

HARD TIMES AHEAD

As Govt Imposes Taxes On Mineral Water, Energy & Malt Drinks, Wines, Fruit Juices, Beers, Others



Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance



Government has passed the Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill 2022

The difficult economic times being experienced by most Ghanaians especially the middle and lower class(es) will soon be aggravated with the passage of the three new taxes which are part of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity measures and meant to

affect food and beverages in the country. With the new taxes passed in parliament on Friday March 31 by 'remote-controlled' majority lawmakers supported by a few 'hungry' minority members,

Ghanaians should expect an increase in the prices of mineral water, energy and malt drinks, wines, fruit juices, beers, cigarettes, Snuff and other Tobacco products and many others all of which will now be taxed under the amended Excise Duty Levy.

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Why The United States Is *page 10* Stirring Up Syrian Cauldron

GHS Blames Sex For Sanitary Pads For Rising Teenage Pregnancies In Ahafo Ano South



Teenage pregnancy in Ahafo Ano

The Health Director at the Ahafo Ano South West District of the Ashanti Region, Dr. Rubben Bedzra, has disclosed that, some teenagers in the district got pregnant for chasing over a Gh¢20.00 money

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Mental Health Authority Calls For Investment Into Mental Healthcare

...On The Occasion Of World Bipolar Day

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The INSIGHT

— EDITORIAL

THE UNEMPLOYMENT MENACE

The unemployment crisis currently facing the country has been viewed as a national security threat.

This is because the number of youth joblessness keeps rising despite the creation of jobs by the government.

And this comes at a time when over the years successive governments in one way or the other have invariably promised to create jobs and make youth unemployment a thing of the past.

Most of these promises were as a result of the realization of the danger posed to the country's peace, security and stability over the lack of jobs for the teeming number of youths who graduate from both second cycle and tertiary institutions in search of non-existent jobs.

The dreams and aspirations of these individuals are heightened by the unrealistic promises of the ruling political establishment and which often turn out to be a mirage.

For example the Kufuor administration once asked the teeming unemployed, especially the youth to queue for a national register to be compiled and jobs provided them. It later turned out to be a false hope. Currently, there is rising youth unemployment with its attendant consequences to the nation.

The government claims to have made strides in growing the economy but data or figures as to how many jobs have been created so far is anybody's guess – none.

The Insight is of the strong opinion that the government needs to endeavour to activate the Komenda Sugar Factory and many others that are dormant or have been shut down for one reason or the other.

The citizens need jobs and cannot afford to wait any longer when there are existing factories that need little or no funding to get them running.

Perhaps it is time to speed up efforts to address the youth unemployment.

GHS Blames Sex For Sanitary Pads For Rising Teenage Pregnancies In Ahafo Ano South

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for sanitary pad.

According to him, most of the teenagers who reported to health facilities in the district after interrogations disclosed that, they succumbed to proposals from men in order to get money for sanitary pads during their Menstrual period. Dr. Bedra disclosed this on the Kumasi-based OTEC FM last Tuesday, April 4, 2023.

"While the causes of teenage pregnancies in the area are many, one of the problems which runs through almost all victims was poverty, most of the teenagers who confided in us said they were forced into bed after the men provided them with sanitary pads for a period of time," he stated.

Teenage pregnancies

The Ghana Health Service disclosed that pregnancy among teenagers between 10 to 14 years was on the rise in the Ahafo Ano South West District of the Ashanti Region. According to GHS, 18 percent of the total 460 teenage pregnancies recorded in the district for the year 2022 were between the 10 to 14-year age brackets.

The situation according to GES is destroying the future of many young girls in the area. Dr. Bedra expressed concern over the alarming rate of teenage pregnancies in the district, calling on all stakeholders to join the



fight against the menace.

He said, "I am encouraging all stakeholders in the district to see this development as a huge burden that needs urgent attention

"The lives of most of our young girls are being destroyed because of this very issue that is why I believe such workshops are very important".

Source: otecfmghana.com

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

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from front page

While the government believes that the bills could generate about GH¢4 billion in domestic revenue when implemented, many Ghanaians in the sections of the working class, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the business community at large have expressed dissatisfaction with the passage of the Excise Duty, Growth and Sustainability Levy and Income Amendment Bills saying the move will compound the already difficult economic conditions in the country. The business community led by their associations notably the Food and Beverages Association of Ghana (FABAG) and the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) have said the taxes will further burden Ghanaians and compound the woes of indigenous and foreign businesses operating in the country even as government eyes the bigger ball of ensuring a revenue yield of approximately GH¢4.00 billion annually. Under the Growth and Sustainability Levy, government expects to raise approximately GH¢2.216 billion in 2023, while the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2022 which amends the Income Tax Act, 2015 (Act 896) is expected to yield revenues of approximately GH¢1.29 billion.

The Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill, 2022 amends the Excise Duty Act, 2014 (Act 878) and is expected to yield approximately GH¢455 million. Some of the items contained

under the amended Excise Duty Levy according to Parliament of Ghana with the passage of the Excise Duty Amended Levy are;

Non-Alcoholic beer and drinks
Mineral water/aerated water
Cigarettes
Energy drinks
Bottled/ Distilled water
Cigars
Fruit Juices
Malt drinks
Wines
Cider Beer
E-Cigarette
E-smoking devices
Negrohead
Snuff and other Tobacco products
Beers/Stout/Indigenous Beer

The Insight publishes some concerns expressed by the business community in the stories below;

AGI Bemoans Introduction Of Three New Taxes By Govt

The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) says it is disappointed in parliament's decision to pass through three revenue bills amid the current economic challenges in the country.

On Friday March 31, the House passed the Excise Duty, Growth and Sustainability Levy and Income Amendment Bills after government tabled the revenue bills for consideration.

Although government believes that the bills could generate about GH¢4 billion in revenue when implemented, the AGI on its

part has berated the decision.

In a statement issued by the AGI President, Seth Twum-Akwaboah noted that the implementation of the revenue bills will pose very dire consequences for industry and businesses operating in the country.

“We continue to experience a tax regime that does not motivate local production and formal business operations. We denounce the lack of stakeholder consultation on such fiscal policies, which have negative impact on businesses. AGI took steps to make input to the bills and it's obvious that our submissions did not receive the consideration we expected.” “Electricity tariffs shot up significantly on two occasions totalling a whopping 56.5%, within a period of less than six months. How could our beverage sector absorb water tariff increment of over 300% in a single tariff review and now excise duties slapped on locally produced beverages.

Contrary to Government's ambitious revenue projection which largely hinges on the performance of Industry, we foresee a contraction in manufacturing and other related business activities,” the AGI added.

The AGI further noted that local industries operating have already been under intense financial and operational pressure which could force them to lay off workers with the implementation of the new taxes.

“Businesses may have no option than to cut down on expenditure and production levels to stay within budget. With the



Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance



Government has passed the Excise Duty (Amendment) Bill 2022

foregoing, Government risks missing its revenue target if industry has to contend with these new taxes. While we reckon that Government needs revenue, fiscal prudence is crucial. We appreciate the urgent need of the IMF measures, but this should not be at the expense of growth in our industrial sector,” the Association stated.

The AGI however called on government to hold engagements on measures to incentivise local industries to forestall the negative consequences of these tax policies.

FABAG Worried Over Passage Of Three New Taxes

The Foods and Beverages Association of Ghana (FABAG) has stated that the passage of the three new taxes by Parliament is a disincentive to businesses in the country.

According to them, producers have seen an increase in their production costs as a result of the newly introduced taxes by parliament to consumers.

This comes on the back of Parliament on March 31, 2023, through a Majority decision that has passed three new taxes which is to generate approximately GH¢4 billion per year to supplement domestic revenue.

These are Income Tax Amendment Bill, Excise Duty Amendment Bill, and Growth and Sustainability Amendment Bill.

Speaking on Accra based Starr Fm, President of FABAG, Sam Aggrey indicated that the move by the government will compound the already existing economic hardship in the system.

“It's affecting industries because if you look at the value of the cedi against the dollar which has depreciated so much. Investors then lost almost about 50% of their income within the same period. Instead of us introducing bills that will make them recouped its loss, we are rather forcing them to go down the drain.

“The benchmark value that was increased, this increase they say were seeking to help local industries to grow. So, if you collect the money from the importer, the best thing you are to do is to reinvest that money into the industry for them to be able to produce at a lower cost,” Mr. Aggrey stated.

He continued: “But then you collect the money and you consume the money. Therefore, the industry stands at the very position that we were trying to help them to grow. Now it has become even worse. So, we don't know if we have to close down or if we have to find another means in the country where we can invest our money.”

