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Russia Denies Cosmonauts Board Space Station In Ukrainian Colours

Russia's space agency has rejected claims that three Russian cosmonauts boarded the International Space Station wearing Ukrainian colours, in a possible statement against the war.

The first arrivals since Russia's war began were warmly welcomed wearing yellow suits with blue trimmings.

They were warmly welcomed on board, hugging and greeting their fellow American, Russian and German crew.

"Sometimes yellow is just yellow," said the Roscosmos space agency.

The ISS is a joint project between Russia, America, Canada, Japan and several European countries.

It is led by a US-Russian partnership that has continued for two decades despite fluctuating tensions between the two world powers.

Russian cosmonauts Denis Matveyev, Oleg Artemyev and Sergey Korsakov docked at the ISS after a three-hour flight which blasted off from a Russian-owned facility in Kazakhstan.

"Congratulations on the successful docking," a voice from Russia's mission control said moments

later.

A few hours later, two sets of hatches were opened and the three smiling men floated into the space station one by one in their bright yellow gear.

The standard-issue Russian uniform is plain blue, and at least one of the men was seen wearing this before take-off.

The moment was live-streamed by both Roscosmos and Nasa, the American space agency.

"It became our turn to pick a colour," Mr Artemyev said when he was asked about the suits in a live-streamed press conference.

"We had accumulated a lot of yellow material so we needed to use it," he joked. "That's why we had to wear yellow."

Since the invasion of Ukraine, people around the world have used the colours of its national flag to show solidarity and support.

But Roscosmos's press service dismissed the reports as a "funny invention" by foreign bloggers and media.

"The flight suits of the new crew are made in the colours of the emblem of the Bauman Moscow State Technical University, which all three cosmonauts



Mr Artemyev was later seen posing in a white suit with the colours of the Russian flag

graduated from...To see the Ukrainian flag everywhere and in everything is crazy."

The head of Roscosmos, Dmitry Rogozin, is a strong supporter of the invasion and he suggested the claims that the cosmonauts were wearing Ukrainian colours had come from Ukrainian nationalists.

Roscosmos later published another picture of Oleg Artemyev wearing an obviously Russian suit.

The three Russians will begin a science mission on the ISS that is set to last just over six months.

They will replace three current crew members who are scheduled to fly back to Earth on 30 March.

UK Grounds Plane With Possible Russian Links - Shapps



Aircrafts owned, operated or chartered by Russians are banned from flying or landing in the UK

The UK has grounded another plane as authorities investigate its "possible Russian links", the transport

secretary has said.

Grant Shapps said ministers were taking decisive action against Vladimir Putin and his "illegal war" in Ukraine.

All planes owned, operated or chartered by Russians are banned from flying or landing in the UK.

The Department for Transport has not revealed any further details, such as where the aircraft was grounded.

The latest plane seizure comes 10 days after it emerged that the UK had impounded a

private jet linked to a billionaire Russian oligarch.

The Luxembourg-registered aircraft had flown from the US into Farnborough airport, Hampshire, on 3 March. UK officials believe the oil tycoon Eugene Shvidler was on board when it arrived.

The plane had been due to fly from the UK to Dubai, but UK authorities prevented this while they investigated whether it was permanently leased to Mr Shvidler and fell under UK sanctions.

Mr Shvidler himself has not been personally sanctioned by the UK at any stage.

The UK and other western nations opposed to the Russian president's invasion of Ukraine have introduced a raft of sanctions designed to cripple Russia's economy and hurt its wealthiest citizens.

The UK has made it a criminal offence for planes owned, operated or chartered by Russians - including private jets - to fly or land in the UK.

New trade

sanctions have also been introduced banning UK exports of aviation or space-related technology to Russia.

Other measures introduced by the UK include:

Excluding major Russian banks from the UK financial system and freezing the assets of all Russian banks

Putting a 35% tax on certain imports from Russia, including vodka

Imposing sanctions - including travel bans and asset freezes - against oligarchs considered close to the Kremlin

Tanner Brass: Canada Police Force In Racism Row Over Boy's Death

A Canada police force has been accused of ignoring an indigenous mother's warning about leaving her toddler with the man now charged with his

death.

Tanner Brass was found dead hours after police arrested his mother, Kyla Frenchman, when she argued with them about her son's safety, she said.

The boy's father, Kaij Brass, has been charged with second-degree murder.

Indigenous leaders say Ms Frenchman was racially profiled and have demanded the local

police chief's resignation.

Two Canadian police officers in the city of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, have been suspended.

Police responded to reports of a domestic dispute in the early hours of 10 February and found Ms Frenchman standing outside the apartment building, she said.

Ms Frenchman told the officers she had been kicked out of her apartment and feared her 13-month-old son was in danger.

She said the officers told her to wait outside and entered the building, only to return shortly afterwards and say no-one had answered the door.

Ms Frenchman said when she demanded the officers check on Tanner, she was arrested for suspected intoxication. She denies being drunk.

Several hours later police were called back to the same home to reports of a homicide involving a child.

They found Tanner dead and Kaij Brass was arrested.

Speaking at a news conference on Friday, Kyla Frenchman struggled to speak as she demanded justice for her son. Standing with friends and relatives, she spoke of her son as a "happy baby" with a big smile.

A statement read on her behalf said she had "begged and pleaded" with police to help her and her child after they arrived at their home.

It went on: "Instead, they accused me of being drunk. They put me in handcuffs and they put me in a cell."

A statement from the Prince Albert police department described the boy's death as a tragedy.

It added: "As an organisation, there is nothing we can say to lessen the grief and torment at this shocking loss of a deeply loved child from our community."

But Heather Bear, Vice-Chief of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, said: "If these officers showed up to a domestic dispute call involving a young white family, knowing that an infant was inside and possibly in danger, do you think they would have arrested the mother and left?"

Police have not responded to this allegation.

Earlier this month, the department's chief, Jon Bergen, suspended the two officers involved with pay.

Last week, 95% of the union representing Prince Albert officers supported a vote of no confidence in Mr Bergen's leadership.

Ms Frenchman said in her statement she believed Tanner would still be alive "if they had listened to me".

An investigation into the boy's death is ongoing.



Kyla Frenchman struggled to speak to media about her baby, who died last month



EDITORIAL

Accra, Monday, March 21st, 2022

Honour Your Debts To ECG

It is indeed sad to note that over all these years, government institutions including Ministries, Departments and Agencies continue to owe the Electricity Company of Ghana.

This week we have seen officials of ECG leading their task force to disconnect some of these institutions from the national grid.

GO is not too comfortable with the development because in one sense, it affects the work of these ministries and departments.

However, GO can also not run away from the fact that ECG needs these monies to survive and deliver good quality service to the consumers.

Most often, ECG focused its attention on the private sector and the household consumers who use but very little of power.

It is interesting that state institutions like the Ministry of Finance, EOCO, Kotoka International Airport (KIA), among others are culprits of this development.

We will like to remind all that the consequences of this debt is that utilities like ECG are unable to cover operating expenses, maintain their existing infrastructure, and fund new investment to accommodate growth in electricity demand.

We would not wish to go back to the days of dumsor. Debt to ECG is also a major barrier to economic growth.

We appeal to government to help in bringing the indebtedness of ECG down. We also appeal to all public and private entities which are in debt to ECG to honour their debt for ECG to be in business.

Frema Osei-Opare: The Benevolent Chief Of Staff Silently Touching Lives



Akosua Frema Osei-Opare

The Chief of Staff role comes with a great deal of responsibilities beyond politics. It takes a lot of tact and diplomacy to survive such position because you work with individuals from all walks of life irrespective of their political persuasions.

In the political space, the Chief of Staff ensures that the executive, especially the president of the Republic constantly remain in touch with the citizenry by keeping an eye on the smooth operation of government machinery.

