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# Policy Discussion Paper

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At CPS, we transform data into actionable insights that inform and influence public policy. Through rigorous research, multi-stakeholder dialogues, and strategic advocacy, we help bridge the gap between research and real world impact.

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- Economic Growth & Development
- Monetary Policy
- Fiscal Policy
- Trade Policy
- Social Protection
- Jobs & Employment

# GHANA'S 24-HOUR ECONOMY AND ACCELERATED EXPORT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: A CRITICAL REVIEW

PREPARED BY A TEAM FROM CPS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 24-Hour Economy and Accelerated Export Development Programme (24H+), described by President John Dramani Mahama as a "reset programme," is designed to shift Ghana's economy from dependence on raw material exports to a more diversified, value-added export model through continuous, multi-shift production, aiming to boost productivity, competitiveness, and inclusive growth.

The 24H+ programme encompasses eight integrated sub-programmes, GROW24, MAKE24, BUILD24, SHOW24, CONNECT24, FUND24, ASPIRE24, and GO24 anchored on the three pillars of production transformation, supply chain efficiency, and human capital development. It proposes extensive interventions across agro-processing, manufacturing, logistics, tourism, financing, education, and public mobilisation. Key targets include the creation of over 5 million jobs by 2034 and an annual GDP growth rate of 6%.

The review conducted by our team at the Centre for Policy Scrutiny (CPS) aims to critically assess the strategic coherence, fiscal credibility, and implementation feasibility of the 24H+ programme.

Summarised below are the key observations and recommendations emerging from our review.

## Key Observations:

- 1. Strategic Focus on Agro-Industrialisation:** The programme rightly prioritises agro-processing and manufacturing as pathways to economic transformation, recognising underutilised agricultural potential and its link to value-added industries.
- 2. Comprehensive Programme Design:** A key strength of the 24H+ lies in its multidimensional structure, linking interventions across agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, and public mobilisation.
- 3. Strategic Potential for Volta Basin Corridor:** The programme's focus on transforming the Volta Basin into a multimodal agro-industrial and trade corridor, if effectively implemented, could unlock underutilised regional assets and rebalance spatial development.
- 4. Similarity with past government strategies:** The 24H+ correctly identifies Ghana's longstanding development challenges and recommends familiar strategies from previous government programmes. However, its distinct emphasis on spatial transformation (e.g. Volta Lake corridor) marks a notable departure from previous programme designs.
- 5. Weak Institutional Anchoring in the Medium-Term Framework:** Despite its strategic scope, the 24H+ is not formally integrated into Ghana's NDPC-led medium-

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term development framework. This risks the likelihood of duplication, inefficiencies, and limited budgetary integration.

6. **Lack of Ex-Ante Appraisals Poses Implementation and Fiscal Risks:**

The 24H+ outlines a wide array of capital-intensive projects, from agro-industrial parks to inland ports and housing developments. Detailed financial and implementation appraisals are crucial to avoid waste, boost investor confidence and ensure fiscal prudence.

7. **Proposed Fiscal Incentives Require Strategic Review:**

Several tax incentive proposals under the 24H+, including shift-based corporate income tax rebates, lack clear links to productivity, employment, or sectoral impact. Poorly structured incentives risk inefficiency and revenue loss.

8. **Programme Cost is Likely Underestimated:**

The likelihood of the estimated US\$4 billion not reflecting the full fiscal burden of the 24H+ is high. The actual cost, including direct and indirect costs, are likely to exceed the estimate.

9. **Infrastructure Ambitions Misaligned with Public Investment Trajectory:**

The scale of infrastructure proposed under the 24H+ contrasts sharply with Ghana's declining public investment levels. With capital expenditure averaging just 2.8% of GDP over the past decade, and projected to fall further, current

fiscal trends do not support the programme's delivery targets. This implies heavy reliance on private sector mobilisation.

## Recommendations

Based on the review conducted by the CPS team, government should consider the following:

1. Integrate the 24H+ into Ghana's Medium-Term Development Framework
2. Establish Transparent Costing and Phased Fiscal Planning
3. Undertake Robust Appraisals of Major Projects
4. Target Tax Incentives to Catalyse Development Priorities
5. Align Infrastructure Ambitions with Public Investment Commitments
6. Institutionalise Learning from Past Development Strategies

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# I. Introduction

On 2 July 2025, the Government of Ghana launched the “24-Hour Economy and Accelerated Export Development Programme,” short-named “the 24H+.” Billed as a “national agenda for productivity, competitiveness, and inclusive growth,” the programme is, in the words of President John Dramani Mahama, “the reset programme” of the administration, intended to actualise the main platform on which he was elected to office.