Source: starrfm.com.gh



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

15 Million In The US To Be Kicked Off Public Health Benefits



From a demonstration in front of the US Capitol building in 2017 (Photo: American Life League). Millions are to lose Medicaid/CHIP benefits in the coming months as pre-pandemic income eligibility restrictions have returned

As US-based news is inundated with coverage surrounding the spectacle of former president Donald Trump's arraignment, 15 million people are being quietly phased out of receiving Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) benefits, beginning April 1 and going through May and July. As the Joe Biden administration will end the COVID-19

public health emergency declaration on May 11, starting this past weekend states have already begun to kick people off of Medicaid and CHIP. These states are all Republican Party-controlled: Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, New Hampshire, and South Dakota. Medicaid and CHIP are the limited government health insurance programs that are offered within

the context of the United States' hyper-privatized healthcare system. These programs are only available for those who meet (extremely low) income requirements. As an example, in the state of Texas, parents within a family of three must receive below USD 3684.8 in *annual* income to be eligible for Medicaid. Childless adults in Texas can never qualify for Medicaid, and the same is true in other states.

However, this changed during the height of the pandemic. In March 2020, Trump signed the Families First Act, which increased federal funds for Medicaid for states on two conditions: states would not make Medicaid eligibility more strict and would not unenroll anyone receiving Medicaid at the time. This meant that even if Medicaid recipients began to exceed the income threshold after being enrolled, they would not be kicked off of the program.

In choosing to end the public

health emergency, Biden is doing away with this Trump-era measure. As a result, his own administration estimates that 8.2 million people will lose their eligibility. 6.8 million more will lose coverage due to "administrative churning" or simple bureaucratic complications, such as failing to re-enroll, as the COVID-19 state of emergency eliminated the necessity of doing so.

Young people and people of color will be disproportionately impacted. 5.3 million children and 4.7 million young adults aged 18-34 will lose their public healthcare coverage. Almost one third of the 15 million losing coverage are Latino, and 15 percent are Black. For comparison, one in five people in the US is Latino and 14.2 percent are Black.

Alongside Medicaid/CHIP, other health emergency benefits will also be eliminated after May 11, such as free at-home testing and COVID-19 treatment for

Medicaid/Medicare recipients. Extra food assistance already ended in 32 states after February, affecting 30 million people in what some called a "hunger cliff".

Many in the US government have been clamoring to end pandemic-era protections for months now. These include GOP lawmakers who used Biden's comments about the pandemic being "over" back in September to argue against approving more relief money. "It also begs the question as to why [Biden is approving] other pandemic-related measures, like student-loan forgiveness, cancellations," said South Dakota Senator John Thune. 25 Republican governors wrote Biden to call for an end to emergency Medicaid expansion back in December. "It is time we move on from the pandemic and get back to life as normal," they wrote. In the United States, it is "normal" for 15 million people to lose their right to healthcare.

Massive Rally Of Farmers And Workers In Indian Capital New Delhi

Thousands of farmers and workers from across India last Wednesday came to the capital New Delhi to protest the central government and its anti-farmer and anti-labor policies. The rally, organized under the banner 'Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Rally' was held at the Ramlila Maidan grounds.

Protesters demand relief from inflation, a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) on main crops, minimum wage for all workers at Rs 26,000 (USD 317) per month, debt relief, pension for all farmers above the age of 60, repeal of the four anti-labor codes, and withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020, among other demands. Protesters accused the Narendra Modi-led government of creating a crisis of

livelihood for all sections of the working class.

The rally was jointly organized by three of India's biggest organizations representing workers, farmers, and agricultural laborers—All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), and All India Agriculture Workers Union (AIAWU), respectively. In the run-up to the rally, an extensive campaign highlighting the demands of the people was carried out in several parts of North India and garnered widespread support. Workers and farm union leaders held joint conventions in over 400 districts to plan the campaign and mobilize the rally in large

numbers.

Unions have highlighted several issues plaguing Indian farmers such as stagnant wages, price rises, unemployment, job insecurity, and low returns for farm produce. According to the joint statement, 100,000 farmers have committed suicide in the last eight years. The unions also have raised the alarms over the unprecedented increase in the number of suicides by daily wagers—112,000 in just three years from 2019-2021. Since the historic farmers' movement in India in 2020-21, farmers across the country have been joining the struggle for their demands against the

diktats of the government.

Last month, on March 12, nearly 10,000 farmers in the State of Maharashtra embarked on a nearly 200 km long-march from Nashik to State capital Mumbai.