The current and first female Chief of Staff of Ghana, Akosua Frema Osei-Opare, has operated an open-door policy ever since she took office in 2017, constantly working behind the scenes to solve problems, mediate disputes, and deal with issues before they are brought to the attention of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo.

"She is the kind of Chief of Staff that the president can go to sleep knowing she won't do or say anything against his wishes.

She is loyal, dedicated, disciplined, wise and careful," that is how one insider describes her.

Beyond making sure that government appointees are on top of their games, Osei-Opare's office on a daily basis receives a plethora of requests from ordinary citizens (both party faithful and non-party members) to deal with their personal or family issues. The issues bother on medical bills, scholarships, job placements as well as funeral donations.

Her benevolent reputation has always preceded her – a trait that has almost landed her a bad press recently because some party folks believe they deserve better and should be given more attention than "outsiders."

New Patriotic Party (NPP) members crying foul may be right, but the Chief of Staff is not wrong in opening her doors wide to every tax payer including non-party members when they also need help, especially in times of grief such as in the case of popular actress, Afia Schwarzenegger aka Valentina

Nana Agyeiwaa, when her father died. In any case, the GHC50,000 donation claim from the Chief of Staff to Afia is not factual and should be disregarded.

When someone is naturally generous, it is difficult to suppress that rare God-given gift and they do so without taking into consideration your party colours. For them, it's always about humanity and nothing else. Osei-Opare has over the years been in the news for all the good reasons, majority of which she prefers remain private.

On top of mind is the recent GHC 15 million donation on behalf of President Akufo-Addo to carry out the first medical procedure in Ghana to separate conjoined twins at the Ridge Hospital in Accra. Also, through her political affairs director, Frank Asiedu Bekoe (Protozoa), she facilitated for a surgery that saved the life of a little boy who was diagnosed with a brain tumour.

Back in 2019, the Chief of Staff also donated items worth thousands of Ghana Cedis to the

maternity ward of the University of Ghana Hospital in celebration of Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Day.

In addition, she has on several occasions called for support for the disadvantaged in society to help them live happy lives after making donations to some mental homes, orphanages and special schools across the country during the festive seasons.

The Office of the Chief of Staff is not only there to serve political purposes, but to serve Ghanaians irrespective of one's political, ethnic or religious divide. Osei-Opare does not discriminate and on occasions where she is unable to personally attend to the myriads of Ghanaians who throng her office unannounced, her aides have always been on hand to assist.

May we not sacrifice a mother whose only perceived crime is being sympathetic towards her neighbour's dying children.

Ukraine War: Putin Has Redrawn The World - But Not The Way He Wanted

Vladimir's Putin's invasion of Ukraine has changed the world. We are living in new and more dangerous times - the post-Cold War era that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall is over.

It is a rare thing to live through a moment of huge historical consequence and understand in real time that is what it is.

In November 1989, I stood on a snow-flecked Wenceslas Square in Prague, the capital of what was then Czechoslovakia, and watched a new world being born.

The peoples of Communist Eastern Europe had risen in defiance of their dictatorships. The Berlin Wall had been torn down. A divided Europe was being made whole again.

In Prague, the dissident playwright Vaclav Havel addressed a crowd of 400,000 from a second-floor balcony. It was an exhilarating moment, dizzying in its pace. That evening, the Communist regime collapsed and within weeks Havel was president of a new democratic state. I sensed, even at the time, that I had watched the world pivot - that it was one of those rare moments when you know the world is remaking itself before your eyes.

How many such moments had there been in the history of Europe since the French Revolution? Probably, I thought then, about five. This, 1989, was the sixth.

But that world - born in those dramatic popular revolutions - came to an end when Putin ordered Russian forces into Ukraine.

The German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called this moment a *zeitenwende* - a turning point - while UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said it was a "paradigm shift". The age of complacency, she said, was over.

Quentin Sommerville, one of the BBC's most experienced war reporters walked through the wreckage in Kharkiv recently and said of the Russian bombardment: "If these tactics are unfamiliar to you, then you haven't been paying attention."

He should know, he spent enough time under Russian rockets in Syria to be paying very close attention. But the governments of the democratic world - how much attention have they been paying to the nature of the Putin regime?

The evidence has been building for years.

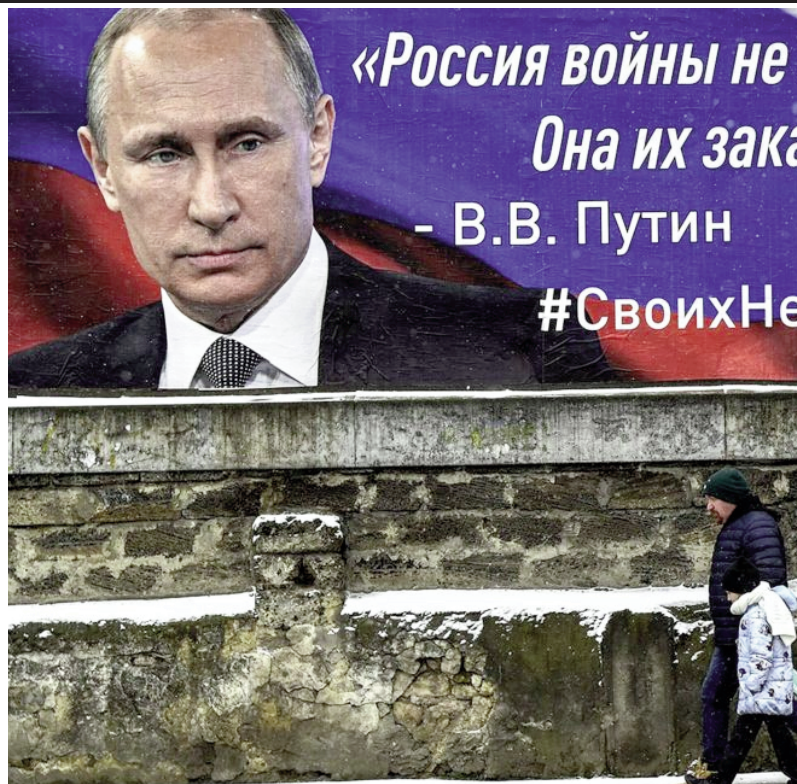
Two decades have passed since he sent troops into Georgia claiming he was supporting breakaway regions.

Later, he sent spies into British cities armed with nerve agents to murder exiled Russians.

In 2014, he invaded Eastern Ukraine and annexed Crimea.

Despite all this, Germany, and much of the EU, were locking themselves into an unhealthy dependence on Russian gas. A year after the annexation of Crimea, they approved the building of a new pipeline, Nord Stream 2, to boost supplies.

The "complacency" Liz Truss refers to also indicts her own country. London has been a safe haven for Russian money since John Major was prime minister. Russian oligarchs have parked billions here, laundered their money, bought up the most prestigious private homes in the capital, socialised with politicians and donated to their campaign funds. Few questions were asked about where their vast wealth, acquired so suddenly, had come from.



Russia does not start wars, it ends them- reads a poster of Vladimir Putin in Simferopol, Crimea, 10 March

So, no. The Western democracies have not been "paying attention" to the nature of the menace that has been incubating on their eastern frontier.

But Putin, too, has seemed complacent.

First, he believed the West was in chronic decline, weakened by internal division and ideological rancour. The election of Donald Trump and Brexit he saw as proof of this. The rise of right-wing authoritarian governments in Poland and Hungary was further evidence of the disintegration of liberal values and institutions. The US's humiliating withdrawal from Afghanistan was proof of a waning power withdrawing from the world stage.

Second, he misread what was happening on his borders. He refused to believe that a series of democratic uprisings in former Soviet Republics - Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004-5) and Kyrgyzstan (2005) - could possibly be authentic expressions of the popular will. Because each was aimed at removing corrupt and unpopular pro-Moscow governments, it seemed self-evident to the Kremlin that these were the work of foreign intelligence agencies, the Americans and the British in particular - Western imperialism's forward march into territory that was rightfully and historically Russia's.

