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General News

Victims of mass appointments revocation can re-apply in govt's upcoming recruitment - Felix Kwakye

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Minister of State in charge of Government Communications and spokesperson for President John Mahama, Felix Kwakye Ofosu, has assured individuals affected by the cancellation of post-election appointments that new opportunities will arise.

Speaking to the media at the Jubilee House on Wednesday, the Minister announced that the government would soon roll out a fresh phase of public sector hiring.

"In due course, the government will recruit, and it will be open to all Ghanaians irrespective of political affiliations. Indeed, your party identity will not be required. You will not be asked to show whether you are NPP or NDC. So even those whose employment has been revoked will still have the opportunity to reapply," he stated.

Also, the Minister defended the Mahama administration's move to revoke appointments made after December 7, citing the need for accountability and adherence to due process.

"The NPP lost the elections and was on its way out, yet recruitment was done in a manner that was unfair to others who did not belong to the party. This decision was taken not because of perception or belief, but because we know that the recruitment processes were tainted

by irregularities," he explained. He asserted that the New Patriotic Party (NPP)'s appointments were saddled with serious irregularities, necessitating their cancellation.

He highlighted issues such as backdated appointment letters, the absence of interviews, and a lack of formal application submissions as key concerns.

On February 11, Chief of Staff Julius Debrah instructed government agency heads to nullify all appointments made after December 7, 2024, citing procedural irregularities.

The directive also required agencies to submit operational reports by February 17, 2025. As John Mahama prepared to assume office, concerns arose over last-minute personnel appointments and financial commitments made by the outgoing administration.

Defending its actions, the previous government maintained that all recruitments and payments had received the necessary statutory approvals and were not unlawful.

It stated, "these recruitment processes and payments have received the relevant statutory approvals and have not been proven to be illegal. It was decided that any specific allegation of illegality about any particular payment or recruitment should be brought to the attention of the Transition Team for a decision to be made."

However, Mr Kwakye Ofosu clarified that the revocation of these appointments was aimed at ensuring a smooth transition and maintaining transparency within the public sector. All affected institutions were ordered to comply and submit a comprehensive report by February 17.

Meanwhile, the NPP's National Organiser, Henry Nana Boakye, has initiated legal action against the government for the mass revocation of appointments.

Citing Article 191(b) of the 1992 Constitution, Mr Boakye contends that public sector employees are protected from arbitrary dismissals and that the terminations were

carried out without due process. He insists that neither the Chief of Staff nor the President has the legal power to unilaterally revoke appointments.

In his petition to the Supreme Court on February 18, Mr Boakye seeks to have the government's directive overturned, an injunction placed on its enforcement, and a ruling affirming job security for public sector workers. Additionally, he is requesting that the government cover the legal costs of the case.

The Attorney General, listed as the respondent in the suit, has 14 days from the date of notification to submit a formal response.



Felix Kwakye Ofosu, Spokesperson for President John Mahama

Mass dismissal, attacks on journalists and fmr govt appointees undemocratic - Bawumia

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Former Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia has expressed deep concern over what he describes as undemocratic actions by the incumbent National Democratic Congress (NDC) government.

In a strongly worded statement shared on his Facebook page on Wednesday, February 20, Dr. Bawumia criticized the mass

dismissal of public servants employed during the previous administration, as well as recent attacks on journalists and former government officials.

According to him, the dismissal of individuals who were legally employed under the previous government contradicts the ruling party's campaign promises, which assured Ghanaians of job creation. He noted that rather than terminating

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Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, Former Vice President of Ghana

General News

Mass dismissal, attacks on journalists and fmr govt appointees aren't democratic - Bawumia

- Continued from page 2

appointments, the government should focus on creating more employment opportunities.

"It is ironic that a party which campaigned on the wings of jobs for all Ghanaians is arbitrarily dismissing the same Ghanaians, rendering them jobless, just because a different government employed them," Dr. Bawumia stated.

He described it as unfortunate that highly qualified individuals are being removed from their positions simply because they are related to or associated with members of the previous government.

Beyond the job dismissals, Dr.