This review sets out critical reflections on the programme. It first elucidates what the 24H+ is about and offers vital perspectives. The objective of this paper is to influence the discourse around the programme and provide some evidence-based recommendations to strengthen the strategic coherence, fiscal credibility, and implementation feasibility of the 24H+.

## II. The 24H+

### What it is

#### 1. A strategic vision for sectoral and value chain development

The 24H+ represents a national economic transformation programme which aims to transform Ghana’s economy from dependence on raw material exports to reliance on a diversity of value-added exports through a two and three-shift daily shift systems. This will be pursued by developing value chains in

strategic sectors, including agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, light manufacturing, tourism, creative arts, and digital services. The goal is a more productive, diversified, and resilient economy, featuring a robust export base and plenty of good-quality jobs.

#### 2. A structured programme with sub-programmes anchored by three strategic pillars

To operationalise its transformation agenda, the 24H+ is structured around eight integrated sub-programmes, each targeting a distinct area of economic activity. GROW24 (focuses on agriculture and agro-processing), MAKE24 (manufacturing), BUILD24 (construction), SHOW24 (culture, arts, and tourism), CONNECT24 (logistics and markets), FUND24 (financing), ASPIRE24 (work skills and culture), and GO24 (public education and mobilisation). The sub-programmes are anchored in three strategic pillars: production transformation, supply chain and market efficiency, and human capital development.

#### 3. A framework of targeted interventions and complementary initiatives to catalyse sectoral productivity and inclusive growth

24H+ outlines a suite of targeted policies, interventions, and investments embedded within eight integrated sub-programmes. Some key initiatives under the sub-programmes include:

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- i. **GROW24: Agricultural Transformation and Agro-industrialisation:**
- The programme proposes the establishment of agro-ecological parks within the Volta Lake enclave producing staple crops (rice, cassava, and tomato, among others), urban fruits and vegetable farms. It further envisions the development of 3,085 agro-processing factories by 2028.
- ii. **MAKE24: Industrial Parks and Manufacturing Expansion:**
- It includes the development of 10 industrial parks by 2028, co-located with the agro-ecological parks, and the expansion of textile and pharmaceutical production. As the infrastructure and construction pillar of the 24H+, BUILD24 targets, inter alia, the development of building-material industries (cement, clay, construction equipment, etc.), including an integrated iron and steel value chain.
- iii. **BUILD24: Infrastructure Development and Housing Delivery**
- Outlines plans to build between 20,000 and 40,000 low- and middle-income housing units by 2028, alongside efforts to modernise and standardise skills with the construction workforce.
- iv. **SHOW24: Cultural Commercialisation and Tourism Promotion**
- SHOW24 intends to address the under-commercialisation of national artistic and cultural assets to boost tourism and exports. Its flagship projects include the development of museums (including at least one in every district), the construction of a National Cultural Convention Centre, and the establishment of a National Creators Academy to develop creative talents.
- v. **CONNECT24: Logistics and Market Infrastructure**
- Efficient linkage of production zones to markets is the focus of CONNECT24; as a result, infrastructure dominates the projects under this sub-programme. This infrastructure includes new inland ports and terminals around the Volta Lake, 1,500km of connected feeder roads, and 500,000 metric tons of storage and cold chain capacity.
- vi. **FUND24: Financing instruments for private sector growth**
- This programme is concerned with addressing traditional financing impediments in Ghana's private sector. It proposes the creation of two instruments, a debt fund (Value Chain Financing Facility) leveraging Development Bank Ghana (DBG) resources and an equity fund leveraging the Venture Capital Trust Fund (VCTF) resources. The debt fund will extend more than US\$1 billion in low-cost credit to enterprises, while the equity fund will capitalise promising SMEs. A key target of FUND24 is to mobilise financing in excess of US\$4 billion by 2030.
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vii. **ASPIRE24: Skills Development and Workforce Readiness**

Aims to improve skills by, among others, establishing Digital Centres of Excellence countrywide, starting with six in 2025.

viii. **GO24: Public Engagement and National Mobilisation**

Seeks to mobilise the public behind the 24H+ through engagement initiatives.

