

# ELECTRICITY

## IES Calls For Mass Mobilization To Force PURC Reduce Tariffs



**Nana Amoasi, Executive Director of IES**

**T**he Institute for Energy Security (IES) has urged members of the public and interest groups to mount pressure on the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) to revise the proposed increment in electricity

tariffs. Consumers of electricity will pay 29.96% more effective February 1, 2023. But speaking to Accra based Starr Fm over the weekend, the Executive Director of IES, Nana Amoasi said the

increment could have been less if PURC got its assumptions for the energy generation mix right. "Between now and then what we can do now is to compel PURC to relook its assumption and set them right. If

*Cont. on page 3*

## Congo Signs Deal To Ship Over \$1.5 Billion Of Gold A Year To UAE

*page 2*

### ...But Minority Says Utility Tariff Hikes Part Of IMF Conditionalities



**T**he Minority Caucus in Parliament has said the recent increment in electricity and water tariffs announced by the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC) are part of efforts by the

*Cont. on page 3*

## Rural Banks Beg Ofori-Atta To Be Exempted From Debt Exchange Programme

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# The INSIGHT

## — EDITORIAL

### DEAL WITH THEM!

**I**t is deeply worrying that recent rainfalls in the country have exposed the shoddiness of several of the roads that were constructed and paid for with the taxpayers' money.

Several of the roads within the country's capitals not to mention the hinterlands, have over the past few weeks developed gaping holes following heavy downpours that were recorded prior to the xmas festivities.

Surprising, some of these deep potholes have developed on roads only recently repaved and in some cases constructed.

Clearly, this is worrying considering the huge amount of money that was injected into such projects.

Our contractors need to get their acts together and do a good job for the state, if their cries for non-payment or delay in payment of awarded and finished projects is to be acted upon.

The country is bleeding due to the fact that some road projects have become an avenue for money-making by some few contractors who do shoddy works only to be called back to fix the problem at an extra cost to the state. This should not be allowed to happen again.

Even though we support early payment of road contracted projects and also for them to be handed to local contractors to build their capacities and also retain the huge monies spent on such projects in the country, shoddiness of work would not be entertained. Certainly, this country is bleeding and our contractors and authorities must act.

## Congo Signs Deal To Ship Over \$1.5 Billion Of Gold A Year To UAE

By Michael J. Kavanagh

(Bloomberg) -- Democratic Republic of Congo has agreed to ship 25 tons of gold — worth more than \$1.5 billion — a year to the United Arab Emirates as part of a crackdown on the illicit trade in the precious metal.

The smuggling of gold and other natural resources has long fueled conflict in the east of Congo. While the UAE denies any involvement in illegal practices, United Nations experts say most of the African nation's smuggled gold transits through neighboring Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi before ending up in bullion-trading hub of Dubai.

To cut the link between conflict and smuggling, Congo has entered a partnership with an Abu Dhabi-registered company to buy as much as 25 tons of hand-mined gold per year. A unit of Primera Group Ltd. made its first purchase of about 29 kilos of artisanal gold from South Kivu province earlier this month, Primera Chief Executive Officer Sib Ali told reporters Friday in the capital, Kinshasa.

"We hope to set up a full-proof ecosystem for the artisanal gold value chain, starting with the 26,350 artisanal miners in the South Kivu region to ensure full traceability to officially export gold from the DRC to the UAE," Ali said.

Primera is targeting gold exports of 300 to 500 kilograms a week, which equates to as much as 25 tons a year, the CEO said.

That metal will be shipped to the company's Auric Hub refinery in Abu Dhabi, he said.

High gold prices since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic have spurred

informal gold mining in Congo as a means of employment and a source of funding for rebels. More than 100 armed groups are active in eastern Congo and over 4.4 million people have been displaced due to conflict, according to the UN.

"This is not only an answer to the security issues, but it is also a contribution to the country's economy, the effects of which we will soon see significantly," said Congolese Finance Minister Nicolas Kazadi. Previously the government generated almost no revenue from Congo's artisanal gold trade, he said.

A second Primera subsidiary, Primera Metals, is planning to soon launch a smelter in South Kivu's capital, Bukavu, to process tantalum and tin ore, according to Ali.

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## THE INSIGHT

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# ELECTRICITY

## IES Calls For Mass Mobilization To Force PURC Reduce Tariffs

*from front page*

they set it right, consumers will not be paying the 29% or 30% that has been set by the PURC."

He added: "We need to get the PURC to understand that every Ghanaian is watching the space and it's very important that they do the right things. Most of the time they get the assumption wrong. In 2021, it was projected that the Bui Power Plant will generate just about 501 gigawatts per hour. It turned out that it was able to generate 991 gigawatts hour of power which was about

40% improvement over the anticipated rate the PURC and the Energy Commission said. So they should go back to the drawing board."

The proposed increment will have severe consequences on a large section of the Ghanaian public most of whom are struggling to buy electricity.