They were demanding the government to address the problems being faced by farmers and workers in the State. Six days after the movement began, and after the farmers had covered a distance of over 100 km, the government agreed to most of their demands in negotiations. Maharashtra was also the venue of the historic farmers' Long March in 2018, when tens of thousands marched from Nashik to Mumbai. Talking about that march, Jagdish, a young farmer,



Thousands of workers and peasants convened in New Delhi to protest the central government and its policies. Photo: CITU. The rally was jointly organized by three of India's biggest organizations representing workers, farmers, and agricultural laborers

told *NewsClick*, "At that time, farmers' issues had become secondary in the State and the country. We brought farmers' struggles to the center of power. After that, the country saw a successful farmers' movement for over a year. We again started a movement and forced the government to accept our demands."

Mental Health Authority Calls For Investment Into Mental Healthcare

...On The Occasion Of World Bipolar Day

Dr. Caroline Amissah, Acting Chief Executive of the Mental Health Authority (MHA) has said Ghana needs to invest in mental health care by providing the needed financial and logistical resources required for the transformation of the mental health system in Ghana. She said the incorporation of mental health services into the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), improved donor assistance, support from local or multinational organisations, and intensified positive media coverage about mental health are key interventions that can be made to improve mental healthcare in Ghana. Bipolar Disorder is a mental

health condition that affects a person's mood, the disease has two presentations; depression and mania. The depressive symptoms include a feeling of hopelessness or worthlessness, sleeping or eating difficulties, lack of energy, and even suicidal thoughts.

Persons affected with bipolar have difficulty concentrating and taking decisions and lose interest in activities that used to be enjoyable.

Bipolar disorder is the third most debilitating mental illness in Ghana, in 2019 Ghana recorded 1,337 cases; this increased to 1,415 and 1,669 in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Dr. Amissah called on

everyone to make a personal commitment to acquiring knowledge on bipolar disorder, and mental health, in general, to help understand and better support persons with bipolar disorders.

She urged families to observe children with emotional and behavioural symptoms and know when and where to seek help.

She said school officials, caregivers, family members, parents, and guardians can help improve care by learning more about the condition and what one should expect. "We are happy to state that help is readily available in all government hospitals across the country, to assist family



members in managing their wards with bipolar disorder, given the

nature of the disease, it is critical that the public seek expert advice from trained mental health.

Professionals," she said.

Bipolar Day is commemorated on March 30 every year, all over the world to create awareness and educate people about bipolar disorder, with

the hope to encourage more understanding about the disease and to reduce the stigma associated with it. It is also a day for connecting, reaching out, and coming together in solidarity to discuss issues surrounding acceptance, and support for persons living with bipolar disorder.

Source -- GNA

Sophia Akuffo Reacts To Akufo-Addo's New EC Appointments



Immediate past Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ghana, Sophia Akuffo

Sophia Akuffo, a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ghana, has reacted to the brouhaha surrounding the appointment of three new commissioners of the Electoral Commission of

Ghana.

President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, on Monday, March 20, 2023, swore-in three new members of the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC) at the Jubilee House.

The three new members of the EC, Dr. Peter Appiahene, Hajia Salima Ahmed Tijani, and Reverend Akua Ofori Boateng, are expected to serve in their new roles till the end of the 2024 elections and are replacements for members of the commission who recently retired.

Akufo-Addo has been heavily criticized for the appointment because some of the appointees are said to be known members of the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

The president is being particularly berated for the appointments of Dr. Peter Appiahene, who is said to be a patron of TESCON, the tertiary education branch of the NPP, and Salima Ahmed Tijani, whose

family relations are leading members of the NPP.

Reacting to this in an interview with TV3 last Wednesday, Sophia Akuffo said that the possibility of conflict of interest should be considered when it comes to the appointments of public servants.

She suggested that appointments to the EC must be made in such a way that no party will be disadvantaged. "There are standards for the public service... and conflict of interest is something that always can be dealt with, whether it is written in black and white or not... and conflict of interest does not

necessarily have to be actual; it can be potential.

"... in doing the right thing in public service, a lot of it depends on public perception, and I think when it comes to something to do with national elections and so on, public perception is very important.

"Everything in this world that you can arrange in such a way that the dealings are at arm's length is better than somebody's arm is twisted and another person's arm is in their pocket," she said.

