

Diabetes Claiming Lives In Ghana -- National Diabetes Association Laments As It Launches World Diabetes Day



Amoako-Atta, Minister of Roads & Highways



Madam Elizabeth Esi Denyoh

SMC WORKERS CHASE MINISTER

Over 36 Months Unpaid Salary Arrears

Hundreds of Single Man Contractor (SMC) staff nationwide have expressed disquiet over what they say is the

government's failure to pay their three years working salary arrears. According to the workers the situation has rendered most of them homeless

whilst others have committed suicide due to frustration and indebtedness to their creditors.

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Under Rishi Sunak. Britishers Are Set To Face More Austerity, Fewer Rights
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Two Lebanese Dragged To Court For Causing Harm, Attempted Murder



Kelvin Saoud

Charles Otoo

Two Lebanese nationals, Kelvin Saoud and Simon Anthony Saoud have been dragged before an Accra Circuit Court for allegedly causing body harm and attempted murder to one Charles Otoo, a resident of Batsoona in Accra.

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TUTAG Threatens Strike If Govt Fails To Address Concerns Within 10 Days

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The INSIGHT

EDITORIAL

DEAL WITH THIS HEALTH MENACE

The revelation that there is upsurge in stroke cases among young people per records at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi is very deeply worrying.

There is clearly no doubt that non-communicable or lifestyle diseases appear to have fast taken over from communicable which used to be our bane as a country. According to the Neurologist, Dr. Fred Stephen Sarfo those as young as 13 are now developing the condition which one suffers when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts resulting in lack of blood to the brain and thus death of the brain cells.

According to the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital it records between 800 and one thousand cases, each year with more than 300 dying and the rest becoming permanently disabled.

With its high risk factors being hypertension, diabetes, high alcohol intake and lack of exercise among others, there is the need for improved or change in lifestyle including other health measures to adequately deal with the situation. Stress is also another causative or factor and health authorities need to intensify public education to reverse the tide. The revelation that there is upsurge in stroke cases among young people per records at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi is very deeply worrying.

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Two Lebanese Dragged To Court For Causing Harm, Attempted Murder

from front page

The two appeared before the court on Tuesday following an altercation that took place in their abode in December 2021 when Kelvin Saoud allegedly shot at Charles Otoo who had gone to visit his ex-girlfriend by name Tatiana Elovskia in one of their rented apartments behind Robinhood Hotel at Spintex in Accra.

The two in their statement of defence denied the claim of allegedly shooting at Charles Otoo in their compound.

On Tuesday when the case was called, Mr. Charles Otoo was cross examined by lawyers for Kelvin and Simon Saoud over the incident.

A witness statement and narration of the complainant, Charles Otoo traced how the incident occurred on that fateful day.

Charles Otoo who is a businessman and lives at Batsoona in Accra told the court that he didn't know the accused persons and have no knowledge about them as the owners of the Alternative Apartment behind Robinhood Hotel on the Spintex Road in Accra until that ill-fated day.

He said on the 26th of December, 2021 he was invited by his former girlfriend called Tatiana Elovskia who is a tenant of the accused persons and he arrived at the premises but calls made to her were not successful.

The victim said he then contacted one security officer who volunteered to lead him to Tatiana's apartment on the 4th floor. He said they boarded an escalator and on reaching the 2nd floor the escalator stopped for others to join, whereupon he saw Tatiana so the officer left and he and the ex-girlfriend continued to the 4th floor.

"On the 4th floor, Tatiana tried to open the door to her room but the key was stuck in the lock making it difficult for her to open it. We became confused and started discussing how we could get access to the room.

"In a while, Serge Osta a neighbor to Tatiana whom I have no knowledge of by then came around and started harshly asking questions. His actions brought up a struggle between me and him."

"In a short space of time, the accused persons together with others approached the scene. I realized that two of them were wielding guns so I became afraid for my life. They pointed the guns at me and started beating me up and I fell in the process.

"During the attack, they dragged me and locked me up in a dark room. I overheard them saying let us kill him. The screaming by a certain woman and my former girlfriend to free me caused them to move me out. They then called one Kennedy Atongo who is their employer to drive me out of their compound."

"The said Kennedy Atongo brought me to the car park and ordered me to drive my car out of the place.

"I was walking towards my car to drive out but Kelvin Saoud crossed me and started using derogatory words on me which led to another confusion. In the process, Simon Anthony Saoud



made a statement in a certain unfamiliar language to me, and that caused Kelvin Saoud to move quickly at distance from me.

"As soon as Kelvin saoud moved, Simon Anthony Saoud who was very close to me and wielding a gun pointed it at me and fired. He caused harm to my right ankle and I fell immediately. I started bleeding and a lot of people came around. Simon after shooting at me told the people to leave me to die", the victim narrated.

He further continued that "Later, Kennedy Atongo drove my car and with the assistance of Tatiana, I was taken to 37 military Hospital for treatment.

"At the hospital, the police came and took my registered pump action gun from my car.