Already, some traders at the Kumasi Kejetia market in the Kumasi Metropolis of the Ashanti Region are contemplating closing their shops due to high electricity bills.

Following increment in electricity last September 2022, a number of them have closed their shops in the market space because of high electricity bills. Some of the traders say they cannot continue to pay such exorbitant bills and for that reason, they have no option but to close their shops. A trader told the media that he paid as much as GH¢977 to settle an electricity bill for September 2022 and has no option than to lock the shops and leave the market if things do not change any time soon. The traders noted that things



**Nana Amoasi, Executive Director of IES**

will get out of hand as the electricity tariffs have been adjusted upwards again by the Public Utility Regulatory

Commission which takes effect February 1, 2023.

## ...But Minority Says Utility Tariff Hikes Part Of IMF Conditionalities

*from front page*

government to meet the conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the \$3 billion bailout it is seeking.

The Public Utilities Regulatory Commission announced the increase in tariffs for utility services on Monday, January 16, which is to take effect from February 1, 2023.

According to the PURC, electricity tariffs will be increased by 29.96 percent while water tariffs will be increased by 8.3 percent.

Reacting to this in a statement issued by the Caucus, John Jinapor, the Ranking Member of Parliament's Mines and Energy Committee, accused the government of using unapproved means to increase the tariffs so that it will be able to meet the IMF's conditionalities in the energy sector.

It said that the increment announced implies that utility tariffs have been increased by

over 70 percent which shows how insensitive the government is to the plight of Ghanaians who are already going through a lot of hardships. "The Minority in Parliament has noted with concern, the significant price hikes in electricity tariffs by the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission taking effect from 1st February 2023. This tariff adjustment leads to almost 77% increment in less than 6 months. "By this statement, the Minority demands of the PURC to refrain from such unorthodox methods, which, by all intends and purposes, is a back door approach to meet the IMF conditionalities in the energy sector," parts of the statement by the minority read.

The minority also accused the PURC of skewing the generation mix of electricity production in favour of thermal power as against hydro to create unfair price hikes.

**This is the full statement by the minority:**

20/01/2023

For Immediate Release

### MINORITY STATEMENT ON THE RECENT UTILITY TARRIF HIKES

The Minority in Parliament has noted with concern, the significant price hikes in electricity tariffs by the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission taking effect from 1st February 2023.

This tarrif adjustment leads to almost 77% increment in less than 6 months.

A critical look at the tarrif structure as announced reveals that all residential customers who consume between 0-300 kWh have witnessed a jump from GHp/kWh 65.4161 to GHp/kWh115.72, representing an almost 77% increase in price since September 2022.

It should be noted that the bulk of residential customers falls between 0-300 kWh band and will therefore be adversely affected by the almost 77% price

increment.

We also note that the increment is on account of the worsening Ghanaian currency (Ghana Cedi) against other major currencies. Recently, the Cedi has witnessed a free fall with the local currency rated as the second worst performing currencies in the world.

Already, inflation is galloping and getting worse by the day, with the current rate estimated at over 50%, and therefore, this increment will only exacerbate the current high cost of living. This will automatically worsen the plight of the already impoverished Ghanaian.

We have also noted the attempt by the PURC to skew the generation mix in favour of thermal power as against hydro to create an unfair price hike to the detriment of consumers. It must be stated that the PURC is not the technical regulator hence, cannot arbitrarily skew the thermal/hydro mix contrary to the projections by the Energy

Commission, which is the technical regulator of Ghana's energy sector. From the available data, all the 3 hydro dams have witnessed very high elevations at the beginning of 2023 and are therefore in better positions to produce more hydro electricity compared to the previous years. We are confident of hydro generating not less than 35% based on the Energy Commission's projections. We therefore reject the 26% Hydro mix used in computing the recent tarrif adjustments.

By this statement, the Minority demands of the PURC to refrain from such unorthodox methods, which, by all intends and purposes, is a back door approach to meet the IMF conditionalities in the energy sector.

Signed  
Hon John Jinapor  
Ranking Member, Mines and Energy Committee





# INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

## Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

### Italian Left Slams Complicity Of Ruling Class In Crimes Of Sicilian Mafia



**Matteo Messina Denaro arrested by the security forces in Palermo. (Photo: via il manifesto). Left-wing groups have warned that the recent arrest of Sicilian mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro—who has been a fugitive since 1993—may have been based on a covert agreement between the mafia**

Left-wing groups in Italy have accused the ruling class of complicity in the crimes committed by the Sicilian mafia and raised concerns regarding the authenticity of the recent arrest of mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro in Palermo. In a statement on January 18, Potere al Popolo (Power to the People) voiced suspicions that the much celebrated arrest of 60-year-old Messina Denaro—who remained elusive for 30 years—on January 16 happened as part of a covert agreement between the mafia and state authorities. Maurizio Acerbo from the leadership of the

Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) stated, “We’re always happy when a mafia boss is arrested but heavy shadows are obvious in the case involving Matteo Messina Denaro.” Matteo Messina Denaro is a Sicilian mafia boss who has been a fugitive since 1993. On January 16, he was arrested by the security forces from a private clinic in the Sicilian capital, where he had reportedly been undergoing chemotherapy. According to the latest reports, he has been transferred to L’Aquila Prison and now has to face trial. He

has been charged with involvement in mafia activities and multiple homicides. Italy’s far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has [termed](#) the arrest of Messina Denaro as “historic” and “a big blow to organized crime.”

