

Mahama to reinstate July 1 as a public holiday

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UG: Education Minister proposes reducing school fee hike from 50% to 25%

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General News

Mahama to reinstate July 1 as a public holiday

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

President John Mahama has announced plans to restore July 1 as a public holiday in Ghana, reinstating its significance as Republic Day and Senior Citizens' Day. He also proposed that the day be recognized as a National Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving.

Speaking during his Thank You tour in the Western Region on February 5, President Mahama emphasized the importance of national unity and gratitude.

"We will soon have the opportunity as a nation to pray and give thanks to the Almighty God, as enjoined by the Holy Book that says, 'In all things, give thanks,'" he stated.

To formalize this decision, the president revealed that proposed amendments to the Public Holidays Act would be submitted to Parliament. The changes will not only restore July 1 as a public holiday but also introduce an additional holiday for the Muslim community to commemorate Eid-ul-Fitr.

"We will soon present to Parliament amendments to the Public Holidays Act to restore July 1 as a holiday," he affirmed.

"In the amendments to the Republic Holidays Act, we shall also make provisions to fulfill our promise to the Muslim community by introducing an extra holiday to mark the Muslim festival of Eid-ul-Fitr."

President Mahama further announced plans to establish a committee of religious leaders to oversee the organization and coordination of the National

Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving. This initiative, he noted, would encourage national reflection and appreciation of Ghana's achievements and progress.

Historically, July 1 was observed as Republic Day and Senior Citizens' Day. However, in 2019, the government of former President Nana Akufo-Addo enacted the Public Holidays Amendment Act 2019 (Act 986), which removed

July 1 as a public holiday. Instead, August 4 was introduced to honor Ghana's founders.

With the proposed amendments, President Mahama seeks to restore the historical and cultural importance of July 1 while fostering national unity and inclusivity in the observance of public holidays.



John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana

We will work tirelessly to prevent 'dumsor' during WAPCo's maintenance - GRIDCo

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Ghana Grid Company Ltd (GRIDCo) has assured the public that proactive measures have been taken to prevent power disruptions, commonly known as "dumsor," during the ongoing maintenance by the West Africa Gas Pipeline Company (WAPCo). The maintenance work, which began on February 5 after being rescheduled to ensure continuous power supply, is expected to be completed by March 2.

In a joint statement with the

Electricity Company of Ghana Ltd (ECG), GRIDCo revealed that, under the oversight of the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition, sufficient liquid fuel reserves have been secured to sustain operations at critical power plants in Tema as an alternative energy source.

The four-week offshore pigging exercise will temporarily suspend the reverse flow of gas from Ghana's Western Region to Tema and necessitate the shutdown of key facilities in Tema (Ghana), Lomé (Togo), and Cotonou (Benin).

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File photo

General News

We will work tirelessly to prevent 'dumsor' during WAPCo's maintenance - GRIDCo

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Scope of the Maintenance Exercise
As part of the maintenance, WAPCo will replace subsea valves in strategic locations to enhance operational safety and pipeline efficiency. The exercise, a regulatory requirement, aligns with global industry standards for pipeline integrity management.

The maintenance will take place in two phases. The first phase, completed in December 2024,

involved cleaning and inspecting the onshore section of the pipeline in Nigeria. The second phase focuses on the offshore segment, stretching from Badagry in Lagos State, Nigeria, to Takoradi in Ghana's Western Region.

Meanwhile, the Executive Director of the Institute of Energy Security (IES), Nana Amoasi VII, has commended the government's proactive approach in securing fuel

reserves to maintain electricity supply.

"The postponement of the maintenance programme gave the government ample time to build up liquid fuel reserves. If the exercise disrupts the flow of national gas to power plants in the Eastern enclave, there will be enough liquid fuel to keep the plants operational," he explained in an interview with the media.

Mr. Amoasi further emphasized that power plants, including Asogli and the entire Tema energy hub, will remain functional, ensuring uninterrupted electricity generation.

"This will enable the government to proceed with confidence, avoiding criticism and ensuring consumers enjoy a steady and reliable power supply," he added.

Pumps needed to resolve Volta Region water shortage to cost govt \$52m - Regional Minister

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Volta Regional Minister, James Gunu, has revealed that expanding Ho's water supply infrastructure is expected to cost approximately \$52 million, according to estimates from the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL).