Bawumia highlighted increasing attacks on journalists, the use of the military to raid the homes of former government officials, and mob actions against innocent individuals and state institutions. He likened these developments to a military takeover rather than a peaceful democratic transition.

"These are certainly worrying times for our democracy, and the earlier action is taken to protect institutions and democratic practice, the better it would be for Ghana's forward march," he cautioned.

Dr. Bawumia urged President Mahama to be a leader for all

Ghanaians and to put an end to these actions. He called on the government to reverse the mass dismissals and ensure that democratic principles are upheld.

"We must advance our democracy. We must protect our state institutions. We must uphold our Constitution. Ghana can do better. Ghana must do better!" he concluded.

Last week, approximately 12 individuals were involved in a raid at the Cantonments residence of former Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta, who is currently outside the country. Five were in military gear,

one was in police uniform, and the rest were dressed in civilian attire. The motive behind the operation, which has been condemned by both the Minority and Majority in Parliament, remains unclear. However, the Minority has called for the prosecution of the raiders.

Meanwhile, Attorney-General Dr. Dominic Ayine is expected to respond to a suit filed by the National Organiser of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Henry Nana Boakye, over the mass dismissal of public sector employees, which was directed by the Chief of Staff on February 10.

Govt orders 10% salary raise for public sector workers

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The government has authorized a 10% salary increment for public sector employees under the Single Spine Salary Structure (SSSS) for the 2025 fiscal year. This adjustment, which takes effect from January 1, 2025, will remain in place until December 2025.

The agreement, finalized on February 20, stemmed from negotiations between the government—represented by the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission, the Ministry of Labour, Jobs, and Employment, and the Ministry of Finance—and Organized Labour.

It emerged from extensive discussions within the Public Services Joint Standing Negotiating Committee, involving key labor unions and public sector institutions. The deal was formally ratified by Ing. Benjamin Arthur, Chief Executive of the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission; Bro. Joshua Ansah, Secretary-General of the Trades Union Congress; Dr. Abdul-Rashid Hassan Pelpuo, Minister for Labour, Jobs, and Employment; Dr. Isaac Bampoe Addo, Chairman of FORUM; and Dr. Cassiel Ato Baah Forson, Minister of Finance.

This latest salary adjustment follows a 23% increase in 2024, which was introduced to cushion workers from the effects of economic challenges

and rising living costs. The new increment aims to provide some financial respite to public sector employees as they navigate the economic realities of 2025.

However, with economic growth slowing and the government adhering to an IMF-backed fiscal consolidation plan, officials took a more restrained approach in 2025 to avoid placing additional pressure on public finances.

Although labor unions have

accepted the deal, many members remain dissatisfied, arguing that the increment does not adequately address rising living costs.

According to the spokesperson for the Civil and Local Government Staff Association of Ghana, Isaac Bampoe Addo, "This is a far cry from what workers deserve, but given the fiscal realities, we've chosen pragmatism over prolonged disputes."

The pay raise will benefit a broad spectrum of public sector employees, including teachers,

healthcare workers, and civil servants, many of whom have struggled with declining purchasing power. However, economists warn that with inflation at 23.8% as of December 2024, the increase may not be enough to offset rising expenses.

Critics contend that the government's focus on salary hikes overlooks deeper structural inefficiencies in the public sector and broader economic challenges.



Trade Union Congress (TUC)

General News

Govt to employ 100 more workers for 24-hour passport application service - Foreign Minister

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The government is set to recruit 100 additional staff for various passport centres across the country to support the implementation of the 24-hour passport application service, which is expected to roll out this year. Foreign Affairs Minister Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa made this known during a working visit to some passport centres following his assumption of office.

Speaking to the media on February 19 at the Passport Headquarters in Accra, the Minister announced that provisions for the new staff are being made in the 2025 budget, which is scheduled to be presented to Parliament by Finance Minister Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson on March 20.

“We are making provision in our budget for 2025 to recruit more staff. We anticipate that we may need about 100 more. That is what our director of passport, based on their analysis, has recommended. When you cut down

the waiting time from three, four, five weeks to less than a week—once you do a 24-hour shift—it should be easy to meet those targets,” he stated.