Potere al Popolo in its [statement](#) also said that “the euphoria of the celebrations staged by big media and politicians risks overshadowing not only the legitimate doubts about the nature of the arrest, but also the systemic ties that exist today between the mafia and the ruling class of this country.”

Left-wing groups, including Potere al Popolo, the Communist Refoundation Party, and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), have pointed to an [interview](#) given two months ago by Salvatore Baiardo, a man well-connected to mafia families, who predicted the possible self-delivery—disguised as an outrageous arrest—of Messina Denaro, who is suffering from cancer.

Acerbo said that “the interview given to Massimo Giletti by Salvatore Baiardo last November anticipated

what happened as a ‘nice little gift to the government’ and the result of a negotiation maybe to get the release of other bosses.”

“It’s really inappropriate to see the influx of proclamations from right-wing representatives who try to claim the merit of the capture,” he added.

Giuliano Granato from Potere al Popolo told *Peoples Dispatch* on January 20 that “the mafia built a system of illegal bourgeoisie inseparably interlinked with legal bourgeoisie. Italian history shows that the mafia is not a disease of a healthy organism, but the violent face of a system that represents itself as peaceful and democratic, but isn’t.” Granato also pointed to some other examples to elucidate the connection between the mafia and the ruling class of Italy.

“Antonio D’Alì—former Senator and Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department with Forza Italia, the party of Silvio Berlusconi—was condemned by the court for his ‘availability’ (or closeness) toward the Cosa Nostra from early ‘80 to the beginning of 2006.”

“The doctor who helped Messina Denaro and released his certificates was the local representative of a right-wing party.”

“Former governor of Regione Sicilia, Totò Cuffaro, representative of the former Democrazia Cristiana and then center-right parties, in 2011 was condemned to seven years of jail for ‘favoring the mafia’.”

“In 2010 a court decided the same sentence for Marcello Dell’Utri—former senator and very close to Silvio Berlusconi—on mafia charges.”

“There is a whole economic, political, and bureaucratic system linked with the mafia. These are just a few names, but there are thousands of people, including in [the] police forces, involved with mafias all over Italy,” Granato added.

Mafia groups have wrought much destruction on the peace and livelihoods of the Italian people, especially in Sicily. Communists and trade unions have also been subject to repeated threats and attacks from the mafia groups over the last century.

### Egyptian Court Sentences 82, Including 22 Children, For Participating In 2019 Anti-Government Protests

An Egyptian court in Cairo has sentenced 82 people, including 22 children, to prison sentences ranging between five years and life imprisonment for participating in anti-government protests in September 2019.

According to the [Middle East Eye](#), a total of 103 people were on trial in Cairo’s criminal court on terrorism charges. The court sentenced a total of 82 people, out of whom [38 were given life sentences and 44 others were given prison terms](#) of between 5 and 15 years. 23 of the 38 who were given life sentences were tried in absentia, including businessman Mohammad Ali. Apart from charges related to participating in the protests, obstructing public servants, and indulging in violence against them, the court also found the children

guilty of charges related to posting videos on social media platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook, as well as disrupting traffic. Mohammad Ali was considered the main trigger for the 2019 protests after the videos he made and uploaded from exile in Spain went viral. In these videos he alleged that al-Sisi’s administration was indulging in corruption.

As a consequence, several [small-scale protests broke out](#) in different parts of Egypt in September 2019, which went on for days despite the state’s attempts at suppression. The protesters had demanded the ouster of president al-Sisi.

Similar protests were held a year later, to mark the anniversary of the original protests. At least one protester was reportedly [killed by security forces](#) during the crackdown

in 2020.

Over 4,000 people were arrested for participating in the protests in September 2019, including hundreds of children. The children sentenced on Sunday were arrested for participating in protests in Suez.

#### Experts question verdict

Several lawyers representing the children in the case questioned the verdict, saying that it was based on little or no evidence. They also called it cruel to children and disproportionate to the charges, *Mada Masr* [reported](#).

According to the experts quoted by the *Middle East Eye*, the verdict of the Cairo court cannot be appealed as it has been issued by a terrorism circuit

court. However, the verdict will also not be implemented until the president ratifies it.