Speaking in an interview on JoyNews, Mr. Gunu emphasized the urgent need for a long-term solution to address the city's persistent water shortages. While acknowledging the significant cost, he stressed that the expansion must be designed to accommodate Ho's rapidly growing population.

"In actual fact, from the report I reviewed, the estimated cost is about \$52 million. That is a report from the Ghana Water Company, but I told them we need to sit down and evaluate it properly because the expansion should adequately serve the increasing population. We do not want a situation where, in the next 10 or 20 years, we will face the same challenge," he stated.

Providing context, Mr. Gunu noted that when Ho's current water facility was constructed in 1992/1993, the city had a population of approximately 5,000. Today, that number has surged past 250,000, with water demand exceeding 30,000 meters. "If we are planning for the future, we must consider a population exceeding 500,000," he said.

The minister underscored the impact of Ho's expanding universities, educational institutions, and other developments, which necessitate a sustainable water supply system. Despite the high cost, he expressed optimism that international funding and donor support could help finance the expansion.

"It is very expensive, but we hope that donor partners will come in. Let's see whether we can secure grants to enable the Ghana Water Company to expand this facility so we can have a sustainable water supply for Ho and its environs," he added.

Mr. Gunu also stressed the need for meticulous planning to avoid future shortages and align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6, which aims to ensure universal access to clean water and sanitation.

The urgency of the expansion comes amid worsening system failures. In January, Ho experienced multiple water supply disruptions, with the latest breakdown lasting over a week. What initially began as sporadic pump failures late last year has now escalated into a full shutdown.

The Ghana Water Company's Kpeve headworks in the South

Dayi District, which supplies water to Ho and surrounding areas, currently has no functional pumps. The only remaining operational pump at the intake station has broken down beyond repair.

According to officials, the station originally had three pumps, all of which have become obsolete after more than 30 years in service. With no working pumps available to draw water from the Volta River for processing and distribution, over 100,000 residents remain affected by the crisis.

Authorities are now racing against time to secure funding and implement solutions to restore and expand water supply in the region.



James Gunu, Volta Regional Minister

General News

Suspension of probe into chaotic vetting false, public hearing resumes Friday - Chairman

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty**

Chairman of the Special Committee investigating the recent vetting chaos, Emmanuel Bedzrah, has refuted claims that the public hearing was indefinitely suspended, indicating that proceedings will resume today, February 7.

His statement contradicts earlier reports suggesting that the committee's work had been put on hold indefinitely due to directives from the Clerk of Parliament, Ebenezer Ahumah Djietror. Speaking to the media on Thursday, Mr. Bedzrah stressed that the temporary suspension of proceedings was a decision initiated by the Minority, not Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin.

"Let me state that the Speaker was not informed at all. In fact, after what happened during the committee sitting, I decided to meet with the Clerk and the two leaders, including the Deputy Speakers, at the Speaker's lobby.

"When I arrived, I was told the Speaker had given instructions to suspend proceedings. However, when I called the Speaker—who had travelled at the time—he denied giving any such directive. Those present also confirmed that they had been unable to reach him on the phone," he explained.

Mr. Bedzrah further revealed that despite the confusion, Speaker Bagbin had made it clear that the Clerk should proceed with the committee's work.

"Everyone heard the Speaker

yesterday, instructing the Clerk to continue. So I called the Speaker again, and he reaffirmed that he had not ordered any suspension.

"In the heat of the moment, we decided to maintain the suspension and wait for the Speaker to return to provide specific instructions on the way forward," he added.

Reiterating that the Minority was behind the suspension, Mr. Bedzrah asserted, "Honestly, this entire stoppage came from the Minority side. I can say that on authority."

Background

The vetting session, held on January 30, descended into chaos as tensions between the Majority and Minority escalated into a physical altercation. The disturbance,

which resulted in significant damage to parliamentary property—including broken tables and microphones—was triggered when the Majority pushed to extend the session beyond 10 PM, a move the Minority strongly opposed.

As tempers flared, some Minority MPs dismantled tables, worsening the destruction. The situation became so volatile that police had to intervene to restore order. Despite efforts by Majority Leader Mahama Ayariga and other parliamentary leaders to de-escalate tensions, the committee was forced to adjourn.