Third, he has failed to understand his own armed forces. It is clear now that he expected this "special military operation" to be over in a few days.

Russia's military incompetence has astonished many Western security experts. It brings echoes for me of a smaller, more containable, but nonetheless devastating war, in former Yugoslavia.

In 1992, Serb nationalists launched a war to strangle the newly independent state of Bosnia at birth. They argued that Bosnian identity was bogus, that Bosnian statehood had no historical legitimacy, that it was really part of Serbia. It is exactly Putin's view of Ukraine.

Like Russia today, Serb forces enjoyed overwhelming firepower superiority. But they often stalled wherever local non-Serbs put up resistance. They seemed unable to seize towns or cities - unwilling to fight street-

by-street on foot. The Bosnian defenders were initially very poorly equipped - I remember boys in tennis shoes in the trenches of Sarajevo with one AK-47 between three of them. But they defended their capital for nearly four years. There is a similar resolve in the young men volunteering to defend Kyiv.

So instead of taking the cities and towns, the Serbs laid siege to them - surrounding them, bombarding them, cutting off water, gas and electricity. It is already happening in Mariupol. Besiege a city and cut off its water supply, and within 24 hours, every toilet is a public health hazard. Citizens have to go out into the streets to find water standpipes and fill up receptacles just to flush their loos. Cut off the electricity and you freeze in your own home. Soon the food runs out. Is that what the Russians intend for Mariupol, for Kharkiv, for Kyiv? To starve them into submission?

But nearly four years of this cruelty gave Bosnian nationhood a founding narrative of resistance, suffering and heroic struggle. Ukraine's identity, too, will be strengthened further by the way Ukrainians have fought. Ukraine's Russian speakers have not felt "liberated" by the invasion. The evidence is that they, too, believe in Ukraine as a sovereign state. Putin's war, aimed at reunifying what he sees as two parts of the Russian nation, is already having the opposite effect - strengthening the will of most Ukrainians to seek a destiny free from Russian domination.

In 1994, while the war in the Balkans was still raging, the rest of Eastern Europe was looking to the future - each nation eager to take what it saw as its natural place in a Europe of independent sovereign states at peace with each other. But it was still far from certain that any of them would be allowed to join Nato.

There was a debate, back then, about whether a third security block should be formed by the newly-liberated East European nations, to act as a buffer between Nato and Russia. Russia was weak in the 1990s, and the nations that had endured Soviet occupation for 40 years did not trust it to stay weak for long. In the end, they wanted nothing short of Nato membership.

Under President Bill Clinton, the US pressed ahead with Nato expansion. The Russian president Boris Yeltsin, who saw himself as a loyal ally of Clinton's, was said to be furious when he found out - at a press conference - that Nato was planning to admit new members without consulting Moscow.

And the tearing down of the Iron Curtain had raised a new question in geopolitics - how far east does the Western world extend? I was commissioned by the BBC to take a road trip through Poland, Belarus and Ukraine to address the question, "Where is the eastern edge of the Western world now?"

I went to the hunting lodge in Belarus where, in late 1991, the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, had met his counterparts from Ukraine and Belarus. Here, they agreed to recognise each other's Soviet Republics as independent nation-states. They then rang the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and informed him that the country of which he was head of state - the Soviet Union - no longer existed.

It was a moment fraught with both danger and opportunity. For Belarus and Ukraine, it was the chance to liberate themselves from Moscow rule - domination by Russian imperialism in both its Tsarist and Soviet forms.

For Yeltsin, it represented the chance to liberate Russia too - from its historic role as an imperial power. The UK and France had both ceased to be imperial powers after World War Two - as Austria had done after WW1. In Turkey, Kemal Ataturk had built a modern European secular republic - a Turkish nation-state - after the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire had been defeated and dismembered in 1918.

Could Boris Yeltsin do the same thing - build a modern Russian nation-state, at peace with its sovereign neighbours, on the ruins of the Soviet Empire? In the early 1990s, he began his Westernising experiment, to try to turn an imperial power into a democratic state.

But the rush - encouraged by the Western democracies eager for investment opportunities - to turn a sclerotic, state-owned command economy into a free-market system was disastrous. It created gangster capitalism. A tiny elite became fabulously rich by plundering the assets of the major industries - especially oil and gas.

The wheels finally came off the experiment in 1998. The economy collapsed, the rouble lost two-thirds of its value in a month and inflation hit 80%.

I stood with a middle-aged couple in a queue at a Moscow bank. They wanted to take their money out in dollars or pounds - anything other than roubles. The queue was long and slow-moving and, every few minutes, a bank employee changed the displayed exchange rate, as the rouble plunged further. People could see their life savings dropping in value by the minute. The couple got close to the head of the queue when suddenly the shutters came down - there was no cash left.

I went to a former coal-mining region near the Ukraine border, where the mines were barely functioning. I met a graduate mining engineer who had lost his job - a man in his 30s with a young family. He took me to his dacha outside the city, which had about an acre of land. "About 80% of what my family eat in the year," he said. "I grow on this patch of land. The rest, like coffee and sugar, I barter for. I haven't used or even seen cash in about 18 months." Nothing spoke

more powerfully about Yeltsin's failure to transform Russia than the sight of this highly educated man digging for his own dinner.

"Stalin turned a nation of peasants into an industrial superpower in a generation. Yeltsin is doing the same thing in reverse," he told me.

Ordinary Russians felt robbed. The great westernising experiment had been a con trick that had enriched a criminalised elite and impoverished everyone else. Many of the reports we filed from Russia at that time boiled down to a single question: "What are the political consequences of the profound disenchantment that Russians now feel?"

The answer was that Russia, eventually, would revert to type - a retreat from democracy and a return to authoritarian rule. A retreat from nation-statehood and return to a more assertive imperial attitude to its "near abroad" - the countries that had previously been part of the Soviet Union.

The former US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski famously said that Russia could be a democracy or an empire, but it could not be both. The Russian emblem, the double-headed eagle, looks both east and west. History has pulled Russia in opposing directions - democratic nation statehood in one direction, domineering imperial power in the other.

Go to St Petersburg and you will see another aspect of this dual character. It is the country's beautiful bay window on the Gulf of Finland. It is an 18th Century city, facing west. It is the European Enlightenment in architectural form. Under the Tsars it was the imperial capital.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks moved the capital back to Moscow and power retreated behind the high, crenellated walls of the Kremlin. It is the architecture of defensiveness, of suspicion, even fear. When Russian leaders look west from here, they see flat open countryside rolling away to the south and west for hundreds of miles. There are no natural frontiers.

When I was the BBC's Moscow correspondent in the late 1990s, there was a driver who could remember, as a boy, seeing German troops on the outskirts of Moscow in the 1940s. Every time he took us to Sheremetyevo Airport, we would pass a monument designed to look like metal anti-tank defences - so-called Czech hedgehogs - and he would say: "This is how close they came, the Germans."

Napoleon's army had gone further the previous century. That experience - that chronic sense of an insecure western frontier - informs the way Russian leaders have thought about their "near abroad".

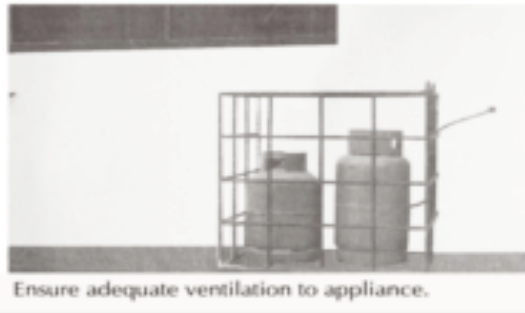
In another conversation about the "near abroad", a friend recited a rhyming couplet to me. In Russian it rhymes nicely, but in English it goes: "A chicken's not really a bird; and Poland's not really abroad." Russia's sense of what it is entitled to in the lands to its west penetrates popular consciousness, too.

