

youth development through diplomatic relations by promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion," Dr. Waheed

and SDGs for a better world. The United Nations Youth Association-Ghana (UNYA-GH), led by

in nation-building as it aspires to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

has contested as an independent candidate before when one Martin Bonnye, who also contested as independent candidate in the 2020 elec-

Catherine Heads Education Agency

PRESIDENT AKUFO-ADDO has appointed Mrs. Catherine Agyapomaa Appiah-Pinkrah as the Acting Executive Director of the Complementary Education Agency (CEA).

Her appointment is in pursuant to Section 11 (1) of the Complementary Education Agency Act, 2020 (Act 1055).

The appointment letter, dated November 27, 2023, was signed by Nana Bediatuo Asante, Secretary to the Presi-

dent.

Until her appointment, Mrs. Appiah-Pinkrah was the Director in charge of General Administration at the Education Ministry, having also headed the Pre-Tertiary Directorate within the same ministry.

She holds an MSc degree in Development Planning and Management, and currently pursuing a Doctoral Degree in Business Administration.

Mrs. Appiah-Pinkrah, who

has a wide experience in public administration after long years of service with various ministries, is going to the CEA at a time when it is going through a great transformation, and she is expected to impact massively on the operations of the agency.

She succeeds Mr. Francis Asumadu who retired from active service in 2023.



Catherine Agyapomaa Appiah-Pinkrah

Govt Introduces VAT On Excessive Power Consumers

BY Vincent Kubi

THE MINISTRY of Finance has announced it will impose Value Added Tax (VAT) on lifeline electricity consumers who exceed their ceiling.

The development, contained in a letter to the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) and the Northern Electricity Distribution Company (NEDCO), was signed by the Minister for Finance, Ken Ofori-Atta.

The ministry indicated that VAT would apply to residential power customers above the maximum consumption level specified for block charges for lifeline units.

The move forms part of the government's Covid-19 recovery programme and is set to have taken effect from January 1, 2024.

The ministry continued that the implementation of VAT for residential customers of electricity was in

line with Section 35 and 37 and the First Schedule (9) of the Value Added Tax (VAT) Act, 2013 (ACT 870).

It added that the government aimed to generate revenue through such initiative to support the country's Medium-Term Revenue Strategy and the IMF-Supported Post Covid-19 Programme for Economic Growth (PC-PEG).

However, it noted that VAT would still remain exempt for, "a supply to a dwelling of electricity up to a maximum consumption level specified for block charges for lifeline units," as mentioned in Section 35 and 37 and the First Schedule (9) of Act 870.

The ministry requested the ECG and NEDCO to collaborate with the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) to ensure the effective implementation of VAT from January 1, 2024 adding companies are expected to put necessary measures in place to facili-

tate the collection of VAT from residential customers above the maximum consumption level.

This decision has sparked interest and raised concerns among consumers who are expected to be impacted by the VAT. As the government hopes to generate additional revenue through this initiative, it remains to be seen how the implementation will affect electricity consumers and their overall expenses.

Both electricity companies and consumers are urged to familiarise themselves with the new regulations and seek clarification from the ministry, if necessary.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) are expected to provide further guidance and support to ensure a smooth transition in the implementation of VAT for the aforementioned group of power consumers.



Kofi Baah Agyepong

YEA's BEAP To Cut Unemployment

BY Vincent Kubi

THE YOUTH Employment Agency (YEA) says its Business and Employment Assistance Programme (BEAP) is targeted at helping to reduce unemployment among the youth in Ghana.

The initiative also aims to address the financial strains faced by Micro and Small Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CEO of the YEA, Kofi Baah Agyepong, said BEAP has been designed to offer

support to struggling businesses, as a recent survey by the Ghana Statistical Service revealed the hardships faced by enterprises, including wage reductions and closures.

The programme, therefore, aims to provide a lifeline to MSMEs, offering salary support of GH¢500 per recruited employee, with employers supplementing the remainder.

The BEAP will target various establishments such as chop bars, pharmacies, and schools, with the goal of alleviating the financial burden on these enterprises while creating employment opportunities for Ghana's workforce.

Mr. Agyepong stated that the programme plans to support 10,000 companies, facilitating the employment of approximately 20,000 individuals.

The CEO expressed gratitude to the government for endorsing and supporting the programme, which

he said would be instrumental in Ghana's fight against unemployment.

He also reassured the public that the YEA has sustainable funding from the Communication Service Tax, and emphasised the agency's commitment to directing these funds solely towards job creation.

Mr. Agyepong highlighted the success of the YEA's previous initiatives, including partnerships with state agencies, skills training, and fostering employment opportunities.

Despite the global economic challenges, he emphasised the agency's dedication to reducing the rate of unemployment among young people and improving their quality of life.

In addition to the BEAP, he said YEA has successfully recruited and trained thousands of individuals for various roles, including Community Protection Assistants, Community Health Workers, Prison Office Assistants, and workers on the Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme.

The agency has also provided support and training to entrepreneurs, insurance agents, and individuals in trade areas like carpentry, masonry, and hairdressing.

The statistics presented by Mr. Agyepong showcased the extensive impact of the YEA's initiatives, with over 16,000 jobs created in the Ashanti Region alone.

YEA is currently recruiting an additional 20,000 young people to be trained and set up in various trade areas.

Arrangements have been made for training to begin next week, further illustrating the agency's commitment to empowering young individuals and reducing unemployment in Ghana.