The implementation of these activities is projected to drive domestic production to substitute imports, increase exports, and expand employment. With a forecast average annual economic growth rate of 6%, and job creation projections of 828,000 by 2026, 1.76 million by 2028, and 5.30 million by 2034.

## What it is not

**1. It is not a directive for adoption of the three-shift employment**

Early interpretations of the 24H+ centred on adopting a three-shift employment system across the public and private sectors, wherein institutions and industries would triple their workforces by running three eight-hour work shifts across the day. This was intended to multiply jobs and thus rapidly reduce the scourge of high unemployment in Ghana.

The idea quickly kindled controversy. Many critics argued, correctly, that it was not possible to bulldoze any or whole industries

into operating around the clock. Neither, on their own initiative, would profit-maximising producers treble the labour they employ in the absence of commensurate growth in demand for their products and commensurate capacity to supply that demand. The critics, therefore, suggested that the road to an economy that produces goods and services, and therefore employs labour, all day round must be by addressing the multi-sectoral constraints to increasing production and consumption .

With the practical details of the 24-hour programme now enunciated, one can conclude that the government has taken the appropriate course. The programme is fundamentally a strategy to tackle well-known constraints to production, particularly in agriculture and industry. Contrary to some public perceptions, the 24H+ is not a blueprint for creating three-shift jobs. The promotion of shift work is, if anything, a marginal aspect of the programme.

**2. It is not defined by shift work indicators**

Notably, none of the programme's suggested outcome indicators relates to shift work, whether in terms of its projected rate of adoption or its projected prevalence in the economy by some future date. While the term "24-hour economy" may suggest round-the-clock operations, the programme represents a broader national transformation agenda. In this context, the shift system may

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be one of the strategies employed, but it is neither a prerequisite nor a defining feature of economic transformation.

### III. Critical Observations

#### 1. The programme correctly diagnoses Ghana's development challenges and prescribes solutions similar to previous development ambitions and strategies

The 24H+ shares characteristics with past development programmes. Since the 1950s, almost every development strategy of Ghana has had agricultural modernisation and industrialisation at its core. Central to this are programmes to diversify agriculture and increase manufacturing, including by expanding agro-processing to substitute imports. In the 1950s to 60s, the development model was state-led, which was the case to a large extent in the 1970s as well. The development programmes developed during the Fourth Republic have also emphasised agro-transformation and industrialisation, albeit with a significantly less state-centric approach.

The most recent government's Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (2017–2024) included agricultural and industrial transformation as one of five main pillars of economic growth and development. For example, under this

framework, agricultural programmes such as Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ) and Planting for Export and Rural Development were implemented to develop warehouses and irrigation infrastructure, similar to plans in the 24H+ to expand storage capacity and irrigation systems within Ghana's agricultural sector.

Beyond agriculture, the 24H+ shares a lot in common with the ideas in the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (2017–2024), particularly in the construction, tourism, and creative arts sectors. Examples include the proposed establishment of a construction industry regulator to enhance standards, an initiative previously attempted but not implemented under the past government, and the development of museums to boost tourism.

In terms of financing, the past government used a blend of budgetary resources and fiscal incentives, backed by private finance, an approach mirrored in the funding architecture of 24H+.

***Nevertheless, the emphasis and details between the 24H+ and the economic programmes of the recent past differ in some respects. For instance, the Volta Lake is the pivot of the agro-industrial projects in the 24H+, with the key ones proposed to be located in the lake's enclave. In addition,***

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*the 24H+ proposes a number of fresh fiscal incentives for the private sector, including bonuses for exporters, income tax credits for investors in infrastructure, and tax rebates for firms having multiple-shift operations.*

## **2. The cross-cutting nature of the proposed interventions makes the programme comprehensive**

One of the key strengths of 24H+ is the cross-cutting nature of its interventions, which makes the programme inherently comprehensive and multidimensional. Rather than focusing narrowly on a single sector, the programme is designed to impact a broad range of economic and social areas simultaneously. As a result, the programme fosters systemic improvements across the economy, creating synergies between sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, retail, etc. For example, GROW24 depends on MAKE 24 for farm implements or tools. MAKE24 will also provide a market for the GROW24, and MAKE24 will depend on GROW24 for raw materials. This comprehensive design enhances resilience, promotes inclusive growth, and ensures that the benefits of the policy reach various demographics and regions, ultimately contributing to a more balanced and sustainable national development.