I will borrow an anecdote from another friend in Moscow at the time. The same driver picked her up from the airport and asked her where she had been. "I've been for a weekend in Prague," she said. "Oh Prague," came the reply. "That's good. That's ours."

Source: BBC

TO BE CONT.....

GAS SAFETY TIPS



Ensure adequate ventilation to appliance.



Fit the cylinder pressure regulator only in daylight or under electric lighting.



Light your match before turning on the gas.



Always keep the cylinder in a vertical position with the valve on top and installed at ground level on the flat surface.



Do not place cylinder (empty or filled) near any naked flame or inflammable liquids.



Regulators should always be kept in OFF position when the cylinder is not in use.



In case of leakage, which is characterized by typical gas odour, first open all windows to let in fresh air and extinguish all naked flames.



Check rubber tubes regularly for cracks, if any. Change rubber tubes once in two years.



Before using cylinder, check for leakage from cylinder valve and other joints by applying soap solution.



NATIONAL PETROLEUM SAFETY CAMPAIGN



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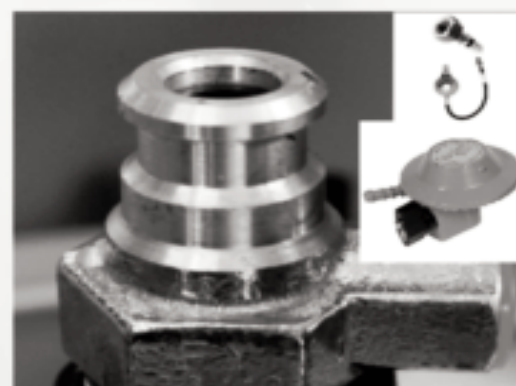
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EMAIL: **info@npa.gov.gh**



If cylinder accessories develop leakage, do not fix it yourself; contact your supplier.



Regulators to be used on the cylinders must be of the same diameter as the cylinder valve.

FHUC Stands Tall In Excellence - Rev. Ntim Fordjour

The Deputy Minister of Education, Rev. John Ntim Fordjour has described Family Health University College (FHUC) as one of the private educational institutions in Ghana that stands tall in Africa and the Sub-region, with excellence in promoting ethics and professionalism in medical education.

He said the Institution has raised the bar in critical skills and imbibed in medical students, essential critical morals and social values.

Rev. Ntim Fordjour made this statement during the Family Health University College (FHUC) 2022 Matriculation and Graduation ceremony for the Family Health Medical School (FHMS) and Family Health Nursing & Midwifery School (FHNMS) respectively, held in Accra.

The two sessions of the Matriculation and Graduation ceremony of the Family Health Medical School (FHMS) and the Family Health Nursing & Midwifery School (FHNMS), were held separately due to the large number of students involved, and in accordance with COVID-19 protocols on outdoor gatherings.

Rev. Ntim Fordjour, who was the Special Guest of Honour for the Family Health Medical School's 2022 Matriculation and Graduation ceremony noted that the Family Health Medical

School's training of medical doctors contributes significantly in improving doctor-patient ratio which use to stand at one (1) doctor to nine-thousand (9,000) patients but now at one (1) doctor to six-thousand, three hundred and fifty-five (6,355) patients, in Ghana.

He added that although the statistics show an improvement in the doctor-patient ratio in the country, the World Bank ranks Ghana fourth (4th) in West Africa and fourteenth (14th) in Sub-Saharan Africa. He also averred that, the government seeks to create an enabling environment that will ensure private sector participation in the training of more medical practitioners for the country to attain the required doctor-patient.

Rev. Ntim Fordjour commended the Founders of FHUC, Prof. Enyonam Yao Kwawukume and Dr. Susu Bridget Kwawukume for their visionary leadership for the healthcare sector, in the training of quality human resource for the country, and making strides in standing tall among its predecessors.

Prof. Kwawukume, admonished the Matriculants for the Medical School, to be resolute, studious, take instructions from their lecturers, embrace team-based learning and, above all, strive for success in their medical education and beyond.

To the BSc. Medical

Sciences graduands, he congratulated them on their medical education journey so far, and added that he was hopeful that they will have an exciting and impactful clinical years; he encouraged them not be afraid to make mistakes but to keep working hard, and in teams, and they will come out in flying colours.

The dual ceremony for the Family Health Medical School (FHMS) in the morning had forty-one (41) students graduating with BSc in Medical Sciences and fifty-nine (59) fresh men and women comprising Undergraduates and Graduate Entry Medical Programme (GEMP) students, matriculating.

For the afternoon session, the Family Health Nursing & Midwifery School's Matriculation and Graduation ceremony had sixty-eight (68) Nursing Assistant Clinical (NAC) students graduating, and two hundred and fifty-seven (257) freshmen and women, comprising two-hundred (200) for BSc. Nursing and Midwifery Programme and fifty-seven (57) for NAC programme, also matriculating.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Guest of Honour, Miss Hannah Akua Oparebea Acquah, Rector of the Ghana College of Nurses and Midwives, congratulated the newly-qualified Nurse Assistants and encouraged them to further pursue academic laurels in Nursing, as the revered



Rev. Ntim Fordjour at the ceremony

profession was embracing innovation. She further advised the students to emulate the qualities of an ideal nurse which include: being caring, being empathetic, having good communication skills, and staying relevant in the Nursing profession by keeping abreast with new trends and technologies in the 21st century. She also welcomed the Freshmen and women to the noble profession and advised them to be serious, attentive to detail and embrace mentorship from their predecessors.

To the graduands, Prof.

Kwawukume congratulated them on their achievements; he entreated them to sharpen the skills acquired in the classroom and to build exceptional work ethics. He entreated the graduating nurses to show care and empathy in their professional duties, and to let the values inculcated in them by the school reflect in their actions and inactions. He also encouraged the Matriculants to aim for excellence and be disciplined, analytical and to learn to question knowledge received, in a refined manner.

The Family Health Medical

School has since 2020 graduated two (2) batches of medical students with Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) degrees; the first batch of thirty (30) students graduated in 2020, whilst the second batch of fifty-four (54) graduated in 2021. All the graduates have been duly inducted into the medical profession by the Medical and Dental Council.

Additionally, the Nursing and Midwifery School has churned out thousands of nurses since its inception in 2009.

Minister Charges Ghanaian Youth To Be Innovative And Entrepreneurial

Reverend John Ntim Fordjour, the Deputy Minister of Education, has charged Ghanaian youth to be innovative and develop entrepreneurial attitudes to



Reverend John Ntim Fordjour

make them distinct and successful in their professional lives.

He noted that the world had grown to the stage where the youth had to embrace innovation and entrepreneurship to contribute effectively to national development.

Rev Fordjour made the call on Saturday when he spoke to graduates at the first session of the 21st Congregation ceremony for 844 students from Ghana, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Gambia in Accra.

The graduates had pursued various Bachelor of Technology programmes from the Faculties of Engineering, Built Environment and Applied Sciences of the Accra Technical University (ATU).

He said the average expectation of graduates in any part of the world, including low-income and advanced countries, was to get a job after a successful programme of study.

He added that it was the determination of the few outliers who dared to venture into the unknown and embraced innovation and through entrepreneurial skills that became

outstanding and successful.

The Minister indicated that such people were those that invented new businesses and technologies and proffered solutions to the myriad of challenges facing the world today.

They, therefore, are: "The ones that create jobs, question the status quo, and are the ones whose names are known."

Citing the example of Bill Gates, a global technology icon, he said: "At the time that Bill Gates and his colleagues will enter into a room and be able to play with the computer, which needed a room as big as this [auditorium of ATU] those that said it's impossible for a computer to be reduced to a sizeable form that can be held by just one hand are those who were left behind."