Following Mr. Bedzrah's clarification, the committee is set to resume its work today, with expectations that proceedings will continue smoothly under the Speaker's directive.



Emmanuel Bedzrah, Chairman of the Special Committee investigating chaos

General News

UG academic fees slashed by 25% after intervention by Education Minister

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The University of Ghana has revised its proposed fee increment following the intervention of the Minister of Education, Haruna Iddrisu.

The decision comes after high-level discussions between the university's management and the Students' Representative Council (SRC), leading to a 25% reduction in the initially proposed 50% increase for fresh students.

A meeting held at the Ministry of Education Conference Room on Wednesday, February 6, was prompted by widespread concerns from students and parents over the financial burden the proposed hike would impose. The SRC, led by its president, Maradonna Adjei Yeboah, strongly opposed the move to increase first-year students' fees from GH¢2,000 to GH¢3,000, describing it as excessive. "If we want to maintain momentum

and peace, I urge your office, the president, and all stakeholders, including the vice-chancellor, to reconsider the increase. We want them to cancel it for further review," Yeboah stated during the discussions. He further appealed for a reduction in the additional GH¢500 fee imposed on continuing students.

Vice-Chancellor Nana Aba acknowledged the concerns raised and indicated that adjustments could be made to address them. To facilitate a fair resolution, the Education Minister invited the Director-General of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Professor Ahmed Abdulai Jinapor, to deliberate on possible modifications.

After careful consideration, the parties reached a consensus to limit the fee increment to 25% for all students instead of the proposed 50%. Minister Iddrisu then directed UG management to implement the revised fees

while cautioning GTEC to enforce compliance with the Fees and Charges Act.

"...Given my background in Parliament, I believe that whenever adjustments to fees are considered, they should align with the Fees and Charges Act. GTEC must take steps to ensure that our

universities comply with these directives. We want to uphold due process in all matters," the minister emphasized.

The resolution marks significant relief for students and parents, who had raised concerns about affordability and accessibility to education.



Haruna Iddrisu, Minister of Education

U.S. Army Major jailed 70 months for smuggling firearms to Ghana

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

U.S. Army Major Kojo Owusu Dartey has been sentenced to 70 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for smuggling firearms to Ghana and making false statements to federal authorities.

Dartey, 42, stationed at Fort Liberty, was found guilty by a jury on April 23, 2024, on multiple charges, including conspiracy, illegal firearm dealing, false declarations in court, and exporting firearms without a license.

According to court records and trial evidence, Dartey orchestrated a firearms smuggling operation by purchasing seven firearms in North Carolina. He also instructed a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to buy three more firearms and send them to him.

To avoid detection, Dartey concealed the weapons inside blue barrels filled with rice and household goods. He then collaborated with an Army Chief Warrant Officer to transport the barrels through the Port of Baltimore, Maryland. The shipment, however, was intercepted at the Port of Tema, Ghana, where Ghanaian authorities seized the firearms and notified the DEA attaché in Ghana and the ATF Baltimore Field Division.

Additionally, Dartey was linked to a 16-defendant marriage fraud scheme involving soldiers at Fort Liberty and foreign nationals from Ghana. Although he initially provided information that aided its prosecution, he later lied to federal law enforcement and under oath in court about his relationship with a defense witness during the U.S. v. Agyapong trial between June

28 and July 2, 2021.

His sentencing was announced by Acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Daniel Bubar, following an investigation conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID), and the Department of Commerce's Office of Export Enforcement. Assistant U.S. Attorney Gabriel J. Diaz prosecuted the case.



Kojo Owusu Dartey, U.S. Army Major

General News

Procurement process for toll collection system will be transparent, competitive - Roads Ministry

By Amanda Cartey

The Ministry of Roads and Highways has assured the public of a fair and transparent procurement process in selecting a technologically advanced toll collection system. This follows the government's decision to reintroduce road and bridge tolls as a revenue-generating measure for road maintenance and infrastructure development.