"A police medical form was issued to me for a doctor's medical examination and report.

I am convinced that the accused persons planned together to kill me. The harm caused to me has negatively affected my walking and my normal way of living", Charles Otoo claimed.

The case was adjourned to November 12 and December 14 for further cross-examination of the victim and the accused persons respectively.

THE INSIGHT

ACTING EDITOR - BENJAMIN AKUFFO
(0244669960)
benjaminakuffo65@yahoo.com

Secretary - Gifty Agyemang

Design and Graphics - Godwin K. Attah

Production Manager - Kweku Menz

PUBLISHERS

Militant Publications Limited
P. O. Box NT 272

Accra-Newtown, Accra

Tel: 0244379344/0242836930

Email: theinsightonline20@gmail.com

LONDON CONTACT

5A Wesminster Bridge Road, London SE 1- 7XW

Tel: 0171-6201430

E-mail: prattc22@aol.com

SMC WORKERS CHASE MINISTER Over 36 Months Unpaid Salary Arrears

from front page

Addressing the media in Accra over their plight, Mr Amoakoh, leader of the SMC workers union, said the situation has left them penny less, homeless and frustrated.

Mr Amoakoh said that majority of them who are parents or bread winners have to depend on their wives and family members for survival, a situation he believes has left

some committing suicide. He thus appealed to the Roads and Highways Minister, Kwasi Amoako Atta to come to their aid, since life has become unbearable for them. "We have thousands of workers across the country. We were contracted to go along the highways across the country and work, but we have not been paid since 2019. Honestly, some of our workers have committed suicide since they have no means of eking out a living.

We are ready to receive at least some months of pay arrears for us to pay our debts," he appealed to the minister. He also called on other stakeholders to add their voices to their plea since all attempts to get their monies paid to them have proven futile. "We are pleading with other stakeholders to add their voices to our plea. In fact, we have lost all hope since several calls on the



Amoako-Atta, Minister of Roads & Highways

government to get our arrears paid have fallen on

deaf ears," he cried.

Diabetes Claiming Lives In Ghana -- National Diabetes Association Laments As It Launches World Diabetes Day



Madam Elizabeth Esi Denyoh

The National Diabetes Association has launched this year's World Diabetes Day at Tema Station near the National Lottery Authority (NLA) in Accra on the theme "Education to protect the future". The fruitful launching was marked with free screening where hundreds of people

rushed to check their diabetes status and sugar levels. The National Diabetes Association provided thousands of T-shirts which it shared to all those who participated in the screening exercise. Speaking to the press during the launching, Madam Elizabeth Esi Denyoh, Chairperson for IDF West

Africa and President of National Diabetes Association lamented that, diabetes is now a tsunami because, a lot of people are dying out of it and needed serious attention. "So in Ghana, we decided to launch the Day at Tema Station where more people can be screened with diabetes. A similar programme is going on in all major markets in the country". She stated that, "If you are going to protect the future, then we have to protect our youth. What can we do to protect our youth?. We must teach right exercising habit. We should increase exercising in schools. We must go back to our previous life style where we used to play ampe, tomato etc so that, children will have more exercises to do". Madam Elizabeth Esi Denyoh, further appealed to Ghana Information Service and the Ministry of

Education to increase exercise time for children either from once a week or increase PE period from 2 to 3 times a week to enable the children exercise themselves for 20 minutes before going to class. She encouraged Ghanaians to do more exercise including cycling, swimming etc adding that, unfortunately, there are ongoing major road and interchange construction but there was no provisions for cycle lanes and urged the government to reconsider adding cycle lanes in the future road construction. "In Ghana, it is estimated that 1 tenth of the population have diabetes. The scary thing is that, most of the people that have diabetes don't know that they have it so, we also encourage people to get tested to know their status, eat right it can help. If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, it is not a dream smash. Take your medication regularly, check

your sugar regularly, go to your follow up appointment and you will be fine". She however sent a message to government that, diabetes needed much attention and a care saying, diabetes is neglected. "Diabetes is killing more people. Between 2020 and now. Those that diabetes have killed are more than those that COVID have killed. But now, we have COVID Fund. Meanwhile, there is no guidelines for diabetes management in Ghana. We don't have any plan so, we are appealing to the government too. We are not asking for too much. If it will be possible, where children are affected with diabetes than the elderly, Government must come in". According to her, there is no specific cause of diabetes but said, it is believed that poor eating habit, lack of exercise and genetic factors are what contribute to diabetes.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

Greek Workers Protest Government's Anti-Labor Policies And Inaction On Inflation

Greek workers on Wednesday organized a general strike holding massive mobilizations against the anti-worker policies of employers and the conservative New Democracy (ND)-led government. They also demanded effective measures to tackle the ongoing cost of living crisis. The protests were called by trade unions, including the All Workers Militant Front (PAME). Political parties, including the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and youth-student groups like the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE) and Students' Struggle Front (MAS), among others, participated.