He said: "But he made it a possibility and dared to dream beyond the average expectation of graduating and expecting someone or the government to put a job on his table, and today through his courage and exploits many people have been employed.

The Assin South legislator said this to encourage the graduates of ATU and every Ghanaian youth who would graduate from any tertiary institution to have the mindset of being innovative and entrepreneurial rather than depending on others for jobs.

Dr Wilfred Kwabena Anim-Odame, the Council Chairman of the University, encouraged the graduates to go and impact the Ghanaian economy and the global job market with the academic and technical skills they had gained.

He was confident that the graduates had been equipped with adequate skills and knowledge to contribute on the national and international platforms, and said: "I urge you all to go and impact the Ghanaian economy, as well as the global market."

He said though the COVID-19 pandemic had made things difficult for all economies, the technical and vocational training presented a niche for the graduates to be resourceful in the job market.

Dr Anim-Odame said the Council would continue to ensure that the increase in student

population was accompanied with the required infrastructure development to promote excellence in teaching and learning.

He noted that the University's five-year strategic plan with eight well-defined roadmaps would enable the attainment of ATU's vision of becoming the top technical university in Ghana with strong regional influence.

Professor Samuel Nii Odai, the Vice-Chancellor of ATU, asked the graduates to join the Alumni and become ambassadors of ATU by continually pursuing self-advancement.

Reading the valedictory address on behalf of his colleagues, Mr Richard Djabonor-Lameh, said their journey at ATU was made fruitful through the support of both the teaching and non-teaching staff.

He expressed appreciation to everyone who contributed to their successful stay at ATU and urged his graduating class to sacrifice for what they wanted in life and be guided by the principle of integrity, creativity and service.

NCCE Urges Students To Practice Ghanaian Core Values

The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) has advised students to imbibe and practice the Ghanaian core values as a foundation to prepare themselves to become responsible adults and leaders of their communities and the nation.

Mr Peter Kwabena Gyasi, the Deputy Bono Regional Director of the Commission, gave the advice when addressing about 605 students of the Methodist Technical Institute in Sunyani, saying the country's core values were fading out of the society, hence the need to revisit them.

The programme, on the theme: "Sustaining Our Democracy-Ghanaian Core Values in Practice" was organised by the Bono Regional Office of the NCCE and aimed at creating and sustaining public awareness on the need to emulate the Ghanaian core values.

It was also to educate and sensitize the students to structure and build their lives on acceptable norms, ethics and beliefs of society.

Mr Gyasi mentioned patriotism, justice, honesty, trustworthiness, peaceful co-existence, hard work,

decorum in language and respect for the elderly as some of the core values, which were gradually fading out in the Ghanaian society.

He stressed bribery and corruption had become a major setback of the country's progress and urged the students to eschew all forms of bribery and corruption and rather assist in the schools and communities to minimise and eliminate it.

Mr Gyasi cited 'Giving and taking of gifts and monies during elections of school prefects are also some forms of corruption' and "our students must not practice that," he advised.

He urged the students to contribute to peaceful co-existence through what they did and say in the school and at home and also entreated them to report to the security agencies all forms of crimes that could derail the peace and security of the country.

Mr Isaac Awuah, a teacher, expressed the school's profound gratitude to the Commission for the sensitization programme and urged the students to put the core values into practice to move the country forward.



Mr. Gyasi addressing the students

Stephen Ntim Is Committed To Resourcing TESCON-Kwabena Frimpong

Michael Oforu-Afriyie, Kumasi
New Patriotic Party (NPP) youth activist and aide to Stephen Ntim, a national chairman hopeful on the NPP, Kwabena Frimpong, says the former 1st Vice National Chairman has plans to properly and adequately resource the students wing of the ruling party.

According to him, the Tertiary Students Confederacy of NPP (TESCON) possesses the potential of grooming and unearthing quality persons with political ambitions for the party now or in the future as data available has shown.

Addressing students and patrons of the NPP students wing

at the Sunyani Technical University, Mr Frimpong said it is important to resource TESCON to enable them scout and groom better student politicians with the NPP tradition imbedded into them.

BRIDGE

Mr Frimpong said the desire of Mr Ntim is to see the party build bridges that would incorporate TESCON activities strongly in the scheme of things of the NPP and empower TESCON in all institutions across the country with a strategic plan.

Some of these initiatives will be to train students to learn the art of hard work and to know NPP rewards loyalty, commitment and long service to

the party.

Mr Frimpong said that a properly groomed and resourced party persons and the grassroots would naturally grow to support the party and work hard to make the party attractive.

Mr Frimpong said if the NPP wants to break the eight year government cycle it will need the students wing and grassroots to be highly resourced to propagate the good works of the party.

PROMISE

The aide said that Mr Ntim promises to make the activities of TESCON more attractive than any students' wing on campuses.

This, he noted, would include the provision of some resources, national service postings, job placements and training programs for the members of the students' wing etc.

Presenting an unspecified amount of money to the students' wing, Mr Frimpong on behalf of Mr Stephen Ntim said the token is to ensure students give off their best while in school for their parents, party and mother Ghana.



Kwabena Frimpong

Court Fines Nigerian For Attempting To Acquire Ghana Card In Tamale

The Tamale District Magistrate Court has convicted Doris Okeke, a 37-year-old Nigerian, for attempting to acquire Ghana Card using a false identity.

Magistrate Amadu Issifu fined her 200 penalty units, the equivalent of GH¢2,400 or in default serve 18 months in jail.

She paid the fine to avoid a jail term after pleading guilty to all four counts of residing in the country without permit, working in Ghana without permit, obtaining a self ID card and attempting to obtain a Ghana ID card.

She was arraigned following a report made to the Northern Regional office of the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) about her illegal activities.

Doris Okeke used the name Doris Dubik as her Ghanaian identity to get a voter's ID card prior to the 2020 elections, applied for Ghana Card, and gained admission into the Tamale Technical University (TTU) as a student.

The court ordered her to submit all her documents to the GIS to be presented to the registration officials to delete her information from the National Identification Authority's system.

Assistant Inspector Mr Christian Kobla Kekeli Zilevu, Northern Regional Public Relations Officer of GIS, told the Ghana News Agency in Tamale that the GIS received a report on the convict's activities and moved in to pick her at the TTU Campus on March 14, and upon

interrogation, she confirmed being a Nigerian, and residing in Ghana since 2015.

Mr Zilevu revealed that the convict's husband, Oliver Okeke, also a Nigerian, acquired the Ghana voter's ID.

He said Oliver Okeke, who used Michael Okeke as his Ghanaian identity, was fined 240 penalty units equivalent to GH¢3000 but would serve two years in jail if he defaulted.

He said Doris and her husband alleged that they were assisted by the complainant to acquire the Ghana ID cards, adding investigations were ongoing to ascertain whether the complainant helped them in that regard.



Ghana Card

US Army Officer Donates 50 Computers To Fiaseman SHS

Michael Ofose-Afriyie, Kumasi

A Ghanaian born United States Army officer, Second Lieutenant, Dennis Duku, has supported the Fiaseman Senior High School, at Tarkwa, in the Tarkwa Nsuaem Municipality of the Western region, with 50 brand-new Dell computers and accessories.

Each of the new set of computers, which is expected to be immediately installed for use, comes with a 500 gigabytes hard drive capacity as well as a 4 gigabyte RAM.

The provision of these computers, in pristine condition, is hoped to boost the capacity of the ICT Department of Fiaseman SHS to be able to offer hands-on teaching and learning of computing.

BENEFACTOR:

Second Lieutenant, Dennis Duku, observed that with the current spate of technological advancement, having digital skills will soon be a key employment requirement.

However, he reckoned that to position the youth in the country for this global digital drift, it will be critical for schools

in Ghana, and Africa at large, to offer more practical teaching and learning of computer skills to students.