Currently, the Ghana Passport Office is reported to have around 300 staff members. The planned recruitment of 100 more personnel aims to reduce waiting times, expedite passport delivery, and support the government’s flagship 24-hour economy initiative as part of its reset agenda.

Mr. Ablakwa urged passport office staff to prepare for extended working hours, including day, night, and dawn shifts, in alignment with the government’s 24-hour economy strategy.

“You have also heard about the major reforms we want to implement. We want the Passport Administration in our country to become a 24-hour operation. This year [2025], you need to get ready. We’re going to run three shifts. We want to cut down the waiting time for passports,” he emphasized.

The Minister further reiterated that a key objective of the reform is to ensure that applicants receive their passports within a week of application.

“We believe that within a week, it should be possible to get a Ghanaian passport when you apply for it. The 24-hour economy intervention we’re introducing will address that,” he added.

Additionally, Mr. Ablakwa disclosed

plans to introduce chip-embedded passports and integrate passport data with the National Identification Authority (NIA) system to streamline applicant verification.

As part of efforts to modernize the Foreign Affairs Ministry, he also revealed plans to revise passport fees—reducing costs for ordinary applicants while increasing charges for premium services.



Sam Okudzeto Ablakwa, Foreign Affairs Minister

More than 9 forest reserves completely taken over by ‘galamseyers’, 44 under siege - Lands Minister

By Amanda Cartey

Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Emmanuel Armah Kofi Buah, has expressed deep concern over the increasing devastation of Ghana’s forest reserves due to illegal mining activities, commonly known as galamsey. According to him, more than nine out of 44 forest reserves currently under siege have been completely taken over by illegal miners, making them inaccessible to the Forestry Commission (FC).

Addressing Parliament on Tuesday, the Minister stated, “Over nine out of the 44 forest reserves have been completely taken over by these illegal mining thugs with impunity. The Forestry Commission no longer has access to these forest reserves.”

He further disclosed that an estimated 5,000 hectares of forest land—equivalent to approximately 7,000 football fields—have already been destroyed.

This widespread destruction has

resulted in severe deforestation, water pollution, and the loss of biodiversity in affected areas.

“In the short term, we want to clear all water bodies of illegal mining activities through the use of river guards under our Blue Water Initiative. Details of this initiative will be provided during its launch in the coming weeks,” he announced.

The Minister also stressed the importance of stronger law enforcement and regulatory measures, while expressing concern over the low prosecution rate of illegal miners. He revealed that out of more than 800 cases recorded in recent years, fewer than 40 individuals have been successfully prosecuted.

“Engagement of stakeholders at all levels is key. Among other things, the intention is to strengthen our regulatory and law enforcement regime. But when we look at the numbers, the situation is discouraging. In the last few years, the number of prosecutions for illegal mining has not been very

encouraging. Out of over 800 cases, fewer than 40 individuals have been prosecuted,” he stated.

The government is facing growing pressure to implement tougher measures to combat illegal mining and protect Ghana’s forest reserves, water bodies, and environment from further destruction.

Illegal mining continues to pose a significant threat to the country’s environmental and economic stability, as well as to the health of many Ghanaians who consume food and water contaminated by hazardous chemicals such as cyanide and mercury used in mining activities.



Emmanuel Armah Kofi Buah, Minister for Lands and Natural Resources

General News

N-Gas Ltd to cease gas supply to Ghana effective March 6 over arrears

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

The management of N-Gas Limited has officially notified the Volta River Authority (VRA) of its decision to halt gas supply to Ghana, effective Tuesday, March 6, due to outstanding arrears exceeding \$75 million.

In a letter addressed to the Managing Director of VRA on Tuesday, February 18, N-Gas stated that despite multiple commitments from VRA, the company has yet to receive any payments. This situation, it said, has thrown the entire value chain into panic and uncertainty, putting N-Gas's reputation at risk.