Massive rallies were held in the Greek capital Athens as well as in cities including Thessaloniki, Patras, Larissa, Komotini, Piraeus, Elefsina, and Kozani. The protesters demanded an increase in wages and pensions, a cap on the prices of essential foodstuffs

and energy, and an end to the ongoing persecution of workers. Protesting workers of mining company LARCO and the Malamatina Winery also actively participated in the general strike and mobilizations on Wednesday.

The Greek working class has been protesting against the anti-worker clauses in the reforms brought in by Labor Minister Kostis Hatzidakis to the labor code, as dictated by the European Union (EU). Since the onset of the cost of living crisis triggered by the Russia-Ukraine war and profiteering by multinational energy distributors, workers and the poor have been struggling to make ends meet. To mitigate the crisis, unions like PAME have demanded an increase in wages, new collective labor

agreements, abolition of VAT on consumer goods, taxes on electricity, and gas companies and a cap on fuel prices. Working class and other anti-imperialist sections in the county have also denounced the government's involvement in the transfer of arms and ammunition that are destined for imperialist conflicts. In his statement on November 9, KKE Secretary General Dimitris Koutsoumbas [said](#), "Today's great nationwide strike sends the message to all of Greece, to all of Europe, that the Greek people, their movement will not become accomplices, will not show any tolerance to the anti-grassroots policy of the rulers, the other parties of big business, energy poverty and EU policies, and the rot of the capitalist system." PAME stated, "Today the anger and indignation that all the



Mobilization in Athens. (Photo: via 902.gr). The Greek working class has been facing persecution by the employers amid an acute cost of living crisis, marked by soaring energy and food prices

working people feel became dynamic, mass participation in the struggle. The images of the working-class river flooding every street in the center of Athens cannot be hidden. With today's mass strikes, thousands of workers

have sent a clear message to the state and employers that they will not go hungry, they will not cool down, and the working-class families will not be targeted for the profits of the few."

Imran Khan's Long March Resumes Days After Assassination Attempt

Days after an assassination attempt on former Prime Minister Imran Khan, his party, the Paksitan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday, November 8 resumed its long march. Khan's supporters marched around the roads of national capital, Islamabad, blocking roads and the highway linked to the international airport, reported *Reuters*.

The march, which began on October 28, was disrupted after the assassination attempt on Khan in the Wazirabad district of Punjab province on November 3. Khan was rushed to a hospital in Lahore where he underwent surgery for bullet injuries and was discharged on November 6. A PTI worker, Moazzam Gondal, was killed in the attack.

"Our march will resume on Tuesday from the place in Wazirabad where I and 11 other people were shot, and where Moazzam was martyred," Khan had announced via social media on November 6. He

added that he will not be able to physically join the march as he is recovering from the injuries he sustained in the attack. The attack on Imran Khan shocked the country, which is already undergoing political instability and an economic downturn. Khan served as the 22nd prime minister of Pakistan before his ouster in April this year. Current Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who replaced Khan in April, condemned the firing on the PTI chairman and directed Interior Minister Rana Sanaulah to investigate the incident.

Attempt on Khan's life triggers protests

The assassination attempt on Khan triggered protests, with thousands of his supporters hitting the streets shouting anti-military and anti-government slogans in cities including Islamabad, Quetta, Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Multan, Peshawar, and Gujranwala. In the aftermath of the attack, Asad Umar, secretary general of PTI,

alleged that high-ranking government and military officials were behind the attack. Subsequently, news channels were advised by the Pakistan Electronic and Media Regulatory Authority to [stop airing these allegations](#).

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan expressed [alarm](#) over the instigation to mob violence following the attack on Khan. The Commission said that "calls for revenge" by senior PTI leaders were in contravention of "democratic processes and rule of law."

Army, civil, and government relations: new leaf or old ways?

Since his ouster in April, Imran Khan has led mobilizations and protest marches in the country. He has also gone on record accusing the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies of being involved in the country's politics and his ouster. However, Khan himself is a product of the army-state nexus in Pakistan, several

commentators have noted.

On October 27, for the first time in Pakistan's history, the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) addressed the media directly in a press conference to counter Khan's narrative and his repeated accusations against the military. [According to Taimur Rahman](#), professor of political science at LUMS, "The ISI press conference was a mistake, the impression it has created is that PTI and ISI are at loggerheads now...the political climate is worsening. The result of these developments is that public perception among PTI followers now favors the narrative that the army or ISI is responsible for the gun attack on Khan." (translated) "Clear that there is no support left for [the] military's involvement in politics. If [the] current impasse ends with [a] new deal among

political parties, wheels of history will move forward. If Generals become main arbitrators, we will remain caught in a vicious cycle. Decisive moments ahead," activist and historian Ammar Ali Jan [tweeted](#).

Political violence has marked the history of Pakistan since the country's formation in 1947. Its first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was shot twice and murdered in October 1951. On December 27, 2007, a suicide bomber murdered Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's first female prime minister. In 2011, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer was gunned down by his bodyguard for opposing blasphemy laws. Supporters of Imran Khan are now demanding a free and fair investigation into the incident.