In a statement issued on February 6, the Ministry emphasized that the selection process for the new toll system would be open, competitive, cost-effective, and aligned with best practices. "The Ministry will employ an open, transparent, competitive, cost-effective, and fair procurement

process," the statement read. Authorities believe that a modernized toll collection system will address inefficiencies associated with previous tolling methods while ensuring a sustainable funding model for road maintenance.

Ghana first introduced road tolls in the early 1990s as a means of financing road infrastructure. Over the years, toll booths became a common feature on major highways, requiring motorists to pay fees for road usage.

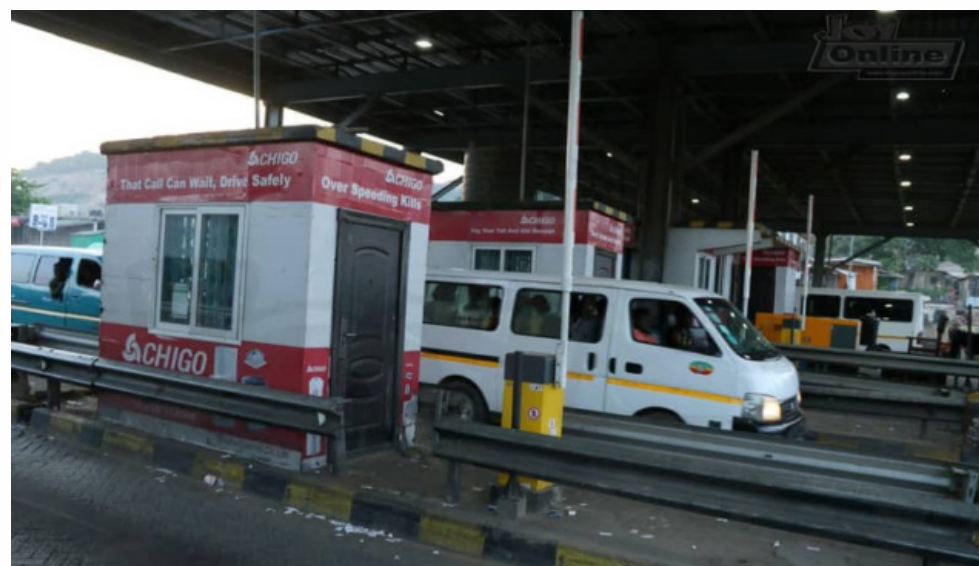
However, in 2021, the Akufo-Addo administration abolished road tolls, citing high collection costs and relatively low revenue generation. The removal was incorporated into the government's budget for that year and was replaced

by the controversial Electronic Transaction Levy (E-Levy).

At the time, then-Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia noted that the government was collecting approximately GHS70 million annually from road tolls. He argued

that if all motorists paid their tolls, the state could have generated as much as GHS2 billion per year.

With plans now underway to abolish the E-Levy, the government is seeking to restore road tolls under a more efficient and technology-driven system.



Toll booth

Mahama engages Finance Ministry, contractor on completing stalled €48m Takoradi market today

By Amanda Cartey

Former President John Dramani Mahama has taken steps to revive the stalled Takoradi Market Circle redevelopment project, and is set to hold discussions with key stakeholders today to set new timelines for its completion.

As part of his thank-you tour in the Western Region following the 2024 elections, Mahama visited the project site to assess its status and assured traders and residents that steps were being taken to resume construction.

"We are here to inspect and assess the status of the project. We will return to Accra, and on Friday, we will meet the contractor and the Minister of Finance to discuss how to complete the Takoradi Market Circle Redevelopment project," Mahama stated.

The redevelopment project was launched in 2020 under former President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo at a cost

of €48 million. The first phase, undertaken by the Italian firm Messrs Contracta Costruzioni Italia SLR, was originally scheduled for completion in 2023 but remains unfinished.

Mahama reassured traders that construction teams would soon return to the site to complete the

work. Once finished, the market will feature 2,408 stores, 33 restaurants and food courts, bulk-breaking areas, a visitors' car park, a police and fire station, and a post office.

Additional facilities will include a clinic, administrative offices, a daycare center, banking spaces, a

waste separation dock, and staff changing rooms.

His commitment to reviving the project has reignited hopes among traders and residents eager to see the Takoradi Market Circle transformed into a modern commercial hub.