The company further noted that it has continued supplying gas to VRA, despite being unable to pay its own gas suppliers and transporters since November 2024 due to the high level of debt. However, N-Gas warned that VRA's failure to meet its financial obligations could soon lead to gas supply and transportation reliability issues.

According to N-Gas, it has not received the committed payment of \$25 million, which was due on or before February 21, 2025. Additionally, the stipulated conditions precedent have not been fulfilled, constituting a material breach of the agreed terms.

Citing Clause 4 (specifically 4.2, 4.4(b), 4.4(e), and 4.4(k)), Clause 14 (specifically 14.1–14.5), and Clause 13.6(a) of the Takoradi Gas Sales Agreement (TGSA), N-Gas stated that it will remove the stay order on the Standby Letter of Credit (SBLC) call and proceed with calling on the Letter of Credit by Monday, February 18.

It further declared that, effective March 6, 2025, N-Gas will cease further gas supply to VRA in accordance with Clause 13.6(a) of the TGSA, which allows for the suspension of gas supply in cases where the buyer fails to meet its payment obligations.

To uphold contractual integrity across the value chain, N-Gas indicated that it may require VRA to make a one-

month prepayment for continued gas supply.

This development raises concerns over Ghana's energy security, as the potential suspension of gas supply

could impact power generation. The VRA, which relies on gas from N-Gas to fuel thermal power plants, may be forced to explore alternative arrangements to prevent disruptions to electricity supply.



File photo

Sidelining of NMC in shutdown of 7 radio stations unconstitutional - MFWA

By **Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) has criticized the Minister responsible for Communication, Digital Technology, and Innovations, Samuel Nartey George, following the shutdown of seven radio stations.

In a statement, the minister directed the National Communications Authority (NCA) to shut down the stations, citing offenses related to operating without valid frequency authorizations and security concerns. Six of these stations—Fire Group of Companies, I-Zar Consult Limited, Abochannel Media Group, Okyeame Radio Limited, Mumen Bono Foundation, and Osikani Community FM—were operating without valid frequency authorizations, while one, Gumah FM in Bawku, was closed on security grounds.

In response, MFWA, in a statement on February 19, highlighted the unconstitutionality of shutting down the radio stations without consulting major stakeholders such

as the independent National Media Commission (NMC).

According to MFWA, while the security concerns regarding Gumah FM's broadcasts may be valid, it is illegitimate for a "tribunal" of partisan political players—including the sector minister, the regional minister, the director-general of the NCA, and the national security coordinator—to act as both complainants and enforcers.

Although the decision to shut down the affected stations may have been based on expert advice, MFWA has urged that such intelligence be presented to the NMC for scrutiny and a final verdict.

"Even if the decision was based on intelligence advice, the facts and evidence must be put before the NMC for it to recommend the shutdown if convinced," MFWA added.

As a reminder to the government, MFWA cited Section 2(9) of the NCA Act 775, which states that the National Communications Authority (NCA) must "pay particular attention to the provisions of Chapter 12 of the

Constitution."

Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana focuses on the freedom and independence of the media, emphasizing the need for a free and responsible press while protecting against government interference.

Consequently, MFWA has advised the government to "pause, reflect, and consult the NMC when taking

a decision to sanction a broadcast station, particularly over alarming content. Ultimately, we call for dialogue leading to a decision to amend relevant laws to give the independent National Media Commission the mandate to approve broadcast license applications and recommend sanctions for infractions regarding licensing conditions."



Sam George, Communication Minister

General News

Korea, Switzerland renew commitment to strengthen Ghana's energy and health sectors

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Ghana has secured renewed commitments from Switzerland and South Korea to boost its energy and healthcare sectors through strategic partnerships and investments.

In separate high-level meetings with government officials in Accra, Swiss Ambassador to Ghana Simone Giger and Korean Ambassador Park Kyongsig reaffirmed their respective countries' dedication to advancing Ghana's energy sustainability and healthcare development.

During a meeting with Energy Minister John Abdulai Jinapor on Wednesday, February 19, Ambassador Giger underscored Switzerland's interest in supporting Ghana's efforts to transition to renewable energy. Discussions centered on expanding clean energy, improving efficiency, and strengthening sustainable power solutions.