TUTAG Threatens Strike If Govt Fails To Address Concerns Within 10 Days



The Technical University Teachers Association of Ghana (TUTAG), has served notice that it will embark on strike if the government fails to address some unresolved issues affecting its members within 10 days. The Association is worried about the government's failure to, among other things, comply with rulings of the National Labour Commission (NLC) to pay certain allowances to its members and would not accept any further delays. "We wish to inform government

that the National Executive of TUTAG has been stretched to its end to the unresolved issues and would therefore not be able to guarantee industrial harmony on the various campuses," Professor Collins Ameyaw, President of TUTAG cautioned at a news conference in Kumasi. He said government's disregard for the rulings of the NLC on the codified Conditions of Service (CoS) for members of TUTAG which had been outstanding since 2016 was worrying. He also bemoaned the reluctance on the part of the NLC to enforce its own ruling against the government, saying that, TUTAG had patiently engaged government amidst a feet-dragging posture on its part. He said the NLC on

September 02, 2022 ruled that the effective date of payment of the Internally Generated Fund (IGF) component of the allowances should be August 2021, as negotiated and agreed by the parties. The same ruling also directed the Minister of Finance (MoF) to ensure payment by issuing the necessary letters to the various University Councils within a reasonable time to make budgetary provisions in the budget, he stated. Subsequent to these rulings, he said, TUTAG had endured several processes expected to culminate into the Ministry of Finance issuing an authorisation letter to the Universities to effect payment. "Unfortunately, despite numerous follow-ups the MoF has not shown any commitment to issue the letter

to the Universities," he complained.

He said TUTAG members had invariably been denied their appropriate benefits within the scope of the reviewed IGF-related conditions of service.

Prof Ameyaw said the inertia displayed by the MoF in failing to authorise Councils of Technical Universities as directed by the NLC to budget for and pay the allowances was creating uneasiness on campuses of various Technical Universities.

Another worrying observation by TUTAG, he noted, was the attitude of Vice Chancellors of Technical Universities in the matter of conditions of service of the Association.

He said TUTAG had picked intelligence that the Vice Chancellors were in backdoor negotiation with some government agencies to defer the effective date of IGF-related conditions of service to January, 2023 instead of August, 2021. "We wish to state that the actions of the Vice Chancellors amount to unfair labour practice, especially when we have concluded negotiations on the allowances in question", he pointed out. He urged the Vice Chancellors to desist from such interference in the work of TUTAG to ensure industrial harmony on various campuses.

Source -- GNA

Why Should We Always Struggle To Get Premix Fuel? - Fishermen Bemoan



File photo of fishermen at work

Some fishermen in the Western region have bemoaned the shortage of premix fuel to aid their work. According to them, though the price has witnessed a marginal increase - now selling at GH¢100 per gallon - the commodity was scarce on the market. In a report filed by Daily Guide, the Secretary of Canoe Owners in Axim, Francis Kwofie Jnr, wondered why fishermen

have to struggle to get the essential commodity - premix fuel - to keep them in business.

He said, "The situation is having an adverse effect on our fishing expedition. Why should fishermen always have to struggle to get adequate supply of the fuel?"

Speaking in the same vein, Vice President of the Canoe Owners Association at the Sekondi Landing Beach, Paa Solomon said

fisherfolk have in the past two months not been supplied premix fuel by government. "For close to two months now, fishermen at the Sekondi Landing Beach have not received any supplies," he said.

Due to this, fishermen have resorted to the use of mixing petrol with engine oil to fuel their canoes to go by their daily duties.

In spite of that, Deputy Minister in Charge of Fishery, Moses Anim, on October 5, 2022, refuted claims that there was a shortage of premix fuel in the country. According to him, government releases about 101.6 million litres of premix fuel to fisherfolks annually. In an interview with the Ghana News Agency in Tema, Mr. Anim said government spends between GH¢150 and GH¢200 million to subsidize premix fuel for fishermen.

Ghana's Inflation Hits 40.4%, Highest Rate In 20 Years

The national consumer price inflation (CPI) for the country reached a startling 40.4 percent rate in October 2022, the Ghana Statistical Service has said.

The new rate which is compared to 37.2 percent recorded in September makes it the highest in about 20 year.

Government Statistician, Professor Samuel Kobina Annim, speaking with journalists on Wednesday November 9 said the increase can largely be linked to rising food prices over the past months.

The price of food reached 43.7 percent inflation in October from 37.8 percent recorded in September this year while non-food inflation rose to 37.8 percent from 36.8 percent.

The Month-on-Month inflation according to the GSS rose up to 2.7 percent in October from 2.0 percent in September this year. For imported items into the country, the GSS said the country recorded 43.7 percent, while inflation for locally produced items stood at 39.1 percent.



Ghana inflation rate has reached 40.4% in October

Prof. Annim further said other factors which contributed to Year-on-Year inflation of about 69.6 percent were; Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and other fuels.

