutional reform is not an admission of failure but an acknowledgment of progress. It is

a recognition that our democracy must be dynamic, responsive, and constantly attuned to the needs of our people,” he stated.

The committee, chaired by legal scholar Prof. H. Kwasi Prempeh, comprises Justice Sophia Adinyirah, Prof. Kwame Karikari, Mrs. Charlotte Osei, Dr. Godwin Djokoto, Ibrahim Tanko Amidu, Dr. Esi Ansah, and Dr. Rainer Akumperigeya, who will serve as secretary.

Calls for constitutional reform have been mounting, with various stakeholders—including former parliamentarians, the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), and the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG)—advocating for changes to address pressing governance issues.

Dr. Kojo Pumpuni Asante, Director of Policy Engagement and Partnerships at CDD-Ghana, has stressed the importance of a multi-stakeholder

approach in the review process. Additionally, former Chief Justice Sophia Akuffo has specifically called for revisions to presidential appointment powers, warning that they contribute to an “imperial presidency.”

As the review process gets underway, citizens are encouraged to participate actively and contribute ideas to shape a governance structure that reflects the evolving needs of the nation.



John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana swears in 8-member committee

# General News

## Parliament begins process to set up pension scheme for retired MPs

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Parliament has initiated steps to establish a pension scheme for retired Members of Parliament (MPs) who are no longer in office, by forming a nine-member panel committee.

The committee, led by Asutifi South MP Collins Dauda, is tasked with reviewing pension scheme options tailored for former lawmakers.

This move follows a proposal by Majority Leader Mahama Ayariga, who argued in the House on Wednesday that a well-supported retirement plan would strengthen the institution of Parliament and promote integrity among its members.

Mr. Ayariga noted that many MPs dedicate decades of their lives to public service but retire without a structured pension scheme, often leaving them financially vulnerable. He suggested an innovative funding mechanism for the scheme, proposing that it be financed through revenues from carbon credits instead of relying on taxpayers.

"This is about fairness, dignity, and

strengthening our democracy. A financially secure legislator is more independent and less susceptible to undue influence," he stated. He added, "This is a necessary step in the evolution of Ghana's parliamentary system, and I am confident we can build a sustainable model."

On January 29, Majority Chief Whip Rockson-Nelson Dafeamekpor urged the committee to submit its report within 45 days, emphasizing the need for timely action. "We will provide them with our terms of reference, and they will be given six weeks to complete their work," he said.

The committee includes Members of Parliament (MPs) such as Sampson Ahi (MP for Bodi), Atta Issah (MP for Sagnarigu), Millicent Yeboah Amankwah (MP for Sunyani West), Alhassan Suhuyini (MP for Tamale North), Mahama Tia Kabiru (MP for Walewale), Stephen Amoah (MP for Nhyiaso), and Dr. Mahama Tia Kabiru (MP for Walewale).

Many legislators have expressed concerns about the pressure to meet the high financial expectations of their constituents while in office.

After leaving Parliament, they often face financial instability due to their inability to save much, if anything, from their salaries during their time in office.

Former Assin Central MP Kennedy Agyapong has been vocal about the financial pressures he faces due to the demands of his constituents. He has mentioned on several occasions that a significant portion of his salary

goes toward meeting their needs, highlighting the financial strain MPs face while serving.

The formation of this committee marks a significant step in addressing the long-standing issue of financial security for former lawmakers, ensuring that they are not left vulnerable after years of public service.



Mahama Ayariga, Majority Leader in Parliament

## SIM re-registration will be done again; MNOs to bear cost - Sam George

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Minister nominee for Communications, Digitalisation, and Innovation, Samuel Nartey George, has announced plans to conduct a more efficient and technology-driven SIM re-registration exercise if confirmed for the role.

During his vetting by the Appointments Committee on Thursday, January 30, Mr. George emphasized that the new process would be streamlined to avoid the long queues that plagued the previous exercise. He described the former approach as inefficient and promised a more logical and seamless process moving forward. "We will conduct a proper SIM re-registration again, and this time, there will be no queues because common sense will prevail, and we will use technology to make it happen," he assured the Committee.