## **3. The transformation of the Volta Basin into an economic corridor to promote industrial activity and trade**

The 24H+ identifies the Volta Basin as a high potential zone for agro-industrial and trade development. By integrating transportation networks such as rail, road, and inland water transport with agro-processing zones and trade hubs, the 24H+ has the potential to unlock significant economic value from a region that has historically been underutilised. Its spatial impact is considerable, promising to redistribute economic activity away from the southern belt and stimulate growth in the middle and northern belts. Furthermore, the project aligns with broader goals of regional integration and industrialisation, potentially positioning Ghana as a logistical and agricultural powerhouse within West Africa. If implemented effectively, this could serve as a catalyst for inclusive development, job creation, and sustained economic modernisation.

## **4. The 24H+'s focus on agro-industrialisation to drive economic transformation is laudable**

Agro-processing and manufacturing development lie at the heart of the 24H+. This is proper in the light of Ghana's productive capabilities. The potential of the agricultural sector in terms of its share of economic activity is yet far from being realised. Besides the availability of unutilised cultivable land in the country, crop yields from cultivated land are invariably below potential. This points to an underexploited agricultural capacity.

<sup>7</sup> See Government of Ghana (2025b) *The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2025 Financial Year*. Accra: Government of Ghana, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> See National Development Planning Commission (2025) *Draft Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (2026–2029): Policy Matrix*. Accra: National Development Planning Commission, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> For details of the Feed Ghana programme, see Government of Ghana (2025c) *Feed Ghana Programme*. Accra: Government of Ghana. Available at: <https://mofa.gov.gh/>

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Furthermore, although a large agricultural base logically opens up possibilities for agro-processing, giving rise to new industries based on value addition to agricultural products, this potential has been equally underexploited. Consequently, the whole economy has been operating below its potential, with devastating repercussions for employment and living standards. *The 24H+ identifies these failings and proposes actions and projects to improve the situation.*

**5. The position of the 24H+ in Ghana's medium-term development framework is unclear**

The 24H+ is a multi-sectoral development programme with a medium- to long-term view. In Ghana's institutional context, programmes of this nature are ideally prepared by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and integrated into the national development framework. This framework serves as a basis for sectoral (MDA) and district-level (MMDA) planning, which are subsequently translated into annual plans and financed through the national budget, ensuring coherence between development programmes and fiscal allocations. *Programmes developed outside the NDPC-led medium-term development framework, apart from being potentially duplicative, suffers weak linkages with the fiscal programme, dimming implementation prospects. This disconnect represents a primary challenge of the 24H+.*

A good illustration is the policy overlap in the agricultural sector. According to the 2025 Budget, the government's strategic development framework for the agricultural sector is the Agriculture for Economic Transformation Agenda (AETA), whose flagship initiative is the Feed Ghana Programme. Both this strategic framework and flagship initiative have been adopted in the national medium-term development framework for 2026–2029, which is currently under preparation by the NDPC. Meanwhile, the 24H+ includes an agricultural transformation sub-programme, GROW24, with similar objectives and activities as the Feed Ghana Programme. Both programmes aim to boost production, productivity, exports, and jobs in agriculture, while reducing reliance on imports. *They also have parallel interventions, including the development of agro-production estates (known as agro-ecological parks under GROW24 and Agro-Production Enclaves (AgPE) under Feed Ghana) and the development of identical strategic crop and livestock value chains.*

*This convergence raises three key policy questions:* Which of the two programmes is the government's principal agricultural transformation intervention? Will both programmes be implemented simultaneously despite their overlapping mandates? Which

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programme will be prioritised in alignment with the fiscal framework that governs resource allocation?

Similar concerns apply to proposed initiatives and projects in housing, tourism, and skills development, which are either parallel to or not aligned with the current priorities of MDAs, given resource constraints. The upshot is that unless the programmes in the 24H+ are integrated into the national medium-term development framework, and further linked with the medium-term fiscal programme, the likelihood of successful implementation remains limited. The integration process would require streamlining the programmes to eliminate duplication, minimise resource waste and enhance financial feasibility.