Ahmed Attar, a researcher with the Egyptian Network for Human Rights, told *Middle East Eye* that “the detention of the protesters was arbitrary and done without warrant.” He claimed that “many of the defendants were subjected to enforced disappearance and torture before being charged.” He also suggested that “these cases are politically motivated, with no evidence to support the charges.” Egypt under Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who first came to power in a coup in 2013, has seen massive crackdowns on the political



**Protests in Egypt in 2019. 38 people, including businessman Mohammad Ali whose videos sparked the protests, were given life sentences. 44 others were given prison terms of between 5 and 15 years**

opposition, human right activists, and journalists. Though the al-Sisi administration finally lifted the state of emergency in the country, in place since 1967, in 2021, protests and strikes are still illegal. According to one estimate, there were over [65,000 political prisoners](#) in the country in 2021.

# Another Financial Sector Collapse Imminent - Dr Ato Forson Warns



Dr Cassiel Ato Forson, the Ranking Member of Parliament's Finance Committee

**D**r Cassiel Ato Forson, the Ranking Member of [Parliament's](#) Finance Committee, has said that Ghana will face another financial sector collapse if the government goes through with its Domestic

Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP).

According to him, the government, through its DDEP, is seeking to transfer its debt problem to individuals and private organisations including banks, which will lead to

them not being able to pay their depositors and their eventual collapse.

Speaking in an interview on JoyNews on Monday, January 16, 2023, Ato Forson added that at least five banks are on the brink of collapse because of the economic challenges in the country.

"... at the end of the debt restructuring, the financial sector will have to collapse again. I am already seeing about five banks (that are) already going to shake because of what is going to happen to them if we allow it (the DDEP) to go (through).

"So, do we really want to

transfer the burden where the state is insolvent to the private sector and what will be the repercussions going forward?" we quizzed.

Dr Ato Forson, the Member of [Parliament](#) for Ajumako Enyan Esiam, therefore urged the government to hold on to its DDEP and make the necessary consultations before going on with it.

"That is why we are saying that it is for you and I to sit down and jaw-jaw for us to find a proper mix to resolve (the current challenges)," he said.

He added that should the government decide to force the debt restructuring

programme on Ghanaians, the entire middle class in the country will also be whipped out.

Meanwhile, the invitation to the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme has been extended for the third time to January 31, 2023.

This comes after the second extension by the Finance Ministry expired on January 16, 2023.

The decision to include individual bondholders was necessitated after the government was forced by labour unions to abandon plans to include pensions in the debt exchange programme which was first announced in December 2022.

## Christian Council Calls On Govt To Suspend Debt Restructuring And Consult Stakeholders

**T**he Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) has asked the government to suspend its Domestic Debt Exchange programme (DDE) and pursue wider engagement with stakeholders.

The CCG in a January 19, 2023 statement signed by Rt. Rev. Prof. J.O.Y Mante said it had arrived at that position after keenly following public debates and talking to some affected parties.

Their call for engagement, the statement noted, was because they had "identified lapses in the debt restructuring programme, a major one being lack of consultation with affected individuals and institutions." The statement continued: "With the current economic hardships in the country and the agitations among the general public, it is in the nation's interest for the Finance Ministry to suspend the 31st January deadline given to individuals to sign on to the program and rather propose a road map for dialogue to make the process participatory such that the outcome would be acceptable to all."

The government has failed to secure a debt restructuring deal with domestic lenders, postponing a deadline for the DDE thrice, the latest deadline being January 31, 2023.

The DDE is seen as a crucial



Ken Ofori-Atta, Finance Minister

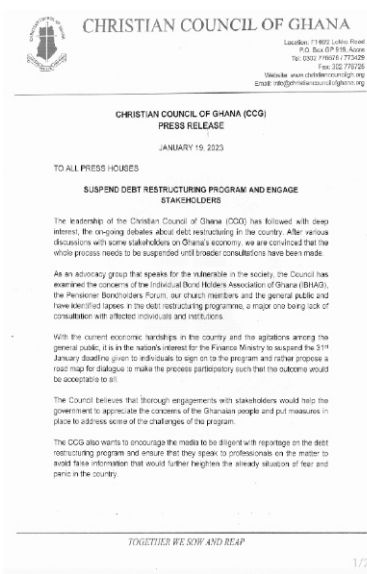
requirement to secure a programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) following a torrid 2022 in which the economy suffered from rising inflation, massive depreciation of the Ghana cedi and the rising cost of living.

The government has repeatedly blamed the crisis partly on the aftershocks of the COVID pandemic and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war but has promised to turn around the economic fortunes of the country after sealing a Staff-Level Agreement with the IMF late last year, with hopes that funds from the US\$3 billion facility will be released early this year.

The government is hamstrung by hurdles as it attempts to secure a debt restructuring programme at home. Processes are underway to restructure external debts too, Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta disclosed to Accra-based Joy FM on January 18.