Mr. George further clarified that the re-registration process would not burden Ghanaians financially, as the cost would be borne by the

Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), unlike the previous system where citizens had to pay to use an app for registration. "Unlike the immediate past government, where people had to pay using an app, no Ghanaian will have to pay for it. The cost will be borne by the MNOs," he added. He also emphasized that leveraging digital solutions would make the re-registration process more convenient for citizens while achieving its primary objectives of enhancing national security and preventing fraud.

Mr. George assured the Committee that, under his leadership, the Ministry would prioritize efficiency and innovation in all digital initiatives, including SIM registration, to strengthen the telecommunications sector and ensure a more robust and inclusive approach.

The announcement comes on the heels of Ghana's previous SIM re-registration campaign, which was launched on October 1, 2021, by former Minister of Communications and Digitalisation, Ursula Owusu-

Ekuful. The campaign aimed to improve security and curb fraud in the telecom sector by requiring citizens to link their SIM cards to their Ghana Cards.

A self-service SIM registration app was introduced to facilitate the process, allowing citizens to complete registration from home. However, users were charged a fee of GHS 5.00 per SIM card for the service. By the end

of the exercise, a total of 28,959,006 SIM cards, representing 67.28% of the 42,749,662 SIM cards issued, were successfully linked to Ghana Cards. Additionally, 20,892,970 subscribers completed the full registration, including biometric verification.

Mr. George's plan promises to address the shortcomings of the previous exercise, with a clear focus on efficiency and convenience for Ghanaians.



Samuel Nartey George, Minister nominee for Communications



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# Business

## Tullow Oil undertakes 4D seismic survey to identify future well locations

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

**T**ullow Oil has initiated a 4D seismic survey across its Jubilee and TEN fields in Ghana, a move aimed at pinpointing optimal sites for future wells and refining the company's drilling programme for 2025 and 2026. The survey will also enhance understanding of pressure and fluid movements within the reservoirs, contributing to more efficient resource extraction.

In a bid to sustain production levels, the company has ramped up water injection capacity at Jubilee to 300,000 barrels of water per day (kbwpd) since late 2024. This, combined with improvements in system reliability, is expected to slow production decline rates in 2025 compared to the latter half of 2024.

Tullow's drilling programme in Ghana is scheduled to commence in May 2025, utilizing the Noble Venturer rig. The initial phase will focus on drilling one production well and one injection well in the Jubilee field, with both expected to be operational by the third quarter of the year. After planned maintenance, the rig will resume drilling at the start of 2026, supporting production growth.

Meanwhile, efforts to enhance the value of the TEN field remain a priority. Tullow is working to streamline operational costs and maximize the potential for further infill drilling, leveraging data from the ongoing 4D seismic survey. Tullow's Chief Executive Officer, Rahul Dhir, highlighted the company's progress in financial stability and strategic planning, stating:

"Over the last four years, through our commitment to operational excellence and

prudent implementation of efficiencies, we have continued to generate free cash flow and have significantly reduced our net debt from c.\$2.81 billion to c.\$1.45 billion. Our improved balance sheet, alongside the extension of our revolving credit facility, positions us well as we look to manage our debt maturities and optimise the Group's capital structure in 2025."

"Following the successful resolution of the Ghana Branch Profits Remittance Tax arbitration and a return to drilling at Jubilee, combined with production optimisation activities to reduce decline rates and further cost reductions, 2025 is set to be an exciting year for Tullow as we lay the foundations for capital returns and pan-African growth."

As part of its financial strategy, the company is considering divestment of certain non-core assets to accelerate debt reduction, with a target of bringing net debt below \$1 billion and gearing to less than one times. However, asset sales will only proceed if they deliver value for both equity and leverage.

Tullow has earmarked approximately \$250 million for capital expenditure in 2025, with 60% directed to Jubilee, 30% to non-operated assets, and the remaining 10% covering TEN, Kenya, and exploration efforts. Decommissioning costs are projected at \$15 million for the UK and another \$15 million allocated for Ghana and Gabon.

Further cost-cutting measures are expected to yield annual savings of approximately \$10 million, reducing general and administrative (G&A) expenses to around \$40 million.

Additionally, cash tax payments for the year are estimated at \$200 million, assuming an oil price of \$80 per barrel, with 60% of payments concentrated in the first half of the year.

Tullow's hedging strategy safeguards 60% of projected sales volumes at a weighted average price of \$59 per barrel, while 60% of sales remain open to potential oil price increases. The remaining 40% is capped at a weighted average price of \$89 per barrel.