It is against this background that he said he is motivated to support his alma mater with the computers to improve 'computer education' and through that also expose students to advance learning tools and platforms.

"While I did not have enough access to learn more computing education when I was growing up, I believe given my current position I am motivated to contribute to ensuring that others do not experience the same situation as I did," he stated.

DETAILS:

With technological advancement happening every minute, he stated that "if they [the students] are fortunate to kickstart their studies with computers from the onset it is going to help shape their future."

He, therefore, emphasized that the opportunity he has impacted his philanthropic tendencies to support others, especially those in his community, for the collective growth of the Ghanaian society.

APPEAL:

Also, Second Lieutenant

Dennis Duku appealed to other old students to endeavour to assist the development of their schools.

"You do not have to be a millionaire or billionaire to help," you can support in any little way they could.

He was hopeful that the beneficiary students will reciprocate the gesture in the future, by also helping the less privileged people.

In 2018, the Second Lieutenant who works with the North Dakota National Guard's 188th Engineer Company embarked on a similar gesture.

OTHER SUPPLIES:

He supported the basic school, Dadwen Schools Complex at Nsuta Wassa, which he attended while growing, with several sets of educational materials.

It included over 400 school bags, crayons among others to children in the kindergarten unit, in support of the physical and academic development of the school.

APPRECIATION:

The headmaster of Fiaseman SHS, Mr. John Kofi Sagoe, who received the computers on behalf of the school noted that Fiasec since its establishment has undergone a lot



Lieutenant Dennis Duku, US ARMY OFFICER presenting some of the computers to Mr John Sagoe

of changes including the original name of the school.

He particularly acknowledged that contribution from past graduates of the school continue to shape the academic

fortunes of Fiasec.

"The massive support the school administration receives from the old students has led to significant achievement in the area of academics," he stated.

He, therefore, said the provision of the computers is timely since it will resource the school's ICT lab and enhance the effective teaching and learning of ICT education

Young Women At Effiakuma Sensitised On Opportunities In Technical Field

The School Community Outreach Project, under the World University Services of Canada, has sensitised young women at Effiakuma in the Western Region on opportunities in the technical field, which they could take advantage of to enhance employment and reduce poverty.

Nana Ama Mensah, the Project Coordinator of Farm Radio International, an implementing partner of the project, addressing the girls, said girls in Kumasi, Accra and Takoradi would also

benefit to reduce rural urban drift.

"The aim is to break some cultural limitations placed on women and advance inclusive market approach that offered opportunities and growth for the male and female," she said.

Mrs Victoria Araba Dennis, the Executive Director of the African Women International, also an implementing partner, said trade areas like welding, mechanical engineering, draughtsmanship, and computer engineering could also be done by women.

Mr John Buckman, the Presiding Member for the Sekondi-

Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to acquire a vocation and become self-sufficient.

"Now there is nothing like white colour opportunities...our youth must begin seeing these realities and turn their own fortunes around," he said.

Nii Kpani Addy, the Deputy Head of the Sekondi/Takoradi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, encouraged the participants to network and build partnerships to propel business growth.



African Women International

Ghana Digital Centres In Talks For Cyber Security Training

Michael Ofose-Afriyie, Kumasi

The CEO of Ghana Digital Centres Ltd (GDCL), Hon. Kwadwo Baah Agyeman along with his management team held talks with Crossword Cybersecurity Plc based in the UK on Monday 14th March 2022.

Crossword Cybersecurity Plc is a technology commercialisation, cyber security consulting and SOC monitoring & threat intelligence company with vast experience across multiple continents.

The maiden meeting held in their London office at the invitation of the company was a very fruitful one with a proposed partnership aimed at achieving the following strategic objectives; to create an enabling environment for Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO), to facilitate digital transformation underpinned by cyber security and to create jobs and employment avenues for the youth in Ghana.

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CROSSWORD:

In his opening remarks, the Division Managing Director - Jon O'Brien indicated his companies

excitement at the initiative and praised Ghana's efforts at prioritising cyber security in our digital transformation agenda.

He also affirmed their preparedness to work with GDCL in particular and Ghana as a whole by availing their immense expertise and resources to help achieve GDCL's objectives.

CEO OF GDCL:

In his closing statement, the CEO of GDCL thanked the team and affirmed his commitment as well as that of his sector minister Hon. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful in ensuring that the Ghanaian youth are equipped with the needed skills in cyber security and the desired jobs.



Jon O'Brien of the Crossword Cybersecurity Plc with Kwadwo Baah Agyemang

Gov't Appoints Sole Inquirer to Probe Bulgarian Embassy Land Brouhaha

GO NEWS HOUNDS

Government through the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, has on Friday, March 18, appointed a Sole Inquirer to investigate the circumstances surrounding the ownership of some parcel of land in dispute between the Bulgarian Embassy and a private developer.

Lands Minister, Samuel Abu Jinapor, at the inauguration said the Ministry's attention was drawn to media reports about the demolishing of the Bulgarian Embassy by some private individuals.

The report, he said, received immediate action as a team led by his Deputy Minister in charge of Lands and Forestry, Benito Owusu-Bio, was sent to the scene.

He said, acting on instructions, all activities on the land were halted until further notice.

The Minister reiterated that government has no hand in the said demolition exercise.

He stressed that President Akufo-Addo, who has previously served as the Minister for Foreign Affairs would be the last person to authorise any act that affects diplomatic relations or the

country's obligations under international law.

In view of this, the Minister said there is the need to commission a full investigation into the circumstances leading to the alleged demolition and the development of the property.

He said the terms of reference for the Sole Inquirer are to;

Undertake a full and impartial inquiry into the alleged encroachment and/or demolishing of property on the land being used as the Bulgarian Embassy,

Make appropriate recommendations relating to the land being used as the Bulgarian Embassy

Inquire into the nature of interest in any land held or occupied by Diplomatic Missions in Ghana

Inquire into any matter relating to land in which Diplomatic Missions in Ghana have an interest whatsoever

Make recommendations to Government.

Due to the urgency of the issue relating to the Bulgarian Embassy, the Minister gave the Sole Inquirer an ultimatum of seven days to present a report on his Terms of Reference (1) and (2) above, and a period of one

month to present a full report on Terms of Reference (3) to (5).

Mr Jinapor declared that government is committed to maintaining the cordial relations it keeps with all diplomatic missions and will by no means allow the current issue to mar the long standing relationship that exists between Ghana and Bulgaria.

Mr Jinapor further noted that with the expertise and experience of the Sole Inquirer, he is absolutely confident that the Ministry would be provided with the full facts and directions to act on them decisively and comprehensively.

The Sole Inquirer, Kwasi Anto Ofori-Atta, a retired Justice of the High Court and a one time Chairman of the Ashanti Regional Lands Commission in his response said he is grateful to government and the Ministry for the confidence reposed in him.

Mr Ofori-Atta assured the Minister that he will do all in his capacity as the Inquirer to fully investigate the matter as per his Terms of Reference.

"I wish to assure you and the whole of Ghana to do my very best to put this matter to rest. Thank you for the opportunity," he said.



The Lands Minister with Justice Ofori-Atta

Economy Will Rebound Soon- Akufo-Addo

GO NEWS HOUNDS

The President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, has assured that the policies being implemented by Government, in the wake of the difficulties occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, will help the economy rebound faster

than anticipated.

Acknowledging the difficult times the nation is going through, President Akufo-Addo noted that every country on the face of the planet, is going through challenges brought forth largely by the pandemic of COVID-19.

"Ghana is not the only

country faced with extraordinary increases in global freight rates, strong inflationary pressures, dramatically rising fuel prices, unprecedented volatility of stock markets, and tighter global financing conditions. These are global phenomena," he said.