Global Civilization Initiative: China's New Gift For World Peace



By H.E. LU Kun, Chinese Ambassador to Ghana

At the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties

High-Level Meeting on March 15th, H.E. Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and President of the People's Republic of China, delivered a keynote speech and proposed the Global Civilization Initiative. This is the third major global initiative presented by China after the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative. It fundamentally answers a series of questions of the times, such as "What kind of modernization do we need?" and "How can we achieve modernization?" The initiative has become another important public good provided to the world and will inject fresh and strong energy into the common development and progress of human society in a world fraught with multiple challenges and crises. I would like to introduce the Global Civilization Initiative to Ghanaian friends and help China and Ghana strengthen

cultural exchanges and cooperation.

The Global Civilization Initiative puts forward four initiatives - respect for diversity of civilizations, advocating the common values of humanity, highly valuing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and jointly advocating robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. It not only covers the basic concepts and principles that different civilizations can tolerate each other, coexist and learn from each other, but also has the source of motivation and a practical path for realization. It is a major initiative that is very constructive, operable and sustainable. It advocates respect for different civilizations and support for their rights to develop, which fully meets the strong needs of the international community. It has shown strong vitality since its inception, arousing enthusiastic responses in the international community.

We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority. All countries have the right to develop in accordance with their own culture, civilization and geographical location, but this does not mean that civilizations should be separated from each other. Instead of the conflict, civilizations should put aside their disagreements and disputes, and contribute to the common pursuit of humanity.

We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, refrain from imposing one's own values or models on others and stoking ideological

confrontation, stop pushing a zero-sum agenda to bully and exploit the weak and vulnerable, and playing bloc politics and using democracy as a tool for political ends.

We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures. We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation, enrich the

contents of exchanges and expand avenues of cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilizations.

China is not only a "thinker" but also a "doer" in promoting building a human community with a shared future and practice the Global Civilization Initiative. In Africa, more than 60 Confucius Institutes have been established in 46 countries. In Ghana, the Confucius Institutes at the University of Ghana and the University of Cape Coast continue to flourish, and a Chinese Bridge Chinese Proficiency Competition will be held in the near future to better raise Sino-Ghanaian friendship.

There are more than 6,000 Ghanaian students studying in China assiduously, ranking second in Africa.

At present, the changes of the world, the changes of the times, and the changes in history are unfolding unprecedentedly. We have more reasons to expect that the Global Civilization Initiative, together with the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, will constantly inject stability and bring new hope to this world of turbulence and transformation. A single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden. Together, we can make the garden of world civilizations full of colors and life.

Next NDC Govt Will Exempt Artisanal Fishing From Closed Season – Mahama

Former President John Dramani Mahama has promised that in his next administration, canoe and artisanal fishermen will be exempted from the closed season exercise.

According to him, the activities of these groups of fishers do not play a role in the issue of dwindling fish stock in the country.

The closed season which is implemented annually is intended to allow fish spawn to improve Ghana's dwindling fish stocks.

Speaking to a delegate at Mfantseman a fishing community as part of his campaign tour of the Central region, Mr. Mahama said the closed season will be for only trawlers.

"Only fishing trawlers will participate in the closed season exercise. Canoe and artisanal fishermen will be exempted as they do not



contribute to the dwindling fisher stock. Rather it's the activities of the big trawlers that can be blamed for that. Their activities are affecting canoe and artisanal fishermen who go on sea but return empty-handed. So we will close the season for the big trawlers, but the small canoe fishermen can continue with their day-to-day activities," Mr. Mahama assured. Closed season otherwise

known as the "biological rest period," is the stopping of fishing activities during the spawning period of the stocks. Closed seasons are observed as a way of reducing fishing pressure on stocks when they are most productive in terms of allowing the fish a chance to lay their eggs to replace the lost population due to fishing and other natural causes.

Press Statement By The Bono Region NDC On The Appointment Of Dr Peter Appiahene As A Member Of The EC By President Nana Akufo-Addo

PRESS STATEMENT For Immediate Release

Wednesday, 5th March, 2023

PRESS CONFERENCE ADDRESS BY THE REGIONAL

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS (NDC) ON THE APPOINTMENT OF DR PETER APPIAHENE AS A MEMBER OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA BY PRESIDENT AKUFO-ADDU

Good afternoon, our friends from the media.

The Regional Communications Office of the NDC in the Bono Region is pleased to welcome you to this urgent press engagement.

We are quite sure that many of you reported in your media houses, the shocking appointment and subsequent swearing in of Dr. Peter Appiahene by President Akufo-Addo on Monday, 20th March, 2023 as one of the newly Commissioners of the Electoral Commission of Ghana.