Minister Jinapor reiterated Ghana's focus on diversifying its energy sources and emphasized the government's commitment to leveraging international partnerships. "We are keen on leveraging strategic partnerships to develop a robust and sustainable energy sector. Switzerland's expertise and investment in renewable energy solutions present great opportunities for collaboration," he stated.

Ambassador Giger commended Ghana's progress in the sector and pledged Switzerland's continued support. "Switzerland recognises Ghana as a key partner in West Africa, and we look forward to working together on projects that will promote clean energy and drive economic growth," she remarked.

Both parties agreed to explore joint initiatives aligned with Ghana's energy transition goals, with Minister Jinapor expressing the government's openness to strategic partnerships that ensure

long-term energy security.

Meanwhile, Korean Ambassador Park Kyongsig reiterated Korea's commitment to advancing Ghana's healthcare system during a courtesy call on Minister of Health Kwabena Mintah Akandoh. Their discussions highlighted Korea's continued investments in maternal and child health, disease prevention, and medical training.

"Korea is dedicated to strengthening Ghana's health systems to ensure accessible and efficient medical services for all citizens," Ambassador Park stated. Accompanied by representatives from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH), the delegation explored potential areas of collaboration, including medical infrastructure development and healthcare management at the district and sub-district levels.

Hon. Mintah Akandoh

acknowledged Korea's long-standing support and emphasized key health priorities under the John Mahama administration, including the expansion of Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) facilities, the Ghana Medical Trust Fund, free primary healthcare, and the construction of regional hospitals in newly created regions.

KOICA and KOFIH officials outlined ongoing initiatives in Ghana, which include building modern healthcare facilities, equipping hospitals with advanced medical technology, and providing specialized training for health professionals. They assured the Health Minister of their continued partnership in improving Ghana's healthcare landscape.

The meetings concluded with both Switzerland and Korea reaffirming their commitment to strengthening Ghana's energy and health sectors through long-term collaborations and targeted investments.



His Excellency Park Kyongsig, the Korean Ambassador to Ghana, paid a courtesy call to the Minister of Health, Hon. Kwabena Mintah Akandoh, at the Ministry in Accra.

General News

Govt to cough up GH¢910,000 as court faults GIS for mistaken identity, wrongful detention

By Amanda Cartey

The High Court has ordered the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) to compensate a Ghanaian citizen, Kwabena Baffour Asare, with GH¢910,000 for wrongful detention and loss of earnings due to a case of mistaken identity.

According to court documents, the ruling was delivered after the court found GIS liable for preventing Asare from boarding a flight to Germany in June 2022—an incident that ultimately led to his job loss after three decades of employment.

Asare, a resident of Berlin, Germany, had traveled to Ghana in May 2022 to attend his late mother's funeral. He was scheduled to return to Germany on June 17, 2022, but was apprehended at Kotoka International Airport by immigration officers.

The officers claimed he was on a wanted persons list and stated they

were acting on a request from the Ghana Police Service. As a result, he was detained and later transferred to the GIS head office before being handed over to the police on June 18, 2022.

Upon investigation, police authorities determined that he was not the individual they were searching for and subsequently released him. The mix-up had occurred because the actual suspect, also named Kwabena Asare, resided in Germany.

Despite securing a police extract confirming he was not the wanted individual, Asare was once again prevented from boarding his rescheduled flight on June 18, 2022, as immigration officers maintained that he was still on the wanted list.

According to his legal counsel, this second denial violated Asare's rights and ultimately caused him to lose his job in Germany, where he had been earning a substantial income.

The court, however, ruled in favor of Asare despite GIS denying any wrongdoing and insisting their actions were in good faith and without malice. Justice Ayitey Armah-Tetteh awarded GH¢910,000

in compensation, which included GH¢650,000 in general damages for negligence and rights violations, GH¢250,000 for loss of earnings, GH¢10,000 in special damages, and GH¢50,000 in legal costs.