The President continued, "Nonetheless, Government

continues to work hard to address these issues, and I am certain that, sooner, rather than later, our economy, through the implementation of Government's one hundred-billion-cedi (GH¢100 billion) Ghana CARES Obaatanpa Programme, will rebound from the ravages of the pandemic, bringing in its wake

stability, development, progress and prosperity for all Ghanaians."

Speaking at the 92nd Speech and Prize-Giving Day of St. Augustine's College in Cape Coast, on Saturday, 19th March 2021, President Akufo-Addo noted that the Ghanaian economy grew at a provisional 5.2% in the first three quarters of 2021, with GDP growth for 2021 projected at 5.6%, as against the 0.4% of 2020.

"We need to undertake the difficult but necessary fiscal and other measures that will enable us to maintain the 2021 and higher rates of growth in the immediate years ahead of us, to develop and strengthen our economy, and help improve the living standards of us all," he added.

Democracy

Touching on the country's democratic credentials, President Akufo-Addo noted that the Ghanaian people, for these last twenty-nine (29) years of the 4th Republic, have reposed their trust in the democratic process as the avenue to resolve the myriad of problems the country faces, and have demonstrated their determination to uphold democratic values and institutions to bring development to the nation.

"There are a few, though, whom I have characterised as 'restless spirits', who are not prepared to allow you to complete your education in conditions of calm, peace and stability, and who seek constant turbulence in the governance of the state. This has led, lately, to some irresponsible utterances about coups as panaceas to our problems," he said.

He continued, "I have said, and will use this platform to repeat that coups have never been, and will never be durable solutions to the political, economic and security challenges confronting our nation and continent."

The President was confident that the great majority of Ghanaians, who are committed to democratic values and democratic institutions, "will continue to resist the rhetoric and advances of coup mongers and coup plotters, and those of us who have the responsibility to safeguard the integrity of the state will employ all legitimate means in a democracy to preserve our free, open system of governance, which is respectful of human rights, the rule of law and the principles of democratic accountability."



President Akufo-Addo giving a prize to a student

The Currency, Economy of Every Country is Under Pressure - Razak Kojo Opoku

GO NEWS HOUNDS

The media core mandate is to educate and inform the masses. The Ghanaian media is no exception to this.

However, with utmost respect, some media outlets out of ignorance, mischief and agenda settings have been always deepening the ignorance of the masses through misleading information.

As an honest government, President Akufo-Addo has admitted the current challenges and seriously working hard to mitigate the effects of the currency depreciation, rise in fuel, goods and services which are not as a result of government's mismanagement but rather war in Ukraine and the cascading effects of COVID-19 variants.

The factors that weakened the fundamentals of the economy in Mahama's era thereby affecting the exchange rate are not the same factors under Akufo-Addo's Presidency.

In the Mahama's era it was a complete misappropriation and mismanagement of the country's meagre resources. It was borne out of incompetence.

"Dumsor," reckless payment of judgement debts,

poor credit ratings etc. were some of the factors which undermined the fundamentals of the economy during Mahama John's era.

During the period of Mahama, there was no free SHS policy as it is being implemented under Akufo-Addo's government at the cost of GHc 7. 5 billion annually.

There were no 1D1F, no 1 Constituency 1 Ambulance, no NAELP, no NEIP, no NABCO, no GEA, no Planting for Food and Jobs, no 1 Village 1 Dam, no employment in the public sector, no allowances for teachers and nursing trainees etc.

Yet, the fundamentals were so weak under John Mahama's administration to the extent that the rate of depreciation badly exposed the Ghanaian economy.

No external factors were the cause of Cedi depreciation under Mahama's administration. While the economy and currency of every Country was doing well, it was the reverse in Ghana under Mahama's administration.

However, it is true that Cedi is being depreciated under Akufo-Addo's Presidency but it is important to state that this challenge is not only peculiar to Ghana.

Almighty Euro, Pounds, Yen, Ruble, Renminbi etc. have

all been depreciated against the US Dollar. This is a global phenomenon due to the COVID-19, Russia-Ukraine War, Sanctions against Russia, tensions between Russia and the West.

Can anyone mention a country which is currently doing well economically in the face of the aforementioned global crisis? Absolutely none.

All countries are suffering economically due to the global crisis we are being subjected to by the conduct of Russian and variants of global COVID-19.

Yes, the Cedi is depreciating and fuel is on the rise but:

1. You are not experiencing "Dumsor" like it happened in the era of Mahama's administration.

2. Your children are still enjoying the free SHS policy unlike Mahama's administration.

3. You are enjoying Allowances as Teacher and Nursing Trainees unlike Mahama's administration which was cancelled.

4. You are witnessing road construction across the country simultaneously unlike Mahama's administration.

5. You are enjoying the benefits of 1D1F, Planting for food and jobs, NEIP, NAELP,



Mr Razak Kojo Opoku

NABCO etc. Programmes unlike Mahama's administration.

6. You are benefitting and making good use of the government's digitalization and digitization programme unlike Mahama's administration.

7. You are benefitting from

the services of the 1 Constituency 1 Ambulance initiative of Akufo-Addo's Government unlike Mahama's administration.

8. Your funds which were locked up in the bank have been redeemed due to the banking/financial sector clean up

exercise by Akufo-Addo's Government unlike Mahama's administration which caused the collapse of the banks/financial sector.

All hope is not lost under Akufo-Addo's Presidency.

Akufo-Addo Announces Major Reliefs to Cushion Ghanaians

GO NEWS HOUNDS

President Akufo-Addo has sanctioned some major reliefs as part of efforts to recover the Ghanaian economy and set it back to its pre-COVID-19 levels.

The reliefs include opening of the country's land borders, easing of general COVID-19 restrictions and measures to arrest currency depreciation.

Part of these reliefs are also measures to tackle the rising fuel prices occasioned by the global economic turmoil brought on by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and measures to address the persistent rise in prices of goods and services.

The reliefs were sanctioned at a crunch three days cabinet retreat that took place over the weekend at Peduase in the Eastern Region where the

President and his cabinet ministers reviewed data on the effects of the COVID-19 on all sectors of the Ghanaian economy and in extension the economic blowbacks resulting from the conflict.

Minister for Information, Kojo Oppong Nkrumah, in a tweet last Thursday disclosed that the essence of the retreat is to enable government proffer solutions to ease the burden on Ghanaians.

"In the coming days details will be announced including when and how borders will be opened, the removal of some testing protocols, shoring up the currency and further cutting expenditures while assuring growth," the Minister told the media on the sides of the retreat.

It is expected that the President, Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta and other sector ministers as well as the Bank of Ghana in the coming days will provide details on the reliefs and which sectors.

The reliefs are also expected to answer questions being posed by economic watchers on how the government of Ghana will respond to the current global economic challenges.



President Akufo-Addo

Zongo Dev't Fund Supports 134 Projects - Veep Bawumia

GO NEWS HOUNDS

Vice President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia says the Zongo Development Fund has supported 134 infrastructure projects in Zongo communities since 2018.

According to him, the projects include astro-turfs, classroom blocks, dormitories, Information and Communication (ICT) centres, bridges, roads and drainage systems in Zongo communities and inner cities across the country.

He said 40 brilliant but needy students from Zongo communities and inner cities were, in 2020, sponsored by the Fund to study medicine in Cuba.

Vice President Bawumia

announced this in Accra on Saturday when he commissioned the Islamic Nursing Training School at Kokrobite, Accra, in the Ga West District of the Greater Accra Region.

The school was established by Sheikh Alhassan Hamza Musah to provide community-oriented training in nursing and midwifery for the youth.

Vice President Bawumia expressed the belief that the institution would complement government's efforts in training the human resources of the country for effective healthcare delivery.

He expressed government's unwavering commitment towards partnering and supporting private entities in training healthcare workers and investing in health

infrastructure.

Dr Bawumia said since the Akufo-Addo-led government assumed office in 2017, it had recruited more than 90,000 health workers and cleared the backlog of unemployed nursing trainees.