President Akufo-Addo in his brief statement indicated that he acted under Article 70 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana in line with Article 43 (1 and 2) to appoint Dr. Peter Appiahene as one of the three (3) newly appointed Commissioners of the Electoral Commission. What President Akufo-Addo deliberately glossed over was the same Article 70 (2) which states that "the President shall, acting on the advice of the Council of State, appoint the Chairman, Deputy Chairmen, and other members of the Electoral Commission.

Many of you may not be aware of the reasons for our opposition to the appointment of Dr. Peter Appiahene, a resident of Sunyani, as one of the Commissioners of the Electoral Commission of Ghana. It is against this backdrop, that we deem it necessary, to assemble you here in what we consider as a national threat to

our democracy, to adduce evidence based reasons to call for the immediate revocation of the appointment of Dr. Peter Appiahene as a Commissioner of the Electoral Commission of Ghana.

WHO IS DR PETER APPIAHENE?

The current Bono Regional Communications Director of the NPP on Friday, 24th March, 2023 in an interview on Ark 107.1 Fm on their political morning program dubbed "Ark in the Morning" told the host, Mr Kwasi Kyei Baffour (KKB) that Dr. Peter Appiahene has never been a member of the NPP communication team. "on fact, i am the Regional communication Director; Dr. Peter Appiahene, and of course Mr Asare Bediako Seth (ABS) is the immediate past Regional Communications Director of the NPP; you can find out from ABS if you can get him; Dr. Peter Appiahene is not a member of the NPP communication team and he has never been a member of the Bono Regional communications team". This claim by the Bono NPP Regional Communication Director is a palpable falsehood and a failed attempt to mislead the general public (a video has been produced).

IS DR. PETER APPIAHENE A MEMBER OF THE BONO NPP REGIONAL COMMUNICATION TEAM?

1. Dr. Peter Appiahene on Thursday, 18th November, 2021 on Nimdee 95.1 Fm in Sunyani representing the NPP on their Political program dubbed "Nimdee in the Morning" praised the immediate past NPP Regional Communications Direct, Asare Bediako Seth (ABS) for giving him the opportunity to always represent the NPP on both radio and TV. Dr. Peter Appiahene was there that day, to represent the NPP to discuss the 2022 budget statement that was presented by the Finance

Minister on Wednesday, 17th November, 2021. This personal statement by Dr. Peter Appiahene exposes the statement made by the NPP Regional Communications Director on Friday, 24th March, 2023 On Ark 107.1 Fm in Sunyani (a video has been attached).

2. Dr. Peter Appiahene on Friday, 7th May, 2021 on Nimdee 95.1 FM in Sunyani again represented the NPP on their political program. On that program, the then Constituency Deputy Communications Officer for the NDC in Wenchi revealed his previous encounter with Dr. Peter Appiahene on another political program on Storm 101.9 FM in Sunyani (video produced).

3. On Monday, 23rd November, 2020, Dr. Peter Appiahene represented the NPP on a local base BA TV station in Sunyani. The host, Mr. Kwabena Obeng Akrofi (Royal Servant) introduced Dr. Peter Appiahene as a "Member of the Bono Regional Communication Team of the NPP". Dr. Peter Appiahene in his introductory comment disclosed his new appointment on the program as the "Regional IT Director of the NPP for the 2020 General Elections" (video produced).

4. The involvement of Dr. Peter Appiahene at the Regional Office of the Electoral Commission in Sunyani can be attested by our Regional Secretary, Mr. Dennis Yeboah Twumasi (Ayan Dawud Twumas) who was in charge of our Regional Collation Team for the 2020 General Elections at the office of the Electoral Commission.

DR. PETER APPIAHENE AS NPP TESCON PATRON AT UNIVERSITY OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES (UENR), SUNYANI

Dr. Peter Appiahene has not

only been an active Regional Communication Member of the NPP but has been the Patron for the NPP student wing –TESCON at the University of Energy and Natural Resources from 2017 until he resigned in 2022.

a) On Saturday, 30th March, 2019, Dr. Peter Appiahene as the Patron of UENR TESCON, was one of the key spokespersons at a program that was organized by the Executive Council of the TESCON UENR on the theme "maintaining power 2020 and beyond – the role of TESCON".

b) On Saturday, 11th May, 2019, Mr. Peter Appiahene was one of the several NPP members who were "honoured with citations in appreciation and recognition of their numerous contributions and efforts offered TESCON UENR" the statement released by the then Communications Director of TESCON UENR, Osei Owusu Bernard indicated. Picture evidence of all these programs confirming Dr. Peter Appiahene as one of the Patrons for the NPP wing at the University of Energy and Natural Resources can be cross checked from the NPP own Facebook page named "**TESCON for ALL NPP**".