Kwame Asuah Takyi, Comptroller-General of the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS)

Akwatia MP appeals contempt of court ruling; files application to stay bench warrant

By Amanda Cartey

Akwatia Member of Parliament, Ernest Yaw Kumi, has filed an appeal challenging the Koforidua High Court's ruling that found him guilty of contempt and issued a bench warrant for his arrest.

In addition to the appeal, his legal team has submitted an application for a stay of execution, seeking to suspend the court's order while the case undergoes further review.

The High Court ruled that Mr Kumi was in contempt for violating an injunction that barred his swearing-in as a legislator. When he failed to appear before the court for sentencing, a warrant was issued for his arrest. Reacting to the development, the Minority in Parliament has condemned the court's decision, arguing that it was excessive. Speaking to the media, Second Deputy Minority Whip Jerry Ahmed Shaib expressed strong disagreement with the ruling. "Legal steps have been taken. A notice of appeal has been filed against the

ruling of the high court at the Court of Appeal. An application for stay of execution pending appeal has also been filed at the high court in Koforidua.

Moreover, all the parties to the section to the certiorari and prohibition application, including the judge, His Lordship Justice Emmanuel Senyo Amedekeh, who is the respondent to this application before the Supreme Court, have been duly served. Further legal steps will be taken, and the Minority Caucus in Parliament will abreast the Ghanaian public on the way forward," he stated.

He further stressed that Ghana's democracy is built on principles of fairness, justice, and the rule of law, cautioning that the court's ruling could set a troubling precedent.

Background

On January 3, 2025, the Koforidua High Court issued an interim injunction restraining Ernest Yaw Kumi from being sworn in as the Member of Parliament for Akwatia.

The injunction stemmed from a legal challenge by Henry Boakye-Yiadom, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) parliamentary candidate and former MP, who contested the election results.

Boakye-Yiadom had filed a lawsuit against the Electoral Commission (EC), Kumi, and the Clerk to Parliament, disputing the outcome of the polls. Official results had declared Kumi victorious with 19,269 votes,

while Boakye-Yiadom secured 17,206 votes.

Despite the court's order, Kumi went ahead with his swearing-in on January 7, 2025. His legal team, led by Lawyer Gary Nimako, later sought to overturn the injunction, but the court dismissed their application.

On February 19, 2025, the Koforidua High Court issued a bench warrant for Kumi's arrest, citing his absence from contempt proceedings and his failure to comply with the earlier injunction.



Jerry Ahmed Shaib, Second Deputy Minority Whip



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Business

Ghana's oil export declined by over 50% in 2024 - OPDAG

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Ghana's oil palm exports declined by more than 50% in 2024, according to the Oil Palm Development Association of Ghana (OPDAG).

The association's president, Samuel Avaala, attributed this sharp downturn to insufficient government backing and the influx of cheaper foreign alternatives, which have put immense pressure on local producers. Speaking to Joy Business, Mr. Avaala made a strong appeal for protective measures to safeguard the domestic oil palm industry. He urged the government to take decisive action against the uncontrolled importation of foreign palm oil, which continues to undercut local businesses.

"We want to develop it ourselves, and it is in a state where we are not going to be competitive compared to

our neighbors. Let's play it safe. It's around 50%. But in recent times, what has happened is that it is probably crossing the 50% mark, leaving the local side to take less than 50%," he said.

The association stressed the urgency of investing in local production capacity to close the widening gap in palm oil supply. Avaala underscored the importance of sound policy measures, exchange rate stability, and efficient liquidity management, stating that a more favorable economic environment would bolster growth in the sector.

Ghana's annual palm oil consumption stands at approximately 450,000 metric tons, largely driven by demand for vegetable oil. However, domestic production accounts for only 300,000 metric tons, creating a substantial deficit of 150,000 metric tons, which is met through imports.

In 2021, Ghana's palm oil exports exceeded \$48.66 million, with Senegal emerging as the top buyer. Other key markets included Niger and the Netherlands, which imported around \$10.25 million and \$4.2 million worth of palm oil, respectively.