President Mahama (R) inspects Takoradi Market Circle project

General News

Find MP who verbally abused Zanetor Rawlings latest by Feb 10 - Anlo Duko Council to Speaker

By *Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

The Anlo Duko Council has called on the Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, to disclose the identity of the Member of Parliament (MP) who verbally attacked Dr. Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, the MP for Klottey-Korle.

The traditional rulers have set a deadline of February 10 for the Speaker to respond to their request, stressing the need for accountability and respect within the legislative body.

The incident occurred during a parliamentary debate marking the 60th anniversary of the passing of Joseph Boakye Danquah. The discussion quickly escalated into a heated political clash, particularly after Tamale Central MP, Ibrahim Murtala Muhammed, challenged the Minority's tributes to Danquah. In response to the growing tension, Speaker Andrew Asiamah restricted contributions to only parliamentary

leadership. Despite the directive, disorder persisted. When Dr. Agyeman-Rawlings attempted to contribute to the debate, she was ignored by the Speaker, further fueling the chaos. The situation culminated in an unidentified MP from the Minority side allegedly calling her the "daughter of a murderer," a remark that has since drawn widespread condemnation.

In a statement dated February 5, Togbi Sri III, Overlord of the Anlo Duko, along with the chiefs and people of the Anlo Kingdom, expressed outrage over the incident and demanded that the responsible MP be identified.

"The Anlo Duko will be grateful if our request is granted and the said individual is identified on or before the 10th of February, 2025," the statement read. The Council further emphasized that identifying the MP would guide their next course of action.

The derogatory comment has sparked

significant backlash, particularly on social media, where speculation has pointed to Damango MP, Abu Jinapor, as the source. However, both Jinapor and Bosome Freho MP, Nana Kwame Asafo-Adjei, who was also linked to the remark, have denied making the statement.

Jinapor, in his defense, reiterated his deep respect for the late former

President Jerry John Rawlings and his family, particularly Dr. Agyeman-Rawlings, rejecting any suggestion that he was responsible for the offensive words.

The controversy has intensified calls for Parliament to uphold decorum and address the behavior of its members to maintain the dignity of the legislative chamber.



Dr. Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, MP for Klottey-Korle

600 workers risk unemployment over potential shut down of GREL factory due to galamsey

By *Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*

Illegal mining activities continue to threaten the operations of Ghana Rubber Estates Limited (GREL), putting over 600 jobs at risk. The company's plantation has been heavily affected by encroachment, rendering parts of it inaccessible and disrupting production.

Speaking to the media, GREL's Corporate Affairs Manager, Perry Acheampong, expressed deep concern over the destruction caused by illegal mining. He warned that if the situation persists, the company may be forced to shut down one of its factories, worsening Ghana's unemployment crisis.

"We are unable to access parts of the plantation. Once the land is taken over, the trees are destroyed, leading to a loss in production. At one point, we had to temporarily shut down the factory due to this issue. If it persists, we may be forced to close one of our factories, which employs 600 direct staff," Acheampong stated.

Beyond job losses, illegal mining has also led to a severe water crisis

at GREL. Acheampong revealed that water sources essential for the company's operations have been polluted, making them unsuitable for use.

"We use a lot of water at the factory, but illegal mining has polluted our water sources, making it unusable for operations," he explained.

To address these pressing challenges, GREL is working closely with security agencies to safeguard its plantation and prevent further encroachment. Mr Acheampong emphasized the urgent need for stakeholders in the sector to develop effective strategies to combat illegal mining and protect businesses like GREL from collapse.

Ghana's unemployment rate currently stands at 3.60%, with a labor force of approximately 14.9 million people. The potential loss of 600 jobs, though statistically small, would contribute to the already strained labor market, leading to increased social and economic challenges.

GREL is Ghana's largest rubber processor, operating two factories in the Western Region with a combined

processing capacity of 20 tonnes per hour. Other rubber processing companies in the country include NARUBIZ Ltd. (1 tonne per hour), Rubber Plantations Ghana Ltd. (RPGL) (0.8 tonnes per hour), and APEX Rubber Processing (1 tonne per hour).