#### **6. In the absence of ex-ante appraisals, the proposed projects pose significant implementation and fiscal risks**

A large number of projects have been proposed in the 24H+, ranging from agro-ecological and industrial parks to factories, inland ports, museums, and housing developments. While these proposals signal strategic intent at the policy framing level, their implementation and fiscal feasibility depend on the development of detailed implementation plans, backed by robust appraisals. These appraisals prove the financial viability of the projects and proposed implementation models.

For the government, this is essential to prevent misallocation of resources and to correctly determine its fiscal commitments and risks in the projects. The importance of this in Ghana's post-debt crisis fiscal environment and in the context of examples of projects that went askew in the past due to deficient planning and appraisal, cannot be overstated. *For investors, both local and foreign, rigorously developed investment cases are necessary to reduce risks and attract their capital. The process of establishing the viability of the projects will also inject some realism into the overall ambitions of the 24H+, helping to prioritise or recalibrate its plans within identified implementation constraints.*

#### **7. The proposed fiscal incentives warrant a review to ensure alignment with national priorities and fiscal sustainability**

*The 24H+ proposes changes to current tax-incentive arrangements, alongside a collection of new tax incentives. Some of these proposals, however, warrant careful consideration. For example, one proposal suggests granting corporate income tax rebates of 25% and 50% to firms operating two and three work shifts, respectively. Unfortunately, shift patterns alone do not constitute a sufficient basis for determining eligibility for tax subsidies. The incentive design should be based on*

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*productivity gains, employment outcomes, and sectoral impact to ensure fiscal efficiency and policy coherence.*

Shift work, in itself, is not intrinsically desirable; it is growth in demand, production, and employment that is. Firms could, without increasing production or employment, adopt shift work by simply reallocating labour across different time slots. From an economics perspective, the incentives that matter are those that focus directly on improving demand, production, and employment. While the 24H+ includes several proposals in this regard, a shift work-based tax incentive, if poorly structured, risks being inefficient and fiscally wasteful.

Another proposal seeks to eliminate existing administrative requirements for accessing tax exemptions through legislative changes. ***The administrative processes involved in providing exemptions have merits and should not be dismissed. With reference to exemptions that have already been legally granted, these processes allow the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) to implement the exemptions precisely and efficiently, preventing abuse and ensuring the realisation of policymakers' true intentions.*** While there is merit in streamlining these procedures for efficiency, outright rescission may do more harm than good.

## **8. The overall cost of the programme is likely to be underestimated**

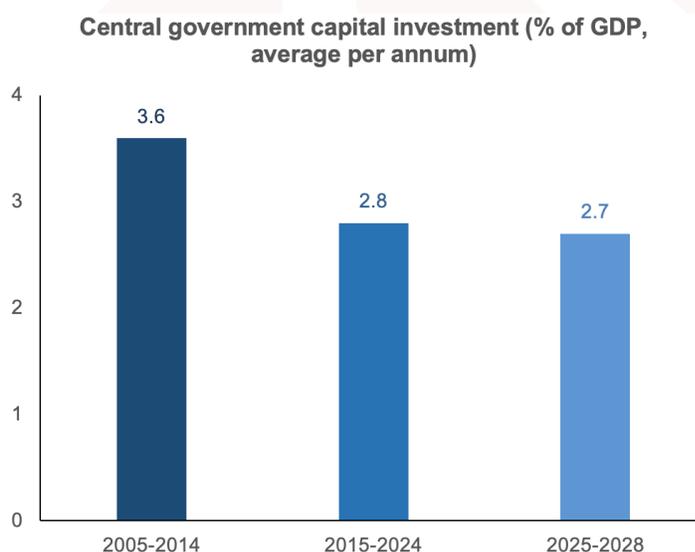
It is widely reported that the 24H+ will cost US\$4 billion to implement. ***However, the 24H+ entails a wide range of fiscal commitments that extend beyond the headline cost estimate of US\$4 billion. In fact, the US\$4 billion figure is one of a number of financing targets of the programme by 2030. To determine the true (net) cost of the programme (both direct cost and indirect cost), other components, which are material, have to be appraised.*** These include the cost of the slew of proposed tax incentives across agriculture, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, energy, construction, etc., which would inevitably reduce fiscal revenue. Additionally, the substantial fiscal expenditure required to deliver the vast array of public goods and infrastructure outlined in the programme such as 1,500 km of feeder roads, community roads, public museums, cultural centres, other tourism infrastructure, irrigation systems, utilities, markets and TVET Digital Centres of Excellence. Further fiscal pressure is expected from the scale of planned investments in storage infrastructure (targeting 500,000 metric tonnes of capacity) and affordable housing (100,000 units by 2030), which are likely to require direct public funding or subsidies.