By 2023, the export value had risen to \$53 million, making up 0.319% of Ghana's total exports. Nigeria led as the primary destination, receiving 59% of the exports, followed by Senegal at 11.8% and Niger at 8.27%.



File photo

Minimum wage surges by 10% to GHc19.97 effective March 1

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Ghana's National Daily Minimum Wage (NDMW) has been increased by 10%, bringing the new rate for 2025 to GHc19.97. The increment, which takes effect on March 1, was announced by the National Tripartite Committee (NTC) following a meeting in Accra on Thursday, February 20.

Minister of Labour, Jobs and Employment, Abdul-Rashid Pelpuo, confirmed the adjustment, stating: "There has been an increase in the national daily minimum wage by 10 per cent over the 2024 National Daily Minimum Wage, which translates into a new national daily minimum wage of 19.97 Cedis. The effective date for the implementation of the 2025 minimum wage shall be the first of March 2025."

The new wage, which the Committee has recommended for tax exemption, forms part of efforts to ensure fair compensation for workers while balancing economic stability and business sustainability.

The latest adjustment builds on previous increments. In 2024, the minimum wage stood at GHc18.15, up from GHc14.88 in 2023. The new hike

comes amid broader discussions on fair wages, especially following a 15% salary increment for over 700,000 public sector workers last year.

All establishments, institutions, and organisations are required to comply with the new wage structure, ensuring that no worker earns below the approved minimum wage.

Prior to assuming office, Abdul-Rashid Pelpuo issued a strong warning to employers who fail to adhere to Ghana's minimum wage regulations. He stressed that violators will be prosecuted under his administration.

"If we agree on a minimum wage, the law is that it cuts across every organization. You shouldn't pay below

that wage. So, if we find anybody doing that, you will be questioned, and if you are found guilty, you will face the law. Ghanaians should not be cheated. We know how much the minimum wage is, and if you can't pay up to that, then it will bring many questions on your kind of organization," he explained.



Abdul-Rashid Pelpuo, Minister of Labour, Jobs and Employment

International

France hands over its Port-Bouët military base to Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast officially took control of Port-Bouët, the last remaining French military base in the country on Thursday. Paris officially handed the camp over in a ceremony that included a changing of the guard to mark the transfer of security responsibilities to the Ivorian army.

France has been present in Ivory Coast for decades, but the handover comes as the majority of its forces leave countries across West Africa. French Armed Forces Minister Sébastien Lecornu said some 80 French servicemen will continue to stay in the country to advise and train the Ivorian military.

"France is transforming its presence, France is not disappearing," he said. About 1,000 French soldiers were deployed in Port-Bouët and helped in the fight against jihadists, who launch regular attacks across the wider region.

The withdrawal will take place gradually over the course of 2025, but around 80

French soldiers are expected to remain for training and support missions. New military cooperation agreements were signed at the ceremony between the two countries, with both sides stressing that relations between them remain warm.

"This act marks a new era in the friendship and strategic collaboration between our two countries," said Ivorian Defence Minister Tene Birahima Ouattara.

He said the base was going to be renamed after the Ivorian army's first Chief of Staff, the late General Thomas d'Aquin Ouattara. Ivory Coast's announcement follows that of other leaders across West Africa, where France's military has been asked to leave.

Analysts say the requests for their departure can be seen as part of a broader structural transformation in the region's engagement with Paris. French troops have in recent years been kicked out of several West African

countries including Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Chad which was considered France's most stable and loyal partner in Africa.

The French government has been making

efforts to revive its waning political and military influence on the continent by devising a new military strategy.

Source: *Africanews*



France's Minister of Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu is welcomed by Defence Minister of Ivory Coast Tene Birahima Ouattara

Foreign aid freeze raises fears of renewed AIDS crisis in Africa

Concerns are rising in Africa about a potential resurgence of the devastating AIDS crisis that once claimed millions of lives across the continent.

Florence Makumene, a 53-year-old from Zimbabwe, witnessed the tragic toll of HIV on her loved ones, who faced a diagnosis that was often seen as a death sentence. However, when she tested positive in 2016, her story took a different turn thanks to a community initiative supported by the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which ensured she received essential treatment.