Meanwhile, the recent inflation figures are expected to further impose more hardships on the average Ghanaian who has been grappling with the rising cost of living in the country. The depreciation of the local currency by about 57 percent since January 2022 to date also paints a rather gloomy picture of Ghana's economic situation. The cedi has since been ranked by Bloomberg as the worst-performing currency in the world among 148 currencies it tracked in a survey.

Kwabena Agyepong Talks Sabotage In NPP



Kwabena Agyepong

A former General Secretary of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), Kwabena Agyepong has said his suspension and removal from office in 2015 was part of a grand scheme to thwart his political career. Although he would not mention any names, the politician said there was no evidence to back the

accusations against him, stressing that his personality was what frightened his accusers. "Everybody knows what I stand for, the kind of person I am. I'm frontal and truthful; I don't like tricks. So, I think some people felt I had too much of a strong personality," he said on The Delay Show. "It was all orchestrated to destroy my political career."

Kwabena Agyepong was suspended indefinitely in 2015 with the party's former National Chairman, Paul Afoko, and a former National Vice Chairman, Sammy Crabbe for misconduct. Mr. Agyepong was found guilty of violating Article 3(d) of the party's constitution, which requires members to uphold the party's decisions. He was also accused of engaging in "unilateral actions and activities without consultation with or seeking authorization from the NEC."

His suspension was lifted in 2021.

In his interview on The Delay Show, Agyepong insisted he did no wrong.

"They first suspended Chairman Afoko and I opposed it. What did he do? To remove a chairman, he must do something very grave, something serious.

They put together the National Executive Committee which was not convened by the chairman," said Agyepong.

Mr. Agyepong recalled how some staunch members of the party attempted to ambush him during the national delegates congress held in Tamale in 2014. According to him, plans by some persons to ensure he lost the election failed, making these persons team up with the aim of frustrating the elected executives at the time.

"I was involved in an accident at Nsawam on my way to Tamale. I sustained injuries, my arm broke. I was at 37 Military Hospital receiving treatment when my campaign manager called me to come because some elders who even visited me at the hospital were spreading falsehood that I'm

paralyzed as a result of the accident which means I cannot effectively function as a General Secretary so people shouldn't vote for me," he narrated.

"In the morning, I pleaded with the doctor. He gave me an injection and I headed to Tamale. When I got there, I waved at the crowd and returned to Accra. At 2 AM, I received a phone call that I'd won massively.

"While at the hospital, I heard some people had met and swore to make things difficult for us as executives. I thought it was a joke but later events were to vindicate the fact that there was really a plan to make it impossible for us to work," Agyepong added.

The civil engineer wants to lead his party to 'break the eight' and is sure he is the best candidate. According to him, "it is time for a new dawn, a new dimension, and a new direction" and his track records are profound.

Unemployed Nurses To Picket At Health Ministry

Some unemployed nurses across the country have hinted at plans to demonstrate over government's delay in posting them to the various health facilities to commence work. The unemployed nurses comprising Nurse Assistant Clinicals (NAC) and Nurse Assistant Preventives (NAP) will demonstrate and picket the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Finance.

Public Relations Officer (PRO) for the group, Ebenezer Enadu, told classfonline.com, this

batch of Nurse Assistant Clinicals and Nurse Assistant Preventives have been home since 2019 and are yet to be posted to any government or private facility to practice despite having been granted the licence to.

He explained that: "It's not the first time we have demonstrated, we have picketed, we have gone through a whole lot of processes.

"We have dialogued on several occasions with the various stakeholders but nothing to write home about and so this is

the reason for embarking on this exercise again."

The PRO for the group further explained the expectations of the group ahead of their planned demonstration.

"We're only anticipating that the Nurse Assistant Clinicals and Preventives have undergone the Ministry of Health Recruitment portal and have been given the various regions for which they'll be posted so the expectation is very simple that the Ministry of Finance will issue a financial clearance.



They will demonstrate and picket the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Finance, on Nov 10

"We understand the delay in posting is a result of the fact that the Ministry of Health only recruited the Nurses without financial

clearance so we're demanding the immediate release of the financial clearance," the PRO stated.

What Will Lula's Foreign Policy Look Like?

Asks Pedro Marin

The tenure of President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil is defined by the deforestation of the Amazon, the return of 33 million Brazilians to hunger, and the terrible governance of the country during the pandemic.

But it also marked a radical turning point on a subject that receives little public attention in general: foreign policy. It's not just that the Bolsonaro government has transformed Brazil, a giant in land area and population, into a kind of diplomatic dwarf. Nor is it just the fact that Bolsonaro turned the country's back to Latin America and Africa. The most serious thing is that in his pursuit of aligning Brazil to the United States, Bolsonaro broke with a long tradition of Brazilian foreign policy: the respect for constitutional principles of national independence, self-determination of the peoples, non-intervention, equality between States, defense of peace, and peaceful solution of conflicts.

