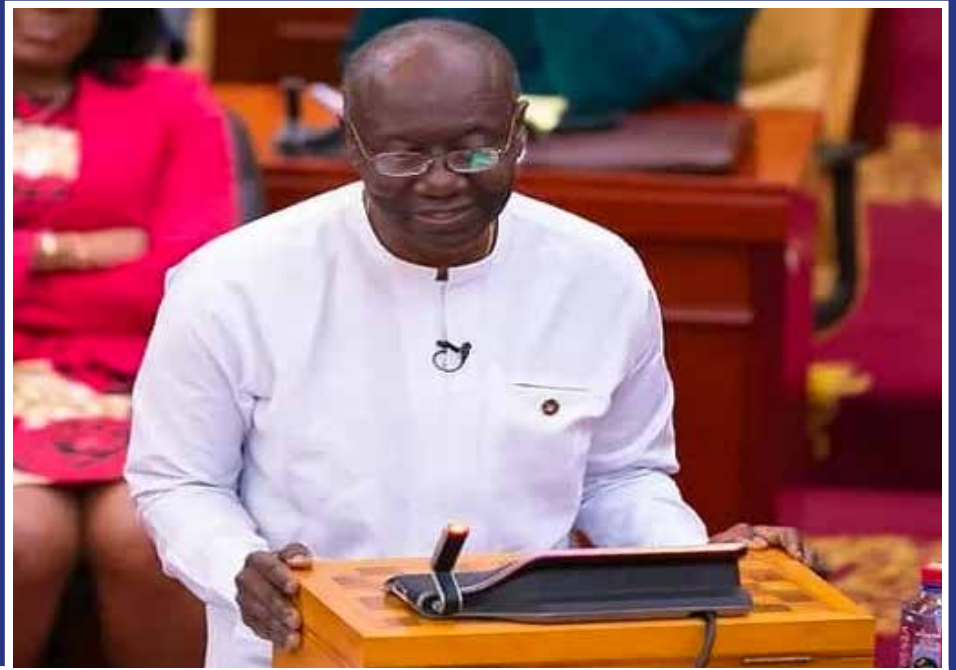




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2024 Budget: Govt to introduce new taxes to raise GHC11bn – Jinapor claims



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# General News

## Ofori-Atta to present 2024 budget today

The Minister of Finance, Ken Ofori-Atta, is scheduled to present the government's 2024 Annual Budget Statement and Economic Policy to Parliament.

Leading up to this crucial presentation, there have been calls for the government to implement substantial cuts to its expenditures as a response to the challenges confronting the ailing economy.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Dalex Finance and Leasing Company Limited, Kenneth Thompson, has recently issued a warning about the potential for an economic downturn in 2024 if the government persists in its current trajectory of escalating and substantial expenditures.

Speaking to the media, Mr Thompson stressed the urgency of protecting the vulnerable segments of society.

He urged a strategic focus on essential sectors, including health, education, infrastructure, food, and other critical areas, as a prudent approach to addressing the economic challenges facing the country.

Meanwhile, in response to recent events, the Finance Minister has announced that the formulation of the 2024 budget will take into consideration long-term relief measures for the victims of the Akosombo Dam spillage.