Distinguished friends from the media, the above video evidence clearly shows that Dr. Peter Appiahene was not an ordinary NPP person but an active communication team member, a Patron of the NPP wing at the University of Energy and Natural Resources and the Regional IT Director for the NPP in the Bono Region.

Article 45 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana mandates the Electoral Commission amongst others to 45(c) to conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda; 45(d) to educate the people on the electoral process and its purpose.

Ladies and gentlemen, with all these evidence against the functions and roles of an

Electoral Commissioner, how can a purely fletched NPP IT Director, Dr. Peter Appiahene, performs his duties as stipulated in Article 46 of the 1992 Constitution where it places a responsibility on the Commissioner not to be subjected to the direction or control of any person or authority?

The question is, can Dr. Peter Appiahene, who has been extensively profiled to discover his long affiliation with the NPP, ever introduce himself at the Electoral Commission's office at a meeting with political parties as a true Electoral Commissioner who can be trusted with his neutral role in any election related issues? How can communicators of the NDC (such as Abdul Mumin Carlos – former Deputy Constituency Communication Officer for Wenchi, Naaba Abdulai – Deputy Ahafo Regional Treasurer and the Bono Regional Secretary, Mr Dennis Yeboah Twumasi) who have been on programs with Dr. Appiahene Peter as a representation of the NPP accept to cooperate with Dr. Peter Appiahene as the Electoral Commissioner in any election related meeting at any level?

The Regional Communications Office, on behalf of the NDC, will appeal to the Council of State, to consider their earlier advice on the appointment of Dr. Peter Appiahene as the Electoral Commissioner regarding their advisory role under Article 70 (2) of the 1992 Constitution to revoke the appointment of Dr Peter Appiahene. Last but not the least, the Regional Communications Office, duly serves notice to the General public of its intention to serve petition and copies of these evidence to the National Peace Council, the Catholic Bishop Conference, the Council of State, the National Muslim Conference and all the relevant bodies to appeal to the President to immediately revoke the appointment of Dr. Peter Appiahene in order to have a smooth collaboration with the Electoral Commission going into the 2024 elections

Why The United States Is Stirring Up Syrian Cauldron

By M. K. Bhadrakumar

The circumstances surrounding the flare-up in Syria between the US occupation forces and pro-Iranian militia groups remain murky. President Biden [claims that the US is reacting](#), but there are signs that it is likely being proactive to create new facts on the ground. The [US Central Command claims](#) that following a drone attack on March 23 afternoon on an American base near Hasakah, at the direction of President Biden, retaliatory air strikes were undertaken later that night against “facilities used by groups affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.”

However, this version has been disputed by the spokesman of Iran's Supreme National Security Council who accused Washington of “creating artificial crises and lying.” The [Iranian official has alleged](#) that “Over the past two days, American helicopters have carried out several sorties with the aim of increasing instability in Syria and transferred Daesh (Islamic State) terrorists in the territory of this country.”

He said Washington must be held accountable for such activities. The official warned that Tehran will give a prompt response to any US attack on whatever false pretext against Iranian bases that exist on Syrian soil at the request of Damascus for fighting terrorism. Is the US deliberately ratcheting up tensions in Syria even as the China-brokered Saudi-Iranian rapprochement is radically changing the security scenario in the West Asian region in a positive direction?

There is optimism that Syria stands to gain out of Saudi-Iranian rapprochement. Already, the [Saudi Foreign Ministry revealed](#) on Thursday that talks are going on with Syria for resuming consular services between the two countries, which will pave the way for the resumption of diplomatic relations and in turn make it possible to reinstate Syria's membership of the Arab League. Saudi Arabia has established an air

bridge with Syria to send relief supplies for those affected by the devastating earthquake in February.

The backdrop is that the normalization of relations between Syria and its estranged Arab neighbors has accelerated. It must be particularly galling for Washington that these regional states used to be active participants in the US-led regime change project to overthrow the government of President Bashar al-Assad. The Saudi-Iranian rapprochement badly isolates the US and Israel.