With 13,093 hectares of rubber plantations—9,555 hectares currently being tapped—GREL plays a significant role in Ghana's agribusiness sector, contributing to job creation and economic growth. In

2022, Ghana earned approximately \$131.3 million from exporting processed rubber and natural rubber sheets, according to the Ghana Export Promotion Authority.

The government holds a 26.75% stake in GREL, benefiting from taxes and dividends paid by the company. However, without immediate action to curb illegal mining, the company's contributions to the economy and employment could be severely impacted.



GREL Factory



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Business

Ghana Gas' debt to GNPC surges by 12.1% to \$626m - PIAC

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Ghana National Gas Company Limited (GNGLC) is grappling with a growing debt crisis, with its debt to the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) soaring by 12.1%, reaching \$626 million as of June 30, 2024.

This marks a significant increase from the \$559 million recorded during the same period in 2023.

According to a report from the Public Interest Accountability Committee (PIAC), the escalation of this debt is primarily attributed to the ongoing financial challenges faced by the Volta River Authority (VRA), which has been unable to meet its payment obligations for the gas supplied by GNGLC.

In addition to VRA's payment struggles, the volume of raw gas supplied to GNGLC by GNPC has experienced a slight decline. In the first half of 2023, GNGLC received

22,730,386.70 MMBtu of raw gas, while in the first half of 2024, this volume dropped to 22,158,283.5 MMBtu.

The invoicing for gas supplied during the first half of 2024 amounted to \$144 million, a sharp increase from \$9.3 million in 2023. However, GNGLC only received a credit note of \$121 million, leaving an outstanding balance of \$22 million. When added to the previous debt of \$604 million, the total debt now stands at a concerning \$626 million.

The PIAC report underscores the serious implications of this growing debt on the operational viability of both GNGLC and VRA. It also raises alarms over potential breaches of the Petroleum Holding Funds (PHF) legal framework, as revenues from gas sales play a vital role in supporting the PHF.

Furthermore, payments through the Cash Waterfall Mechanism (CWM) have been inadequate. By June 2024,

total payments amounted to just \$10 million, covering invoices from November 2023 to April 2024.

This marks a significant decline from the \$18.2 million received during the same period in 2023. The shortfall in payments has further strained GNGLC's finances and exacerbated the company's debt crisis.

In light of these challenges, PIAC has called for urgent action from all relevant stakeholders to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of key players in Ghana's energy sector. The committee emphasized that addressing VRA's financial difficulties and improving the efficiency of the CWM are critical to resolving the crisis and preventing further escalation of GNGLC's debt.



Ghana National Gas Company

Trade flow restored as Ghana Customs clears 1,000 containers in 10 days

By Amanda Cartey

The Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) successfully cleared 1,000 containers at the Tema Port within just ten days, reducing the backlog from 4,600 to 3,600.

Samuel Akrofi, the Acting Head of the Ghana Customs Laboratory, explained that the congestion, which began in July 2024 due to scanner breakdowns, had severely hampered cargo processing, leading to slower trade and increasing port congestion. "The breakdown of scanning equipment caused delays in cargo processing. By December, the number of containers at the Meridian Port Services (MPS) had surged to 4,600. The situation was spiraling out of control," Akrofi said during an interview on the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority's (GPHA) Eye on Port programme.

Despite efforts to repair the scanners, including bringing in experts, no immediate solution was found. As a result, Customs implemented a new clearance strategy in January

2025. The revised approach involved transferring uncleared containers to internal container depots (ICDs), where they underwent manual inspection instead of relying on scanning.

"We needed to clear the backlog without compromising security. Therefore, we moved the containers to depots like the Golden Jubilee Terminal for further checks," Akrofi noted, adding that rigorous manual inspections ensured compliance.

In addition to clearing the backlog, Customs is working to enhance cargo processing efficiency through the Integrated Customs Management System (ICUMS), a digital platform designed to reduce paperwork, strengthen risk management, and improve inter-agency collaboration.

Customs has also shifted to a supply chain-based monitoring system, moving away from a sole focus on border checks. This new approach, aided by technology, allows for real-time shipment tracking and risk profiling. It ensures that trusted traders experience faster clearance,

while high-risk shipments undergo more rigorous scrutiny.

Akrofi further revealed that Customs is leveraging advanced tools such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning to improve compliance monitoring.

"While most shipments are compliant, a few pose security risks.