Organized labour successfully fought

off plans to include pensions in the DDE; now individual bondholders are also rejecting plans to include them with talks ongoing on a mutually acceptable way forward.



The leadership of the Christian Council of Ghana will continue to pray for the managers of our economy, especially the finance minister, for God's wisdom and direction in this matter, and we urge all churches to do the same.

We strongly believe that God will see us through this difficult situation. Let us keep our hopes alive.

God bless our homeland Ghana and make our nation great and strong.

SIGNED

Rt. Rev. Prof. J.O.Y Mante

## PAC Directs Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital To Refund GH¢36,000 Unearned Salaries

**T**he Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament has asked the Management of the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital to refund GH¢36,000 paid as unearned salaries to some staff in 2020. Ebenezer Prince Arhin, the Deputy Human Resource Director, Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, appearing before the PAC last Wednesday, said efforts made towards retrieving the funds from relatives of some of the deceased staff, in the last two years, had proven futile.

"The unearned salaries are GH¢115,889,12, and Korle-Bu has been able to recover GH¢79, 000 plus and the outstanding is GH¢36,000. We have made frantic efforts to recover that amount but some of them are deceased. We have gotten to their next of kin and we are pursuing them for the money," he said.

Mr Arhin, therefore, pledged that management would do all it could to retrieve the monies as directed

by the Committee.

James Klutse Avedzi, the Chairman of PAC, rejected the explanation of the Hospital and charged the Management to refund the unrecovered amount to the Hospital's accounts.

PAC commenced sittings on Monday, January 16, 2023, to examine the Auditor General's Report on public accounts of the Government for the year 2020 and also scrutinise the accounts of the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies per the recommendations of the Report.

The accounts of public boards, corporations, and other statutory institutions would also be considered.

Proceedings of the almost two-week sitting are expected to be concluded on Friday, January 27, according to a statement issued by the Public Affairs Directorate of Parliament, and copied to the Ghana News Agency in Accra.

**Source -- GNA**



# Everything You Need To Know About The Upcoming NDC Presidential And Parliamentary Elections

The main opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) is actively gearing up for a busy 2023 ahead of crucial 2024 General Elections as they look to wrestle power from the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP). It will be the first major test for the newly-elected batch of executives led by National Chairman Johnson Asiedu Nketiah, who until December 2022 had served for 17 years as the party's General Secretary. Asiedu Nketiah, along with his successor Fifi Fiavi Kwetey and members of the National Executive body are gunning for early victory by way of leading the NDC into the Jubilee House after eight years in opposition. The party on Wednesday, January 18, 2023 released detailed guidelines on how its presidential and parliamentary primaries will be conducted later this year.

**These are the major highlights contained in both processes.**

## Major modalities for the presidential primary

Date and venues:  
The election of the Presidential Candidate shall be held on Saturday, 13th May, 2023 at Voting Centers in all 276 Constituencies of the NDC which includes the SALL/Guan catchment area.

The National Headquarters of the

NDC shall constitute an additional voting center for all delegates from external branches of the party.

## Nomination process and completing forms:

Nominations shall be opened between 22nd and 24th March, 2023. A candidate must be proposed by a party member in good standing and endorsed by five others in each constituency in each region across the country.

Candidates shall be subjected to a vetting process which is expected to take place at the party Headquarters on a specified date.

## Cost of forms and submission:

Nomination forms shall be made available in the office of the General Secretary for purchase at a non-refundable fee of Thirty thousand Ghana Cedis (Gh¢30,000.00) paid by bankers' draft. The completed forms (Nomination and endorsement forms) are to be returned to the General Secretary of the Party with evidence of the payment of a non-refundable filing fee of Five hundred thousand Ghana Cedis (Gh¢500,000.00) via bankers' draft.

Female candidates and Persons with Disabilities shall pay fifty percent (50%) of the filing fees

## Election Day:

The presidential primary will take place concurrently with the parliamentary primary with the party's national headquarters serving as the collation center. A candidate will require 50% plus one to win a first-round victory.

## Major modalities for the parliamentary primary

### Date and place:

It shall be held on same day as the presidential primary (May 13, 2023). The election shall be held at a venue within the Constituency as determined by the Constituency Executive Committee in consultation with the Regional Executive Committee (REC) of the respective region.

## Nomination forms

Forms shall be made available online for download on [www.ghanandc.com](http://www.ghanandc.com) and a non-refundable fee of Five thousand Ghana Cedis (Gh¢5,000.00) paid online via the stipulated momo or bank card.

The completed forms (nomination and endorsement) shall be completed and submitted to the Elections Directorate of the constituency after the payment of a non-refundable filing fee of Forty thousand Ghana cedis



(Gh¢40,000.00) via Bank Card on [www.ghanandc.com](http://www.ghanandc.com).

## Completing forms:

Each contestant must be proposed by one person and seconded by three (3) persons all of whom must be members of good standing of the party in different branches of the constituency. Each prospective candidate shall be endorsed by at least one branch executive member of the party from 50 percent of the total branches in the constituency.