From such a perspective, it stands to reason that the US is once again stirring up the Syrian cauldron. Lately, Russian aircraft have been reported as [‘frequently flying over the USs military base At Tanf’](#) on the Syrian-Iraqi border where training camps for militant groups are known to exist. Israel too is a stakeholder in keeping Syria unstable and weak. In the Israeli narrative, Iran-backed militia groups are increasing their capability in Syria in the last two years and the continued US occupation of Syria is vital for balancing these groups. Israel is paranoid that a strong government in Damascus will inevitably start challenging its illegal occupation of Golan Heights.

A key factor in this matrix is the nascent process of Russian mediation between Turkey and Syria. With an eye on the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary election in Turkey in May, President Recep Erdoğan is keen to achieve some visible progress in improving the ties with Syria.

Erdoğan senses that the Turkish public opinion strongly favours normalization with Syria. Polls in December showed that 59% of Turks would like an early repatriation of Syrian refugees who are a burden on the Turkish economy, which has an inflation rate of 90%.

Evidently, Turkey is ending up as a straggler when the West Asian countries on the whole are coasting ahead to normalize their

relations with Damascus. But the catch is, Assad is demanding the vacation of Turkish occupation of Syrian territory first for resuming ties with Ankara.

Now, there are growing signs that Erdoğan may be willing to bite the bullet. The consummate pragmatist in him estimates that he must act in sync with the public mood. Besides, the main opposition party CHP always maintained that an end to the Syrian conflict needs to be anchored firmly on the principles of Syria's unity and territorial integrity.

The influential Beirut newspaper *Al-Akhbar* has reported citing sources close to Damascus that Erdoğan is weighing options that would meet Assad's demand with a view to restore relations. The daily reported that one possibility is that Turkey may propose a timetable for the withdrawal of its troops in Syria. Significantly, Erdoğan telephoned Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday and the [Kremlin readout](#) mentioned that amongst “topics concerning Russian-Turkish partnership in various fields,” during the conversation, “the Syrian issue was touched upon, and the importance of continuing the normalization of Turkish-Syrian relations was underlined. In this regard the President of Türkiye highlighted the constructive mediatory role Russia has played in this process.”

Earlier, on Wednesday, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar held telephone talks with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu to discuss developments in Syria [where he underscored](#) that the “sole purpose” of its deployment in northern Syria is to secure its borders and fight terrorism.

It is entirely conceivable that Erdoğan has sought Putin's help and intervention to reach a *modus vivendi* with Assad quickly. Of course, this is a spectacular success story for Russian diplomacy—and for Putin personally—that the Kremlin is called upon to broker



A convoy of US armored vehicles patrolling the occupied territories of northeastern Syria bordering Turkey. (File photo). The specter that is haunting Washington is that the stabilization of Syria following Assad's normalization with the Arab countries and with Turkey will inexorably coalesce into a Syrian settlement that completely marginalizes the “collective West”

the Turkish-Syrian normalization.

The China-brokered Saudi-Iranian normalization hit Washington where it hurts. But if Putin now brokers peace between two other rival West Asian states, Biden will be exposed as hopelessly incompetent.

And, if Turkey ends its military presence in Syria, the limelight will fall on the US' illegal occupation of one-third of Syrian territory and the [massive smuggling of oil](#) and other resources from Syria in American military convoys. Furthermore, the Syrian government forces are sure to return to the territories vacated by Turkish forces in the northern border regions, which would have consequences for the Kurdish groups operating in the border region who are aligned with the Pentagon. In sum, continued US occupation of Syria may become untenable. To be sure, Russia, Turkey, Iran and Syria are on the same page in seeking the vacation of US occupation of Syria.

Thus, an alibi is needed for the US to justify that although dialogue and reconciliation is in ascendance in West Asian politics, Syria is an exception as a battleground against “terrorism.” The US is vastly

experienced in using extremist groups as geopolitical tools.

The US' real intention could be to confront Iran on Syrian soil—something that Israel has been espousing—taking advantage of Russia's preoccupations in Ukraine. The Russian-Iranian axis annoys Washington profoundly. The specter that is haunting Washington is that the stabilization of Syria following Assad's normalization with the Arab countries and with Turkey will inexorably coalesce into a Syrian settlement that completely marginalizes the “collective West.”

In retrospect, the unannounced visit by General Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff to northern Syria, in early March falls into perspective. Milley told reporters traveling with him that the nearly eight-year-old US deployment to Syria is still worth the risk!

The time may have come for the militants, including ex-Islamic State fighters, who were trained in the US's remote At Tanf military base to return to the killing fields for “active duty.” [Tassreported](#) that on Friday, the terrorist group known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham tried to break into the Aleppo region which has been under Syrian government control and relatively stable in recent years.