Our task is to identify and intercept these without disrupting the overall clearance process," he stated.

With these ongoing improvements, Ghana's trade sector is expected to operate more smoothly, bolstering business confidence and enhancing government revenue collection.



Tema Port

International

Uganda trains Community Health workers from Kole, Mukono and Wakiso districts on community-based approach to Ebola

Uganda's Ministry of Health has conducted a training on Ebola disease detection and management for Community Health Worker representatives from Kole, Wakiso, and Mukono districts. The training also focused on developing the Ebola Community Health Workers curriculum. By leveraging community structures and assets, this initiative aims to enhance Uganda's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to health emergencies.

The three-day event was supported by World Health Organization (WHO), and the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (UK-PHRST). The UK-PHRST is a UK aid project funded by the Department of Health and Social care.

Participants engaged in discussions focused on multi-sectoral action to safeguard communities from emerging zoonotic diseases with pandemic potential such as Ebola. The exercise underscored various challenges, such as economic downturns, lockdown-related absenteeism, system strains, public anxiety, and rampant misinformation. It also highlighted the significant roles of community volunteers, health workers, civil society organizations, the private sector, and government entities in outbreak and pandemic response.

Dr Dansan Atim, Ministry of Health Senior Medical Officer in charge of community Health, emphasized the importance of a community-based approach in responding to public health threats. "By integrating community-centered health emergency management into national policies and practices, we strengthen our ability to detect, report, and respond to public health threats early, preventing outbreaks from escalating," he said.

The community protection approach is a central component of WHO's new Health emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and resilience (HEPR) framework. The framework is based on the principle that health emergencies begin and end in communities, necessitating robust national health systems that are accountable to those they serve and promote gender equity and human rights.

"By prioritizing community-centered policies and strategies through the community protection approach we foster greater collaboration between governments, communities, and civil society organizations. This approach ensures interventions are effective and aligned with community needs," said Dr Kai von Harbou, Unit Head, Country Readiness and Resilience at WHO Headquarters.

Building on lessons learned from past health crises such as Ebola and COVID-19, Uganda has already made substantial advancements in emergency preparedness. Communities have played an integral role in raising awareness, supporting case identification, tracing contacts, and maintaining essential health services. The emphasis on collaboration with local leaders, volunteers, and health workers is seen as vital for effective responses to public health emergencies.

"We are delighted to have contributed our technical expertise to this community protection exercise and strategic action planning workshop alongside the World Health Organization at global, regional, and local levels, the Ministry of Health in

Uganda and other partners. We hope this will help ensure Ugandan local communities are even better prepared for outbreaks," said Dr Claire Bayntun, Head of Capacity Strengthening UK-Public Health Rapid Support Team (UK-PHRST), Honorary Professor at London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and Consultant for Global Public Health.

Byantun added, "This exercise builds on our previous successful collaboration and simulation exercise in Ghana. Bringing this workshop to Uganda has further strengthened our partnerships and reinforces the benefit of these exercises, as learnings are relevant for the public health responses for communities in many countries."

Source: WHO



Uganda's Ministry of Health has conducted a training on Ebola disease

Fire breaks out at a school in northern Nigeria, killing at least 17 children

At least 17 children were killed in a fire that broke out in an Islamic school in northwestern Nigeria, the country's emergency response agency said, as authorities launched an investigation into the cause on Thursday.

The National Emergency Management Agency said in a statement that about 100 children were at the school when the fire broke out on Wednesday in the Kaura Namoda district of Zamfara state. Seventeen children were seriously injured and were being treated at different hospitals.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire. Preliminary findings, however, suggest that the fire was caused by a stockpile of sticks used for oral hygiene, locally known as "kara," which were gathered in the

vicinity of the school, the agency said.

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu commiserated with families of victims and urged schools to prioritize children's safety.

Deadly school fires are not commonplace in Nigeria but past incidents have been blamed on government's failure to enforce recommendations under Nigeria's Safe School Initiative, which was formulated in 2014 to protect schools and students. Tinubu ordered regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with the directive.

Last month, an improvised explosive device detonated at a school on the outskirts of Abuja, Nigeria's capital, killing two people and injuring two others.

Source: Africanews



Accident scene

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