With forecast free cash flow of approximately \$200 million at \$80 per

barrel—bolstered by \$50 million in outstanding gas payments from Ghana in 2024—Tullow intends to repay its 2025 Notes at maturity using available cash and its Glencore credit facility. The company also plans to refinance its capital structure over the course of the year.

Following this refinancing, Tullow aims to establish a clear strategy for capital returns and further expansion through acquisitions, with a new CEO expected to take charge of the company's next phase of growth.



File photo

## Price of petrol, diesel to surge by more than 2.9% today

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

**T**he cost of petrol, diesel, and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is set to increase across the country today February 1, barring any last-minute adjustments.

According to projections by the Chamber for Petroleum Consumers (COPEC), petrol prices will rise by 2.93%, bringing the retail price to GH¢14.697 per litre. Diesel is expected to see a 3.00% increase, setting the new average price at GH¢15.869 per litre. LPG will also experience a price adjustment, with the estimated retail price climbing to GH¢17.224 per kilogram.

In a statement signed by its Executive Secretary, Duncan Amoah, COPEC called on the government to take immediate steps to make LPG more affordable by reducing taxes or introducing subsidies.

"This will help save the environment from further degradation by the use of firewood," COPEC stated.

Currently, fuel taxes and levies account for about 21.34% of the total retail price of petrol and diesel. COPEC is urging the government to either reduce these taxes or introduce measures to shield consumers from the financial strain.

It further suggested the adoption of a flexible pricing formula that adjusts levies based on fluctuations in the cedi-to-dollar exchange rate.

Additionally, the advocacy group stressed the need for the government to prioritise efforts to revive the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR), arguing that local refining of petroleum products would help curb importation costs and reduce the risk of fuel adulteration.



File photo

# International

## Kenya breaks new ground and pilots its first digital health campaign system

After five days of walking door-to-door, visiting churches and attending community gatherings, Margaret Khasiala finally gets to rest in her home in Chekalani, Western Kenya. She is one of 4,250 community health promoters who worked to ensure up to 13 million children across Kenya received medicines to combat neglected tropical diseases.

Margaret was also one of 110 community health promoters piloting a new digital system. Using her phone, she recorded the details of every child she gave medicines to. The data could be seen immediately at national level, making the data collecting process faster than traditional handwritten records. This marks the first time Kenya has used a digital system for a mass public health campaign, a bold step forward in a country where health initiatives of this scale have long relied on manual data collection.

### THE BURDEN OF NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES

While Kenya successfully eradicated Guinea Worm Disease in 2018 and is on track to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027, at least 25 million Kenyans remain at risk from neglected tropical diseases. For children, these diseases often hinder school attendance and academic performance, while adults experience reduced work productivity and social stigma.

To curb the prevalence of these diseases, on the 13th of December 2024, Kenya launched a 5-day mass drug administration campaign targeting 13 million children aged 1 to 15 years in the Western, Nyanza, and Coastal regions of Kenya — areas with the highest neglected tropical disease prevalence.

“Addressing neglected tropical diseases not only saves lives but also unlocks economic opportunities” said Cabinet Secretary for Health, Dr. Deborah Barasa during the launch of the campaign.

WHO supported the Ministry of Health to train over 800 healthcare workers across

20 counties, donating \$1.6 million worth of medicines, provided support supervision, and advocated for government ownership and investment in neglected tropical disease elimination.

“We believe investing in neglected tropical disease elimination will give us the best returns because it reduces poverty, while allowing people to live dignified and productive lives,” said Georgina Bonet Arroyo of WHO.

### CHALLENGES OF HAND-WRITTEN RECORDS

While mass drug administrations are an effective strategy for combating neglected tropical diseases in Kenya, their large-scale implementation presents a major challenge—efficient data collection.

To track the number of children reached during these campaigns, community health promoters like Margaret traditionally record household visits by hand, noting details such as children’s names, ages, administered medicines, and any refusals.

With each promoter visiting up to 800 children daily, these handwritten records are then submitted to local health facilities, where the data is compiled and forwarded up the chain—from the sub-county to the county, and eventually to the national level. This labour-intensive process requires manually counting millions of records to assess the campaign’s overall impact.