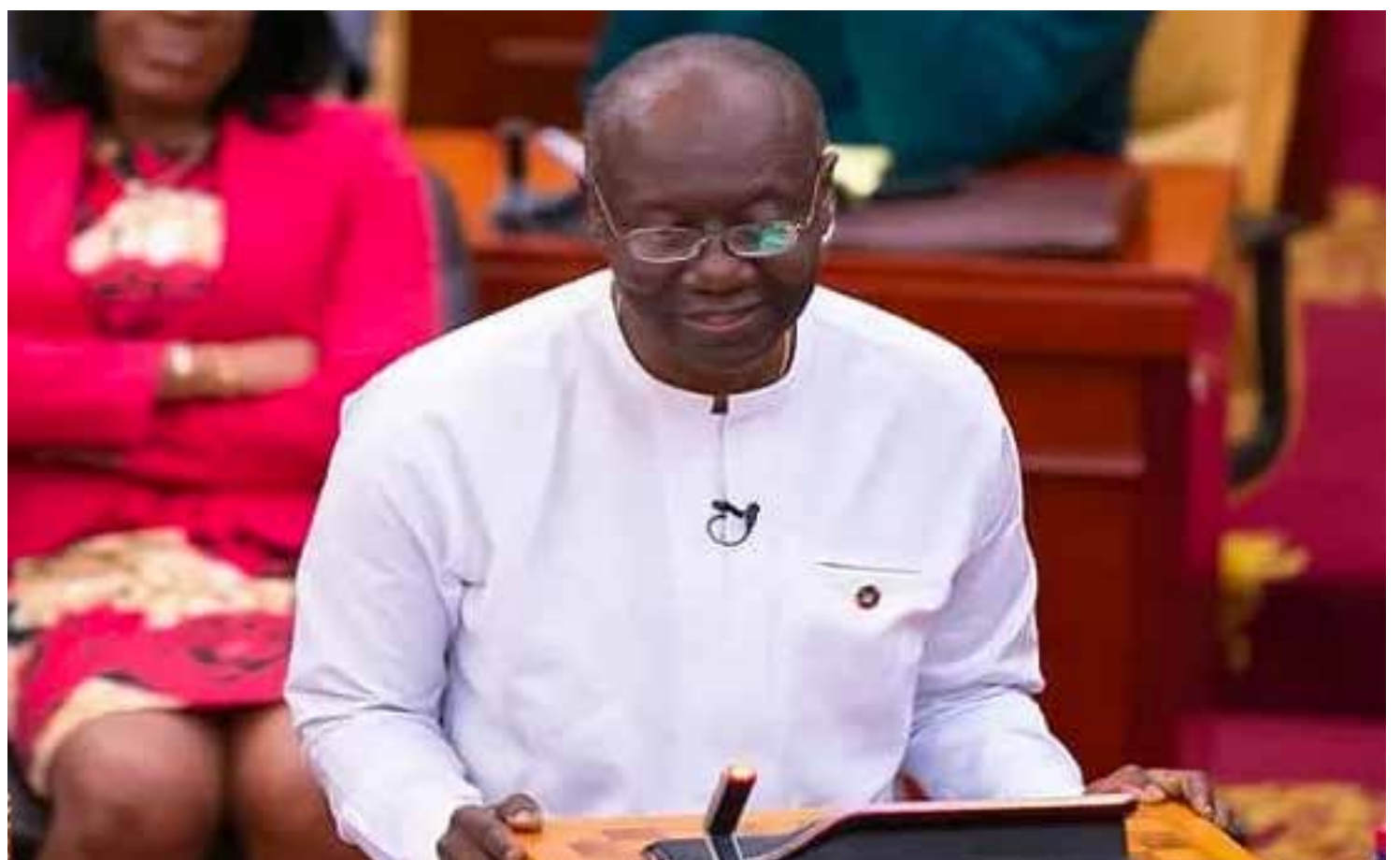
Mr Ofori-Atta, who was addressing

journalists after visiting the affected communities, acknowledged that while the government had already provided some relief items to the victims, there was a firm commitment to doing more.

This commitment to aiding those affected by the spillage is expected

to be clearly outlined in the upcoming budget, with a specific emphasis on social interventions designed to meet the genuine needs of the affected communities.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku*



*Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance*

## Otumfuo urges Ashanti Region MPs to prioritise local development over 'enjoyment' in Accra

Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, has directed Members of Parliament from the Ashanti Region to shift their focus towards addressing the developmental needs of the region.

Accusing all MPs from the region of excessively enjoying the perks of the capital, Accra, where their legislative duties are centred, he emphasised the negative impact on their respective constituencies.

This directive came during his address at a fundraising event aimed at revitalising the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH), the primary teaching hospital in the region.

The hospital has deteriorated

significantly due to a poor maintenance culture, prompting the Asantehene's intervention.

Expressing frustration in his speech at the gathering, which included the MPs, he sternly emphasised, 'I am telling you to be serious and focus on the region; it seems you are enjoying Accra too much. Accra is becoming too sweet for you. Stop the hypocrisy and focus; this is what will bring you glory in Accra,' eliciting cheers from the audience.

KATH, situated in Kumasi, serves as a referral centre for the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions, as well as Brong Ahafo, Central, Western, Eastern, and parts of the

*- continued on page 3*



*Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene*

# General News

## Otumfuo urges Ashanti Region MPs to prioritise local development over 'enjoyment' in Accra

- Continued from page 2

Volta Regions.

On Friday, November 10, 2023, at the KATH premises, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II rejected a prepared speech in the presence of hundreds of people gathered at the hospital.

"Instead of delivering his speech in English, the Monarch chose to use the local dialect of the Asantes – Twi, to address the congregation to the surprise and admiration of all present," Opemsuo.com reported.

The official mouthpiece for Manhyia Palace added that "His Majesty, in the course of his submission, noted that the condition of the hospital did

not require an eloquent speech, but understanding in championing the good cause.

"This is not the time to be eloquent," he said, reasoning with the public to support the renovation and justifying the rejection of the written speech.

"The state of the hospital is a matter of an emergency, and that's why we are here. Corporate institutions, businesses, professionals, and all must contribute their quota. No amount is meagre."

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II is calling on all Ghanaians, corporate institutions, businesses, professionals, and others

to contribute towards saving the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH).

The Ashanti overlord described the current state of the hospital as embarrassing and emphasised the urgent need to raise funds for the building, which is nearly 70 years old.

He revealed that he personally inspected the hospital on two separate occasions, both at midnight, to assess the extent of its dilapidation. Following these inspections, he instructed the Chief Executive Officer of the hospital, Prof Otchere Addai-Mensah, and some executives to develop a financial proposal for the renovation.

"I've been there twice, all at midnight to inspect the hospital. I saw the sorry state it sits in...Why should the hospital suffer this fate, if Komfo Anokye himself never got ill? So I promised to amass help for this project."

"12 out of 16 regions have their patients referred here. Patients get drenched when it rains and the exposed wires can cause fire outbreaks when rainwater comes into contact with the wires. Even the new Emergency Ward is in dire need of renovation. We will be brought to this hospital when the need arises and so there is a need to work it out."