Despite the different foreign policies adopted by Brazilian governments over the years, no president had ever so openly broken with these principles. Never had a Brazilian president expressed such open support for a candidate in a US election, [as Bolsonaro did](#) to Trump and against Biden in 2020. Never had a president so openly despised Brazil's main trading partner, [as Bolsonaro did](#) with China on different occasions. Never had a Brazilian president [offended](#) the wife of another president as Jair Bolsonaro, [his Economy Minister](#) Paulo Guedes, and his son [Representative Eduardo Bolsonaro](#) did in relation to Emmanuel Macron's wife, Brigitte. And never, at least since re-democratization in the 1980s, has a president talked so openly about invading a neighboring country [as Bolsonaro did](#) toward Venezuela. This attitude has thrown Brazil into a position of unprecedented diplomatic isolation for a country recognized for its absence of conflicts with other countries and its capacity for diplomatic mediation. As a result, during the campaign for the 2022 elections—won by Lula da Silva on Sunday, October 30, by a narrow

margin of 2.1 million votes, with 50.9 percent of the votes for Lula against 49.1 percent for Bolsonaro—the topic of foreign policy appeared frequently, with Lula promising to resume Brazil's leading role in international politics.

“We are lucky that the Chinese see Brazil as a historic entity, which will exist with or without Bolsonaro. Otherwise, the possibility of having had problems of various types would be great. ... [For example, China] could simply not give us vaccines,” professor of economics at Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ) Elias Jabbour tells me.

“Brazil should once again play a decisive role in major international issues,” he adds.

The return of 'active and assertive' foreign policy?

International relations during the first Lula administrations, from 2003 to 2011, were marked by Celso Amorim, minister of foreign affairs. He called for an “active and assertive” foreign policy. By “assertive,” Amorim meant a firmer attitude to refuse outside pressure and place Brazil's interests on the international agenda. By “active,” he was referring to a decisive pursuit of Brazil's interests. This view was “meant to not only defend certain positions, but also attract other countries to Brazil's positions,” Amorim [said](#).

This policy meant a commitment to Latin American integration, with the strengthening of Mercosur (also known as the Southern Common Market) and the creation of institutions [such as Unasur](#), the South American Institute of Government in Health, the South American Defense Council, and CELAC. The IBSA forum (India, Brazil, and South Africa) and the BRICS bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) were also established. During this period, Brazil also advanced its relations with the European Union, Africa, and the Middle East. Due to Brazil's size and the diplomatic weight it took on by increasing its diplomatic representation worldwide, Brazil came to be an important player in international forums, seeking to

advance discussions toward multilateralism and greater democratization of these forums, effectively mediating sensitive issues such as the Iran nuclear agreement with the UN and tensions between Venezuela and the US during the Bush administration.

So far from God and so close to the US

There is a popular phrase throughout Latin America, originally said by Mexican General Porfirio Díaz, overthrown by the Mexican Revolution in 1911: “Poor Mexico! So far from God and so close to the United States.” It applies outside the bounds of its original time and place. Today's Latin Americans could easily swap out “poor Mexico” for their own country, whether that's Colombia, Guatemala, Argentina, or even Brazil—a country where a Christ the Redeemer statue is an international tourist attraction.

In a scenario where nations are heading toward war and confrontation, the return of a diplomatically active Brazil may be exactly what the world, and Latin America in particular, needs. “For the past 40 days, the war in Ukraine has been heading toward a point of no return. Diplomatic exits are no longer on the agenda and the use of brute military force has increased,” says Rose Martins, a doctoral candidate in international economic relations at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). “In this scenario, the BRICS and its New Development Bank offer alternatives for economic development distinct from the neoliberal terms.”

The question, perhaps, is which “world” actually looks forward to an active Brazil. This resumption may interest the Third World, for example, but there are doubts about whether it would interest the so-called Western world. “In this global situation, in which there is a dispute over 'cosmotechnics' and among which the exercise of force is in place, Brazil will have to play in a



Brasília, 2010. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, Brazilian President Lula, Chinese President Hu Jintao and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pose for the official photo during the 2nd BRIC Heads of State and Government Summit Photo: José Cruz/ABR/Wikimedia. Lula's incoming government has an immense challenge ahead to repair historic relations and alliances which were undermined by Bolsonaro

very balanced way, with great caution,” says Professor Héctor Luís Saint-Pierre, coordinator of the Defense and International Security Study Group (GEDES). “I can imagine two possible attitudes: from the point of view of the dispute over cosmotechnical hegemonies, it would be the pragmatic non-alignment. In other words, entering into commercial, economic, and technological relationships in a pragmatic way, non-aligned: neither with one nor with the other,” he says. “And with regard to the US, a certain precaution, because they are at war—we are not. We don't need to go to war to defend US interests: the right thing to do, to defend Brazilian interests, is not going to war. Sometimes national interests are defended by not going to war.”