## Day of voting:

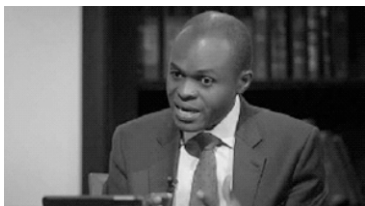
All rules as applies in national elections shall be applicable along with any other rules as communicated by the National Executive Committee (NEC). Candidates can appoint agents to monitor the process. Ballots shall be counted and collated

immediately after the process and winner shall be declared on the basis of first past the post – aspirant with highest number of votes.

## Key timelines for the process:

OPENING OF NOMINATIONS  
MONDAY 22ND - 24TH FEBRUARY, 2023  
SUBMISSION OF FORMS/ FILING OF NOMINATION MONDAY 20TH – 22ND MARCH 2023  
VETTING MONDAY 27th - 29th MARCH, 2023  
APPEAL 30TH MARCH – 6TH APRIL, 2023  
ELECTIONS SATURDAY, 13TH MAY, 202

## Govt's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme Is 'Weapon Of Mass Destruction' – Martin Kpebu



Martin Kpebu, Lawyer for a collective of individual bondholders

The lawyer for a collective of individual bondholders, Martin Kpebu, has said that his clients remain opposed to the plan of government to include them in its debt

exchange programme. According to a report by [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com), the lawyer likened the government's Domestic Debt Exchange programme to a nuclear weapon which will kill many individual bondholders if they are included. “We're still standing by the 'no-no-no-no'. So, we're asking government to respectfully exempt individual bondholders from this programme. “As I've stated over and over,

the programme, that's the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP) is proven to be a weapon of mass destruction. “It (the DDEP) is going to kill more citizens, it's going to destroy more businesses. It's going to destroy more schools and livelihoods and so on and so forth,” Kpebu is quoted to have said on Joy FM's Newsnight programme. Meanwhile, the Minister for Finance, Ken Ofori-Atta, has

stated that the debt exchange programme is necessary to fixing Ghana's ailing economy. According to him, scrapping the programme is not an option. “We have a situation where our debt exchange is necessary... we have a situation where we have come out of certain formulations ... I think we've done that successfully.” “In the same way, we sat with

the union pensions, and I think we are making great progress in what we do for them. In the same way in which we are looking at individual bondholders to see how we can tweak this. Would we lose a bit of what we have? I think all of us are going to. But we have to make sure that what we eventually come up with will create sustainability,” he explained.

# Fresh Troubles Between Armenia And Azerbaijan, And Challenges To Russian Influence In The Region

By Abdul Rahman

Nearly two years after both countries fought over a month-long war on the Nagorno-Karabakh (also referred to as Artsakh by Armenians), Armenia and Azerbaijan are yet again on the verge of conflict. Armenia has recently accused Azerbaijan of “provocation” over the Lachin corridor, and Russia of failing to play its peacekeeping role in the region.

The resurgence of the conflict, at a time when war is ongoing in Eastern Europe, has unleashed a global geopolitical race, as the US and its European allies attempt to curb Russian influence—hitherto strong—in the region.

## Lachin corridor

The Lachin corridor is the only road link that connects Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Though Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as Azerbaijani territory, the majority of its residents are ethnic Armenians and have strong links to Armenia. Since December 12, hundreds of people calling themselves [environmental activists](#) have marched into the Lachin corridor, claiming that Armenia is endangering the regional ecosystem by exploiting natural resources, and demanding an end to its mining activities.

Armenia sees the protests as sponsored by Azerbaijan, and has accused it of blocking its only road link with the region. It has claimed that the blockade has created a humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh by causing disruptions in the

supply of basic goods. Azerbaijan has denied playing a role in the protests. The Azeri Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov has even questioned the Armenian claim that the corridor is completely blocked. He [claimed](#) that “dozens of transport vehicles, cars of the (Russian) peacekeeping contingent, the international committee of the Red Cross, and Armenian ambulances are using the Lachin corridor daily.”

Azerbaijan, however, had objected to Armenian mining at the Gyzybulag gold deposit and the Damirli copper and molybdenum deposits in Karabakh, calling it “illegal” and damaging to the environment. Russia has [stressed](#) the need for the earliest possible unblocking of the traffic along the Lachin corridor in accordance with the parameters stipulated in the November 9, 2020, trilateral top-level statement.”

## Geopolitics of the conflict

According to some [estimates](#), over 120,000 ethnic Armenians live in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In 1991, immediately after the dissolution of the USSR, these Armenians had declared their independence from Azerbaijan, calling their new state the Republic of Artsakh. The self-proclaimed republic was not recognized by any country except Armenia.