Terminal which was inaugurated in December 2022 by President Akufo-Addo, which has now drastically reduced loading time from 14 days to 4 days at the Port.

He further explained that there are terminals under construction which includes, Atlantic Terminal Services, a container termi-

SSNIT increases pension by 15%

By Emmanuel Bonney

THE Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) has increased the monthly pension payments by 15 per cent, effective January this year.

Under the arrangement, all persons on the SSNIT pension payroll as of December 31, 2023, will have their monthly pension increased by a fixed rate of 10 per cent plus a redistributed flat amount of GH¢79.10.

The redistribution is to cushion persons with low pensions under the current economic situation, SSNIT said at a press conference in Accra yesterday to announce the new increase in the monthly payments.

The redistribution is a mechanism applied to the rate (indexation rate) to cushion low-earning pensioners in conformity with the solidarity principle of social security.

SSNIT, in consultation with the National Pensions Regulatory Authority (NPRA) and in line with Section 80 of the National Pensions Act, 2008, (Act 766), indexed the monthly



• Dr John Ofori-Tenkorang (inset), Director-General of SSNIT, addressing the press conference in Accra

pensions upwards by 15 per cent for the year 2024.

The effective increase in pensions would, therefore, range from 10.05 per cent for the highest-earning pensioner to 36.37 per cent for

the lowest-earning pensioner.

Accordingly, the highest-earning pensioner as of



December 31, 2023 will now receive GH¢186,777.58 per month in 2024.

The lowest-earning pensioner will now have the monthly pension increased from GH¢300 to GH¢409.10 in 2024.

Also, the average monthly pension will now increase from GH¢1,527.29 in 2023 to GH¢1,756.38 in 2024.

The 15 per cent indexation rate will result in an additional pension expenditure of GH¢697.64 million, bringing total pension payroll expenditure in 2024 to GH¢5.38 billion.

The total expenditure will exclude pension cost for new awards, that is the benefits to be paid to retirees who will be due for pension in 2024.

The total benefit expenditure is projected to increase from GH¢5.44 billion in 2023 to GH¢7.02 billion in 2024.

Addressing journalists, the Chief Actuary of SSNIT, Joseph Poku, said the indexation of pensions was a technique used to adjust

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Auditor-General transfers GH¢9.5m into Consolidated Fund

By Maclean Kwofi

THE Auditor-General has remitted into the Consolidated Fund GH¢9.5 million retrieved from disallowed expenditures captured in different reports. This brings to GH¢19.5 million the amount transferred into the Consolidated Fund during the 2023 financial year from the special account established at the Bank of Ghana (BoG) by the Auditor-General to receive disallowed earnings.

So far, the account, known as the 'Auditor-General's Recoveries Account,' set up in June 2022, had accrued over GH¢19.7 million at the end of December 2023.

The money recovered is part of expenditure disallowances with regard to unearned salaries and other recoveries reported to Parliament through different Auditors-General's reports.

Protecting public purse

The Auditor-General, Johnson Akuamoah Asiedu, who made this known to the *Daily Graphic* in Accra last Wednesday, stated that the specialised account was set up purposely to protect the public purse by tracking in real time the progress of recoveries made



• Johnson Asiedu Akuamoah
— Auditor-General

through expenditure disallowances. "The Auditor-General's Recoveries Account was opened at the Bank of Ghana in June 2022 mainly to receive unearned salaries and allowances recovered," he said.

Mr Asiedu said until June 2022, the Auditor-General's recommendations for recoveries of unearned salaries had always been directed into the Controller and Accountant-General's Suspense Account (CAGSA). However, he said the CAGSA could not provide real-time information on those recoveries, making efforts of enforcing the rules on surcharging and

disallowances appear to be yielding fewer positive results.

"It is in the light of this that the Auditor-General's Recoveries Account was opened to track and report on recoveries made in implementing audit recommendations with regard to unearned salaries and allowances," Mr Asiedu said.

Infractions

Each year, the Auditor-General's reports to Parliament were often replete with issues of infractions in the use of public funds.

Article 187(7)(b) of the 1992 Constitution provided that in

the performance of its functions, the Auditor-General might disallow any item of expenditure which was contrary to law and surcharge the amount of any expenditure disallowed upon the person responsible for incurring or authorising the expenditure.

Disallowance of expenditure normally leads to the Auditor-General recommending recovery from individuals, public officers and institutions who committed infractions.

It was through the same process of disallowing expenditure contrary to law that the service recovered over GH¢2.2 billion between 2017 and 2020.

Timely reports

Mr Asiedu stated that the Auditor-General's Office had in 2023 submitted 22 audit reports to Parliament in compliance with the constitutional requirement.

He explained that measures put in place at the Audit Service by the current administration continue to yield positive

results.

That, the Auditor-General pointed out, had subsequently aided the operations of the Auditor-General to submit audited reports to Parliament before the constitutional deadline in three consecutive years.

Consequently, he said 18 audit reports were submitted to Parliament in 2021, 15 reports in 2022, and 22 reports in 2023, underscoring the importance of producing timely audited reports.

Measures put in place at the Audit Service by the current administration continue to yield positive results.

Appreciation

The Auditor-General expressed appreciation to the government and the Minister of Finance for the timely release of funds to the Audit

Service to facilitate the discharge of its constitutional mandate.

"I also thank the staff of the Audit Service for their diligent and dedicated work.

"The Audit Service will continue to promote good governance, transparency, accountability and probity in the country's public financial management system," Mr Asiedu added.