This system slows down data collection and often takes weeks before information reaches decision-makers. The process is not only time-consuming but also prone to errors. Without real-time visibility, organizers struggle to address challenges as they arise. For instance, if certain areas experience low coverage or high refusal rates, these issues may go unnoticed until it is too late to take corrective action. Additionally, accessing handwritten records for follow-ups or long-term evaluations remains cumbersome, making it difficult to measure the true impact of the campaign.

### THE DIGITAL PILOT: A STEP FORWARD

Recognizing the limitations of manual data collection, Kenya’s Ministry of Health, with support from WHO, Clinton Health Access Initiative, and funding from the Gates Foundation, piloted a new digital data collection system.

The pilot took place during the recent mass drug administration campaign and involved 110 community health promoters from two areas in Kakamega County—Chekalani and Bunyala Central.

Using their mobile phones, these health workers logged every child they administered medicine to, as well as any refusals or adverse reactions.

“The ability to see live results from these two areas was a game-changer,” said Eric Maira from WHO. “It allowed us to monitor progress during the campaign and respond immediately to challenges.”

For the individuals who took part in the pilot, this data was instantly uploaded to a centralized database, allowing health officials — both locally and nationally — to access live campaign updates.

For participants like Margaret, the app simplified their work. Without the burden of carrying registers or worrying about errors

in transcription, they could focus on reaching more children.

The WHO supported the Ministry of Health in the design, development, testing, and piloting of the new system, as well as conducting trainings with the 110 community health promoters on how to use it.

Since the digital tool was designed as a new feature within the Electronic Community Health Information System (eCHIS)—an app they already used—health promoters had some familiarity with it, making it easier to adopt.

With 90% coverage achieved, the recent mass drug administration campaign met WHO’s target for effectiveness, pushing Kenya closer toward its goal of eliminating neglected tropical diseases by 2030. Additionally, the 110 community health promoters using the digital tool expressed optimism about incorporating it into other large-scale health campaigns, such as polio vaccination campaigns.

By improving efficiency, accuracy, and real-time monitoring, Kenya is setting a new standard for public health campaigns in Africa.

As for Margaret and thousands of other health promoters, the campaign may be over, but its impact has just begun.

Source: WHO



File photo

## Uganda records first Ebola death since 2023 outbreak ended

A nurse in Uganda has died of Ebola, a health official said Thursday, in the first recorded fatality since the last outbreak ended in 2023.

The 32-year-old male nurse was an employee of Mulago Hospital, the main referral facility in the capital, Kampala, Diana Atwine, permanent secretary of the health ministry, told reporters Thursday.

After developing a fever, he was treated at several locations in Uganda before multiple lab tests confirmed he had been suffering from Ebola. The man died on Wednesday and the Sudan strain of Ebola was confirmed following postmortem tests, Atwine said.

At least 44 contacts of the victim have been identified, including 30 health workers and patients at Mulago Hospital, according to Uganda’s Ministry of Health.

The health authorities are “in full control of

the situation,” Atwine said, urging Ugandans to report suspected cases.

Tracing contacts is key to stemming the spread of Ebola, and there are no approved vaccines for the Sudan strain of Ebola. Uganda’s last outbreak, discovered in September 2022, killed at least 55 people before it was declared over in January 2023.

Confirmation of Ebola in Uganda is the latest in a trend of outbreaks of viral hemorrhagic fevers in the East African region. Tanzania declared an outbreak of the Ebola-like Marburg disease earlier this month, and in December Rwanda announced that its own outbreak of Marburg was over. The ongoing Marburg outbreak in northern Tanzania’s Kagera region has killed at least two people, according to local health authorities.

Ebola, which is spread by contact with bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated materials, manifests as a deadly hemorrhagic

fever. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle pain and at times internal and external bleeding.

Scientists don’t know the natural reservoir of Ebola, but they suspect the first person infected in an outbreak acquired the virus through contact with an infected animal or eating its raw meat. Ugandan officials are still investigating the source of the current outbreak.

Uganda has had multiple Ebola outbreaks, including one in 2000 that killed hundreds. The 2014-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa killed more than 11,000 people, the disease’s largest death toll.

Ebola was discovered in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks in South Sudan and Congo, where it occurred in a village near the Ebola River, after which the disease is named.

Source: Africanews



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