"I was deteriorating, but after starting treatment, I made a remarkable recovery," Makumene shared. Since its inception in 2003, PEPFAR has been credited with saving over 26 million lives and significantly altering the global landscape of AIDS. However, following a 90-day freeze on foreign aid ordered by former US President Donald Trump, this vital program has come to a standstill.

In Africa, the consequences have been dire, with thousands of US-funded health workers losing their jobs and clinics shutting down, leading to diminished access to HIV testing and treatment services. Health officials and experts across the continent are urgently calling for the resumption of PEPFAR, fearing that the dismantling of these essential services could set back progress by decades.

"If the American government doesn't reconsider and uphold its leadership... lives will be lost," warned Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of the United Nations AIDS program.

According to the United Nations AIDS program, AIDS-related deaths have plummeted by 69% since their peak in 2004, and new HIV infections have dropped by 60% since 1995. Many experts attribute this turnaround to PEPFAR, initiated by Republican President George W. Bush, which has primarily focused on Africa, saving countless lives through a program that provides crucial medication to manage HIV.

Now, the continuity of this treatment is at risk.

The nongovernmental organization supporting Makumene has been inactive for weeks, mirroring the situation of nearly all PEPFAR-funded NGOs across Africa as their futures are deliberated in Washington.

"We feel abandoned; there's no one to help us," expressed Makumene, who has a limited supply of medication. "We are reverting to the dark times when being HIV positive was synonymous with death. We urgently need assistance."

She is among approximately 20 million individuals globally who rely on antiretroviral medications, or ARVs, with the support of PEPFAR.

These medications prevent the HIV virus from proliferating within the body. Halting their use allows the virus to multiply again, potentially resulting in the development of drug-resistant strains.

Byanyima informed The Associated Press that the funding halt could lead to a rise in AIDS cases, causing "panic, fear, and confusion" across numerous African nations. "We could see an increase of 3.4 million AIDS orphans," she warned. PEPFAR finances thousands of NGOs and also directly bolsters public health

systems in various countries, often covering the salaries of tens of thousands of health workers involved in national HIV programs.

In South Africa, PEPFAR funds 15,000 health workers specializing in HIV within government hospitals and clinics. Although they constitute only 5% of the total workforce in South Africa's HIV response, they play vital roles: doctors and nurses administering ARVs, social workers, counselors, and community outreach workers connecting with those far from medical facilities.

Their removal would disrupt the entire system.

The South African government is exploring strategies to prevent a crisis by securing funds to retain these health workers. Other African nations are facing even more significant challenges. In Kenya, over 40,000 workers are at risk of being laid off due to the aid freeze, according to officials.

Meanwhile, in Lesotho, a small and impoverished nation in southern Africa, 1,500 health workers—around 7% of the country's total health staff—have already lost their jobs. Lesotho's Health Ministry has reached out to final-year medical students and recent graduates, encouraging them to volunteer at local health centers to fill staffing gaps.

On January 28, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced waivers aimed at ensuring the continuation of lifesaving treatments and other essential components of PEPFAR. Rubio has expressed his support for PEPFAR, although he has raised some concerns, and the Trump administration is keen on its ongoing operation.

Recently, a federal judge mandated that the Trump administration temporarily lift the freeze on foreign funding, dismissing the claim that the administration was providing waivers to facilitate some funding. The judge pointed out that no waiver system was in place at that time. Despite the announcement of waivers, numerous clinics remain closed. Health experts and activists have voiced their discontent with the waivers issued by the Trump administration, which limit access to treatment for certain populations.

In addition to antiretrovirals (ARVs), PEPFAR also supports pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a newer preventive medication. However, the waivers restrict PEPFAR-funded NGOs from providing PrEP to anyone other than pregnant or breastfeeding women, excluding high-risk groups such as gay men and sex workers who are more vulnerable to HIV transmission.

Furthermore, contraception services funded by PEPFAR have also been suspended.

Source: *Africanews*



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