In addition to the external challenge, Lula arrives at the presidency in a very different situation from that found in his first term. Not only will he have to deal with all the institutional destruction left by Jair Bolsonaro, but he will also have to deal with the members of his own “broad front” coalition—many of whom had been radical opponents during his previous governments. One of the most sensitive topics, however, is how the armed forces will act. Since the coup against Dilma Rousseff, in 2016, the generals have returned to the Brazilian political scene, expanding their domains to the point of conquering thousands of

positions under Bolsonaro—a scenario that puts a country that only left its last military dictatorship 37 years ago on alert. “More than paradoxical, it is aporetic. It's a dead-end situation,” says Saint-Pierre, when I ask him whether the way to disarm military power internally would be to carry out a consistent foreign policy, or if, in order to carry out a consistent foreign policy, it would first be necessary to disarm military power. He believes that Lula will have to establish some kind of pact with the military, in which their demands are respected, so that he can effectively govern. But for all the challenges, Saint-Pierre, Martins, and Jabbour all seem to agree on one point: the Lula government's foreign policy will definitely be better for Brazil, Latin America, and the world than Bolsonaro's. So do the Brazilian people.

Pedro Marin is the editor-in-chief and founder of [Revista Opera](#). Previously, he was a correspondent in Venezuela for [Revista Opera](#) and a columnist and international correspondent in Brazil for a German publication. He is the author of *Golpe é Guerra—teses para enterrar 2016*, on the impeachment of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, and coauthor of *Carta no Coturno—A volta do Partido Fardado no Brasil, on the role of the military in Brazilian politics*. This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#) in partnership with [Revista Opera](#).

Fossils From Millions Of Years Ago Shed New Light On How Animals First Grew Skeletons

By Sandipan Talukdar

In a research paper published in [proceedings of the Royal Society B](#), scientists have revealed important aspects about evolution of life on Earth. This research, published on November 2, discusses how the first animals skeletons looked like.

During the Cambrian period, around 500 millions of years ago, the first animals to develop hard skeletons emerged on Earth, the researchers found in their analysis of intact fossils discovered in China. These well-preserved fossils had been discovered in the Eastern Yunnan province.

Many archaic fossils appear to be hollow tubes of length, ranging from a few millimeters to many centimeters. However, the researchers could not come out with definitive conclusions regarding which animals these fossils belonged to, because the skeletons, mostly hollow tubes, did not have the soft parts that were intact. Hence, researchers failed to identify a majority of the species that the fossils belonged to by comparing with major groups of animals that

are still alive in Earth.

During the Cambrian period (in what is known as the [Cambrian explosion](#), around 538 million years ago), almost all the major animal phyla started appearing. Before the Cambrian explosion (which is also termed as the biological Big Bang) most of the organisms on Earth were relatively simple and were unicellular or simple multicellular organisms. The Cambrian period led to the diversification of species. The new fossil collection, ageing 514 million years, include four specimens of *Gangtoucunia aspera* which contained soft tissues of the gut and mouth parts. In their analysis, the researchers found that this particular species had a mouth with a ring of smooth and unbranched tentacles around 5 millimeters long.

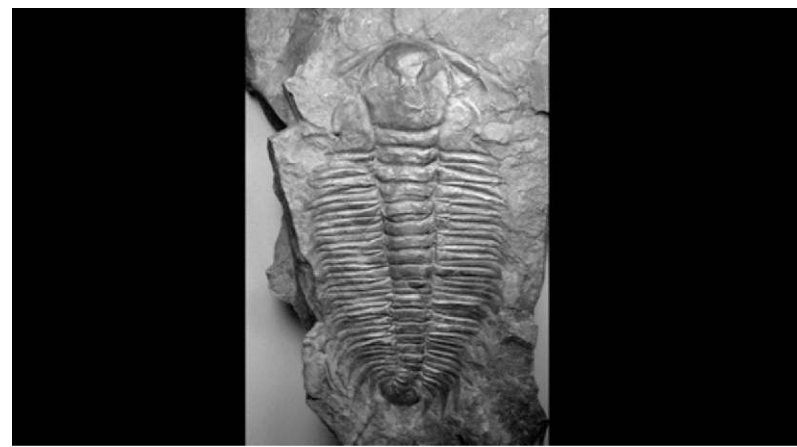
A likely situation could be that these parts were used to sting and capture prey, for example small arthropods (this includes insects and spiders). The fossils also revealed that the *Gantoucunia* contained a gut open on only one

side but partitioned into internal cavities.

Interestingly, these features in the fossils matched only jellyfish and anemones. The study found that these simple animals were the first to develop hard skeletons.

Commenting on the findings, Luke Parry of Oxford University, the corresponding author of the study, [said](#) in a statement: "This really is a one-in-million discovery. These mysterious tubes are often found in groups of hundreds of individuals, but until now they have been regarded as 'problematic' fossils, because we had no way of classifying them. Thanks to these extraordinary new specimens, a key piece of the evolutionary puzzle has been put firmly in place."

Earlier studies suggested that the *Gangtoucunia* was related to annelid worms (for example earthworms). But the new study revealed that *Gangtoucunia* is not related to the annelid worms. The *Gangtoucunia* had a smooth exterior along with the gut partitioned longitudinally. On the



A Cambrian fossil. (Representation image: Wikimedia commons). This fossil was discovered in eastern Yunnan province where the oxygen-limited situation or the anaerobic conditions did not favour the degradation of soft tissues

other side, the annelids have segmented body.