Since then, Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars over this region. In the last war, in 2020, which lasted for nearly 44 days, at least 6,500 people were killed. For the first time, Azerbaijan was able to make strategic gains in Nagorno-



(Photo: Alexander Patrin/TASS). Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the “blockade” of the Lachin corridor have kicked off a global geopolitical race in the region

Karabakh, with the benefit of open military support provided by Turkey. It now controls the majority of the self-declared Artsakh republic.

The war ended following [Russian intervention](#) in November 2020, and all three countries issued a joint statement calling for the maintenance of the status quo and the beginning of a peace process mediated by Russia. Russia also agreed to send a peacekeeping force to Nagorno-Karabakh. Unfortunately, this peace process has not made much progress. Allegations and counter-allegations are often made by both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and there is often violence in the region.

In September last year, over [two hundred people were killed](#) in sudden clashes between the forces of both countries.

Meanwhile, the West has begun to use the conflict as a means to undermine Russian influence in the region. This is happening both in the context of the war in Ukraine and the historical race for influence in the post-Soviet republics.

The media has already started [talking](#) about the growing role of the US in the region, and the need for sanctions and other coercive measures as a way out of the conflict.

Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made a rare visit to Armenia in September last year after the clashes and met Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The *New York Times* [claimed](#) at the time that this was an attempt to use the opportunity provided by the war in Ukraine, which has made the Russian position weak. US Foreign Secretary Antony Blinken also [held a meeting](#) of the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in November in Washington.

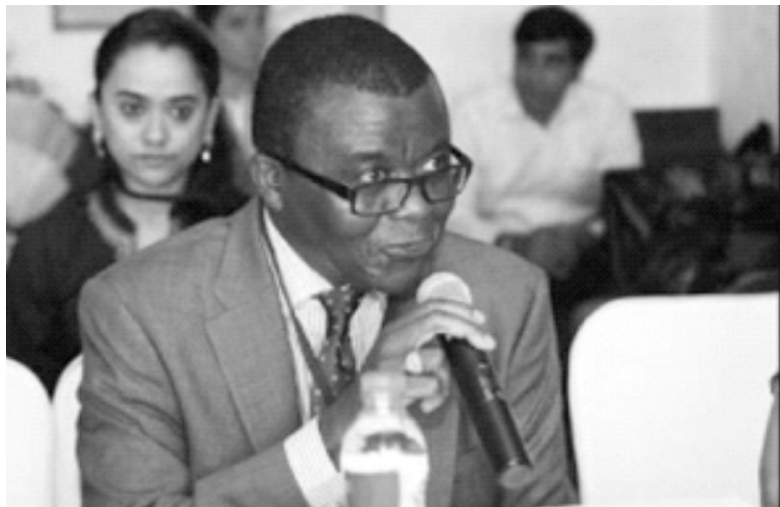
Armenia, which has been considered a traditional ally of Russia, has failed to secure its full backing as [Russia tries to balance its relations with Turkey](#), a close Azeri ally, due to the peculiar situation created in the context of the war in Ukraine.

This has led to Armenia recently canceling the joint military operations of the Collective Security Treaty

Organization (CSTO), an alliance of post-Soviet countries. Pashinyan has also openly [accused](#) Russia of failing to lift the blockade, and has appealed to the UN, the European Union, and [G20 to intervene in the matter](#). This has invited a sharp Russian reaction, with Maria Zakharova, spokesperson of the Russian Foreign Ministry, [rejecting the Armenian allegations](#) and claiming that Russian peacekeepers are doing everything they can do in their zone of influence to maintain peace. She also asked the Armenians to desist from making “public attacks” as they may do “visible harm to the process of Armenian-Azeri normalization.” Russia has also [blamed Armenia](#) for dragging its feet on the issue of talks and taking unclear and vague positions, which have prevented discussions related to the peace treaty.



# National Cathedral An Ill-Conceived Project With Respectable People Fronting It – Kufuor Foundation Boss



Chief Executive Officer of the J.A. Kufuor Foundation

The Chief Executive Officer of the J.A. Kufuor Foundation, Prof. Baffuor Agyemang Duah, has described the scandals that have befallen the construction of the National Cathedral of Ghana as a tragedy. Speaking in an interview on XYZ TV, Prof. Agyemang Duah said that the cathedral project was supposed to be spearheaded by the clergy, but it appears some individuals are making the decisions for them.