It had, so far, established six medical drone delivery centres to supply medicines, and blood products and vaccines to clinics and hospitals in hard-to-reach areas, making Ghana the largest medical drone supply worldwide.

The Zongo Development Fund Act, 2017 (Act 964) was passed by Parliament in 2018 to provide financial resources to develop and transform the socio-economic conditions of Zongo communities across the country.

Bu\$ine\$\$

No IMF Bailout On Akufo-Addo's Agenda; Cabinet Targets 'Home-Grown Solutions' – Jubilee House

Ghana's Presidency, the Jubilee House, has said President Nana Akufo-Addo and his government do not intend to go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a bailout.

Rather, the Presidency is looking for solutions to the country's economic problems at home.

"An IMF bailout is not on the country's agenda as Cabinet considers home-grown solutions while it discusses fuel price hikes, reopening of borders and other main items", the Presidency said in a post on Facebook.

A few weeks ago, international rating agency Fitch said Ghana can gain access to the international capital market again if the country opts for a programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Asked about the prospects for new sources of external financing and the medium-term fiscal consolidation in a podcast series in which Mr Toby Iles, Head of Middle East and Africa Sovereign Ratings featured Mr Jermaine Leonard, the Director at Fitch Sovereign and Lead Analyst for Ghana and Zambia, the latter said: "Along with the drawing down of international reserves and the use of IMF SDRs, we do expect that the government will be able to find some additional external financing; this could come from private loans from international commercial banks, or, perhaps, an additional lending from official lenders – an IMF programme is a possibility. This would, also, likely open international capital markets to Ghana again. Ghana completed an IMF programme in 2019 but has been reluctant to return to a programme. That said, Fitch believes that it would be the most likely outcome if the government were to experience some real financing stress".

Importantly, he added, "I would note that we do not expect that this would be like Zambia, where IMF negotiations dragged on over the course of close to two

years and only brought to fruition by a default event and a change in government".

"Regarding fiscal consolidation, we do expect to see a narrowing in the fiscal deficit but the problem of low government revenue and rigid fiscal structure will remain. Ghana's 2020 budget forecast a reduction of the deficit to 7 per cent in 2022 and to 5.3 per cent of GDP by 2023. We believe that it is optimistic, our forecasts are for a narrowing in the fiscal deficit to around 8 per cent of GDP by 2023".

"Now, this should be a significant consolidation, as the overall fiscal deficit was 15 per cent of GDP in 2020".

Further, he said "we think that a good deal of the deficit reduction will come from COVID-related spending falling out of the budget and that the government will continue to face low domestic revenue mobilisation and that will present some challenges, as interest costs remain high and as the government continues to realise contingent liabilities from the energy sector".

In conclusion, he noted, "we do expect some fiscal consolidation but at a lower pace than what's in the government's medium-term fiscal framework and there are some notable risks that could materialise over that period".

A few days ago, Ghana's Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta said the country's access to the international market to borrow has been restricted.

Speaking at a town hall meeting on the e-levy in the Volta Region on Friday, 4 March 2022, Mr Ofori-Atta confessed: "I am telling you that because of what we are doing, now, our access to the international market is being curtailed to a certain degree".

"Now, even when we go, we are going to pay US\$500 million over 10 years if I were to issue a billion cedi paper and that is significant and cannot be allowed", he explained.

Fitch downgraded Ghana's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'B-' from 'B' with a negative outlook in January 2022.

The downgrade of Ghana's IDRs and negative outlook, the rating agency said, reflected the sovereign's loss of access to international capital markets in the second half of 2021, following a pandemic-related surge in government debt.

Fitch, in a report, said, "This comes in the context of uncertainty about the government's ability to stabilise debt and against a backdrop of tightening global financing conditions. In our view, Ghana's ability to deliver on planned fiscal consolidation efforts could be hindered by the heavier reliance on domestic debt issuance with higher interest costs, in the context of an already exceptionally high interest expenditure to revenue ratio."

Talking about the drivers of the downgrade of Ghana's ratings and the negative outlook, Mr Leonard said: "The key rating driver for the downgrade to B- and the negative outlook is the sovereign's loss of access to international bond markets".

"We believe that not being able to issue Eurobond debt elevates some concerns regarding Ghana's external liquidity, especially as we expect global financing conditions to remain tight for some time and it also exacerbates the existing weaknesses of Ghana's public finances".

According to him, "Ghana is not in a situation where the government needs to constantly roll over hard currency debt or whose debt market is wholly reliant on non-resident investors".

In fact, Mr Leonard added, "Ghana ended 2022 with an international reserves position that we estimate at \$7.9 billion and that is just above three months of current external payments and that is an improvement for Ghana".



President Akufo-Addo

"Ghana's reserves averaged about two-and-a-half months of coverage over the previous ten years, so, that improved reserves position will allow Ghana to meet its external debt servicing payments in 2022".

"That said, Ghana's international reserves position has become quite reliant on Eurobond issuance for replacement", he pointed out.

Continuing, he noted: "If you were to look at a historical chart of monthly reserves levels, you would notice the peaks and valleys that correspond to regular Eurobond issuance followed by the gradual drawdown on reserves until the next bond issuance".

"Also, non-residents do hold about 20 per cent of Ghana's domestic government debt and that comes to just under US\$6 billion. This is all medium- and long-term issuance, which limits the risk of capital flight but our concern is the slow and steady draining of reserves but then there is also a risk of foreign

investors selling what they hold and taking their dollars out of Ghana, which would put further pressure on reserves".

The other concern, Mr Leonard mentioned, "is specifically about the public finances", explaining: "Ghana has a medium-term debt sustainability issue that will necessitate a strong fiscal consolidation to get debt levels on a downward path but beyond just the level of debt, there are debt affordability issues; Ghana's debt is more than five times its annual government revenue and yearly interest costs take up a little less than half of government revenue, so, few external financing options will mean an increased reliance on more expensive domestic debt and that will keep the interest burden high, making consolidation more difficult".

On what could influence a stable rating and positive outlook for the country, Mr Leonard said: "On the positive side, that is what things could lead to a stabilisation

of the rating? A resumption of access to international capital markets would be a big one and that could come from an IMF programme, or from a change in investor sentiments. Over the medium term, we will be paying attention to the international reserves position and whether Ghana can see a rise in non-debt creating flows like FDIs and we'll also be paying attention to whether the government can implement its fiscal consolidation plan and put public sector debt on a downward path".

"In terms of negative rating sensitivities, here again, the reserves levels will be important as a measure of external liquidity and we'll also be watching the government's ability to source new external financing with which to meet its debt servicing obligations. Also, we will be paying attention to the level of fiscal consolidation that the government can achieve along with any signs of stress in the domestic debt market".

Ghana's Debt Stock Shoots Up To ₵351.8bn



Vice-President Mahamudu Bawumia explaining something to Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta (seated)

As of December 2021, Ghana's debt stock was ₵351.8 billion, the March 2022 Summary of Economic and Financial Data by the Bank of Ghana (BoG) has revealed.

It was ₵344.5 billion in November 2021.

The current debt stock is about 80.1% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The Summary indicated that about ₵730 million fresh

loans were added to the total public debt stock in December 2021.

The domestic debt went up to ₵181.8 billion in December 2021, from ₵179.4 billion in November 2021.

This is equivalent to 41.4 of GDP.

The external component of the total public debt shot up to \$28.3 billion (₵170.0 billion), from \$27.9 billion in November 2021.

The debt-to-GDP ratio of the external debt is however equivalent to 38.7% of GDP.

The cedi component shot up by ₵6.3 billion, primarily due to the decline in the value of the cedi to the dollar during the period.

The financial sector resolution bond remained unchanged at ₵14.9 billion in December 2021, equivalent to 3.4% of GDP.