This fossil was discovered in eastern Yunnan province where the oxygen-limited situation or the anaerobic conditions did not favor the degradation of soft tissues. Guangxu Zhang, the first author of the study [said](#): "The first time I discovered the pink soft tissue on top of a *Gangtoucunia* tube, I was surprised and confused about what they were. In the following month, I found three more

specimens with soft tissue preservation, which was very exciting and made me rethink the affinity of *Gangtoucunia*. The soft tissue of *Gangtoucunia*, particularly the tentacles, reveals that it is certainly not a priapulid-like worm as previous studies suggested, but more like a coral, and then I realized that it is a cnidarian." Zhang was involved in collection of the species.

Three Years Since 2019 Protests In Iraq, Most Demands Remain Unfulfilled

This October marks the third anniversary of the [2019 popular protests](#) in Iraq. On Tuesday, October 25, a large number of [people gathered](#) in the Tahrir square in capital Baghdad and paid homage to the people who were killed in the protests. They raised slogans in support of what has been termed by the protesters as the Tishreen movement.

The countrywide protests in 2019, rooted in the long-term grievances of people against successive governments, went on for months. Before the global COVID-19 outbreak forced them to end, the [protests were successful](#) in forcing the then government led by Adil Abdul Mahdi to resign, putting the ruling classes on the defensive and pressing for reforms.

Caretaker prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, who came to power in May 2020 after months of uncertainty, had promised to deliver on some of the major demands raised by the protesters, including rebuilding the economy and [punishing those guilty](#) for the deaths of over 600 people including protesters and others.

Three years down the line and with a new government on the horizon, none of these promises have been met. This is likely to lead the vast majority of pro-reformers pushing for their demands in the coming days.

Economic and political aspects of the protests

The 2019 protests were one of the largest in Iraq's history since the 2003 US invasion. Long-term grievances regarding inefficiency of successive administrations and the widely perceived corruption among the ruling establishment were at the [center of the public anger](#). In their slogans, the protesters repeatedly denounced the failure of the system created under the supervision of the US occupation in tackling the issues faced by the people, such as rising poverty, unemployment, and basic services delivery.

At the time of the protests, the [official rate of poverty](#) in the country of approximately 40 million people was rising. Even before the pandemic hit in 2020, the poverty rate had risen to above 31%. Oil-rich Iraq witnessed an unprecedented [rise in poverty during the COVID-19 outbreak](#). While the government claimed that the poverty rate was coming down after the pandemic, a large number of [Iraqis are still](#)

[forced](#) to live a life as paupers. Since oil revenues make up the bulk of Iraq's federal budget – [around 96%](#) – the economy remains vulnerable to market fluctuation. Iraqi youth, who make up the majority of the population, were at the center of the 2019 protests. The unemployment rate among the youth – fresh graduates from the university and others – [was above 40% at the time of the protests](#).

The majority of [Iraqis were forced to live without the basic amenities](#) such as power, sanitation, and health care. Protesters claimed that these failures on the economic front were the result of inefficiency and corruption of the ruling elite. They also pointed to structural reasons such as the system of *Muhasasa* or sectarian quota based on distribution of political posts for this inefficiency and corruption.

Failure to address demands for structural changes

The protests were not limited to Baghdad but [spread across all urban centers](#) in the country, particularly in the southern regions. The protesters raised the demands of more jobs,

better governance and systemic changes, including ending the sectarian quota system and all kinds of external intervention in Iraqi affairs.

Instead of taking initiatives to address the issues related to structural reforms, the ruling class announced fresh national elections in October 2021, a year before schedule.

Partial changes in the country's electoral laws and introduction of the [first past the poll system](#) to replace the system of proportional representation were sold as fulfilling the demand for reforms in the political structure.

Earlier, amid rising tensions created by the US assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, the outgoing parliament passed [a resolution mandating the complete withdrawal of all foreign forces from the country](#). However, none of these addressed, even partially, the demands raised by the protesters. The US troops were forced to end their operational presence but, in complete violation of the parliament's resolution and popular demand, they [still remain in the country](#).

The national elections of October 2021 saw a historically low participation rate with [just about 40%](#) of the electorate exercising their right to vote [amid a call for boycott](#). This resulted in a situation where no political coalition or group was in a position to claim majority and form a new government for almost a year after the elections. Mohammad Shia al-Sudani was finally approved as prime minister this week. He was designated to the post by Abdul Latif Rashid who was [newly elected as president](#) earlier this month. Al-Sudani's appointment is expected to end the political uncertainty in the country for now. However, it may not mean an end to the political turmoil despite his promises to deliver on the [economic front and tackle corruption](#).

A sign of the challenges ahead is the fact that disagreements and disputes over the nature of government as well as al-Sudani's candidacy [led to the killing of dozens of people](#) this year.