Once these components are fully costed and appraised, the actual financial requirement of the 24H+ Programme is likely to significantly exceed the initial US\$4 billion estimate. Presenting only a partial view of the programme's cost undermines its credibility and weakens the basis for informed decision making. In contrast, establishing and communicating a realistic cost envelope would help in determining feasibility within current resource constraints, enable effective planning and prioritisation and guide necessary adjustments to programme targets, if necessary.

**9. The programme's infrastructure ambitions do not square with the current trajectory of public investment**

As previously discussed, the 24H+ has vast infrastructure plans. At the same time, these ambitions sit alongside existing

infrastructure pledges under other public programmes (for example, the Big Push). Yet, public investment, on which infrastructure development depends, is low. In the past decade (2015–2024), central government capital investment as a proportion of GDP fell to an average per year of 2.8% from 3.6% in the previous decade (2005–2014). *Projections for central government capital investment from the 2025 Budget indicate a further decline to an average of 2.7% of GDP between the 2025–2028 period. This signals contraction in public investment, the very opposite of what is needed to accomplish the 24H+'s ambitions and broader socio-economic transformation goals. In the absence of a shift in public investment, the programme will likely rely heavily on private investment to achieve these goals.*



*Source: Ministry of Finance, Ghana Statistical Service, Bank of Ghana*

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## IV. Conclusion & Recommendations

The 24H+ reflects the Government of Ghana's need to fill the pressing need for a stronger, more diversified, and job-rich economy. The programme's emphasis on value chain development and export competitiveness aligns with the country's pursuit of long-term transformation. However, the programme's success will not only depend on its vision but also on coherence and efficiency to reduce implementation and fiscal risks.

In light of these observations, the CPS team proposes the following recommendations to strengthen the strategic and implementation feasibility of the 24H+:

### **1. Integrate the 24H+ into Ghana's Medium-Term Development Framework**

The government should integrate the 24H+ with other public programmes in the context of the medium-term development framework being developed by the NDPC. This will not only ensure alignment with national priorities and eliminate duplication across public programmes but also ensure alignment with the medium-term fiscal programme.

### **2. Establish Transparent Costing and Phased Fiscal Planning**

To enhance credibility and guide effective implementation, the government should publish detailed cost estimates for the 24H+

and adopt a phased fiscal approach. This includes prioritising interventions based on impact and feasibility, aligning expenditure with available resources, and clearly outlining funding sources and timelines. Such transparency will support budget discipline, enable stakeholder confidence, and reduce the risk of overextension in a constrained fiscal environment.

### **3. Undertake Robust Appraisals of Major Projects to Justify Projects and Mitigate Investment Risks**

All major interventions under the 24H+ should be subject to robust appraisals, taking into consideration direct and indirect costs, prior to rollout. This will help justify public investment, mitigate risks, and ensure that resources are directed toward high-impact, scalable initiatives.

### **4. Target tax incentives to catalyse development priorities**

Government should conduct a comprehensive review of the tax incentives associated with 24H+. These incentives must be strategically targeted toward sectors and value chains where productivity gains, export potential, and job creation prospects are demonstrably high. This will help minimise revenue leakage and attract credible private sector participation.

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## **5. Align Infrastructure Ambitions with Public Investment Commitments**

The programme's infrastructure goals, particularly those related to transport, industrial zones, and logistics, must be matched by corresponding increases in public capital expenditure. Without this, implementation risks will persist, and the programme's transformative potential may be undermined.

## **6. Institutionalise Learning from Past Development Strategies**

Finally, given the 24H+'s overlap with previous economic development strategies, it is imperative that government institutions undertake a structured learning exercise. This should focus on consolidating past successes, identifying implementation bottlenecks, and applying lessons to avoid repeating earlier pitfalls. Such a process will enhance institutional memory and improve delivery capacity.