“The whole project was ill-conceived... initially my thinking was that this was a private initiative, which means that funds would be mobilised privately. And I think they attempted that; because I understand that they engaged somebody, a fundraiser, to do that, and perhaps because the private fundraising did not go well, that is why they decided to use state money for what they call seed money. “The fact is that the controversies about the cathedral reflect a very

flawed national project, badly conceived and badly executed. And the government succeeded in lining up some respectable individuals to be the face of the project,” he said. “And from what we are hearing from members who have resigned, major decisions concerning the project were not even taken by the Board of Trustees. It seemed like there were some private individuals behind it who were making all the decisions... so mixing private sentiments and desires with public resources and topping it with religious faces is what has caused this tragedy,” he added. Prof. Agyemang Duah, a governance expert, noted that the modus operandi of the stakeholders involved in the construction of the cathedral was not in consonance with good governance practices. He also said that he is not surprised about the scandals that are now meeting the construction of the cathedral. Prof. Agyemang Duah made these

remarks while reacting to the latest corruption exposé on the National Cathedral by MP for North Tongu, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, portions of which suggested impropriety on the part of the secretary to the Board of Trustees of the National Cathedral of Ghana, Rev. Victor Kusi Boateng. On January 16, 2023, the MP made some allegations against Rev. Kusi Boateng, who is the secretary to the Board of Trustees of the National Cathedral of Ghana. In an earlier revelation about the National Cathedral, Okudzeto Ablakwa said a whopping GHC 2.6 million was dished out to a company named JNS Talent Centre Limited. Further investigations into the alleged payment led to the discovery of one Kwabena Adu Gyamfi as a director of JNS Talent Centre. Having confirmed the identities of two out of the three directors of the centre, Ablakwa dug

deeper in a bid to discover the identity of the third director, Kwabena Adu Gyamfi. According to his findings, citing a number of documents, Kwabena Adu Gyamfi was the same as Reverend Kusi Boateng, who had allegedly been operating under the pseudonym Kwabena Adu Gyamfi. But Kusi Boateng, in a statement said that the allegations made against him by Ablakwa are mere fabrications. He said that the accusations the MP made against him were for political purposes, adding that he has not engaged in any criminal activity in his dealings with the National Cathedral project. Rev. Kusi Boateng also said that he is waiting on the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), which has been petitioned by Ablakwa, to investigate him. He added that he will explore the legal options available to him against the MP for deliberately defaming him.

## We Don't Know The Exact Amount Of Seed Money For The National Cathedral – Joyce Aryee

A member of the National Cathedral Board of Trustees, Rev. Joyce Aryee, has indicated that government has not told the trustees the exact amount of money the government has as seed money for the National Cathedral project. According to her, they relied on the seed money the government finds from time to time without knowing the exact amount the state said it will give as seed money. “I’m still looking for it, I think that’s the question we need to go and ask—Since the state said it will give us seed money, what percentage is it giving? ...No, we were not told, we were just told seed money, and we have relied on the seed money the government will find from time to time. We have not been told the exact amount the seed money is,” citinewsroom quoted Joyce Aryee as having said.

Responding to the question of how the board of trustees was operating without the knowledge of government's financial commitment, she noted that in such instances, they assume that they are supposed to raise the total budget and consider “the other one [government's seed money] as a gift. It will be wonderful when the other person [government] brings his gift, otherwise, I’m building [the project without it]”. They added that the National Cathedral Board of Trustees were assigned to raise funds while the government will also support them with other stuff.

“The project was never meant to be fully financed by the state and when we were called, that is what we were told. The state will do certain things and we the members of the board were to make sure that we raise the money to build the Cathedral. It was never meant to be fully financed by the state,” Rev.

Joyce Aryee clarified. President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on March 16 appointed a 13-Member Board of Trustees to spearhead Ghana's National Cathedral. At their inauguration at the Jubilee House, the President said the 13-member Board of Trustees will be in charge of the National Cathedral when it is completed. The members are:

1. Apostle Prof. Opoku Onyinah, former Chairman of the Church of Pentecost – Chairperson
2. Archbishop Charles Gabriel Palmer-Buckle, Metropolitan Catholic Archbishop, Cape Coast – Vice Chairman
3. Most Rev. Bishop Justice Ofei Akrofi, Anglican Archbishop Emeritus – Member
4. Rt. Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey, former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church – Member
5. Most Rev T. K. Awotwi Pratt, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist

- Church – Member
6. Rev Prof Cephas Omenyo, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church – Member
7. Pastor Mensa Otabil, General Overseer of International Central Gospel Church – Member
8. Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, Presiding Archbishop and General Overseer of Action Chapel International – Member
9. Rev Dr Joyce Aryee, Executive Director, Salt and Light Ministries – Member
10. Bishop [Dag Heward-Mills](#), Presiding Bishop, Lighthouse Group of Churches – Member
11. Rev Eastwood Anaba, Founder and President of Eastwood Anaba Ministries – Member
12. Rev Victor Kusi-Boateng, Founder of Power Chapel Worldwide – Member/Secretary



National Cathedral Board of Trustees, Rev. Joyce Aryee

13. Rev Dr Frimpong Manso, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God – Member At the National Cathedral Secretariat, there is an appointed Executive Director known as Dr. Paul Opoku-Mensah with two (2) representatives of the United States. However, in August 2022 Bishop [Dag Heward-Mills](#) resigned as a member of the trustee.

NYA/WA