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey**

## More hospitals need to be demolished - Health Minister tells Parliament

Minister for Health, Agyemang Manu, has expressed the need for several health facilities that lack structural integrity to be pulled down.

He made this known when he appeared before Parliament on Tuesday, November 14, to answer questions on the stalled works with regards to the La General Hospital.

According to Mr Agyemang Manu, there is the need to demolish several hospitals in the country just like the La General Hospital to prevent the loss of lives in the future, but due to lack of funds, government is unable to do so.

He noted facilities such as the Elmina Polyclinic, the Korle-Bu surgical block, Akyem Oda Government Hospital, among others, need to be levelled for reconstruction.

"It is true, there are several hospitals in this country that need to be pulled down tomorrow morning. But you know, when you don't have adequate funding, you can't do everything at a go. Salt pond, Elmina, Oda, Korle Bu (surgical block), we need to pull down all these facilities and rebuild them," he said.

The Minister took the opportunity to inform the House that work on the Komfo Anokye Maternity block has been suspended after its demolition

due to lack of funds.

"La General Hospital is not the only hospital that has been pulled down, and we are not working on it. We have pulled down Komfo Anokye Maternity Block. It was there for nearly 44 years," he said.

He also noted that there were plans to raze down the Korle Bu Maternity block for reconstruction, but due to the current La General Hospital situation, there has been a u-turn.

"We started working on the Korle Bu maternity block. Parliament approved funding, signed agreement, loan was procured, but as I speak, we have suspended work in that place because of the experience with La.

"We just haven't been able to pull down the maternity block and it is a very dangerous thing for us as I speak. We are using an adjoining land in Korle Bu unlike La, because we have lot of space to do the work," he said.

Touching on the stalled work on the La General Hospital, which has garnered the wrath of many residents and a section of the public, the Health Minister assured that government "wants to see that hospital back."

In July 2020, the La General Hospital was demolished due to severe structural issues. Subsequently, President Akufo-Addo initiated the

La General Hospital Redevelopment Project with a groundbreaking ceremony on August 10, 2020. However, construction has not commenced as of now.

Majority Leader in Parliament, Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, has blamed the delay in the reconstruction of the La General Hospital in Accra on the withholding of funds by the sponsors of the facility.

Reacting to a statement made by the Member of Parliament for La Dade-Kotopon, Rita Odoley Sowah, Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu said that the sponsors withheld the funds after Ghana

entered into an engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"Mr. Speaker, what has happened is that after the engagement with the IMF, funding from those sources that Parliament approved of, the funding has been withheld by the sponsors," Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu said.

"Mr. Speaker, until the nation is given a clean bill of health by the IMF, it is going to be difficult for the funding to be released. This is why the government now wants to situate it within the context of Agenda 111, and that will mean that the facility will

- continued on page 4



**Agyemang Manu, Minister for Health**

# General News

## More hospitals need to be demolished - Health Minister tells Parliament

### - Continued from page 3

have to be scaled down a bit.”

Following this, the Chairman of the Greater Accra caucus of the Minority, Nii Lante Vanderpuye, has threatened that the group, along with residents of La and Ga Mashie, will stage a demonstration if the government fails to include funding for the La General Hospital in the 2024 budget.

But in his update in Parliament today, Mr Agyemang Manu noted that the Finance Ministry has secured €50 million in local funding for the reconstruction of the La General Hospital

“At the 37th session of the cabinet, the president directed the Ministers of Trade and Industry, Health and Finance to find alternative sources of funding to recommence the project. Through the efforts of the three-man committee, the Minister of Finance has now identified funds locally to continue the project with the same simple work scope but a reviewed price of 50 million Euro,” he said.

He noted that borrowing from a syndicated group to undertake the construction of the La General Hospital has checked the cost implications for financing.

In response to this information, the Member of Parliament for Asawase, Muntaka Mubarak, faulted the Minister for failing to disclose the source of funding.

“Is it Rawlings Park or Kejetia Market or where, you want us to believe that sincerely you have found money and you are going to deal with it.”

Per the minister’s briefing, the contractors have pledged to return to site when they receive the money in their account.

For Mr Muntaka, this does not indicate the contractor’s confidence in the government’s ability to provide the funds.

“You know that when there is confidence and the contractor knows proper documentation has been done, he will not ask you that give me money before I go to the site. He will go to the site, work and raise certificate for you to pay. Why is the contractor telling you that let the money hit my account first? It shows that everyone around the project does not trust what the government is saying.”

Meanwhile, Mr Muntaka is of the assertion that the government never intended to reconstruct the La General Hospital. According to Mr Muntaka, government should have ensured funding would not be a challenge before it brought down the structure.

“The Minister being a chartered accountant and all that will know that you will not dare step forward to commence a project when you are not certain, ensure of the readiness of funds. The first thing any reasonable person would have done will be first,

get a makeshift structure that you can move almost all the facilities so the hospital will still be running,” the Asawase MP said.

He made reference to the Minister’s submission provided to the House, which in part says “submission of proposal for value for money was done in May 2020.”

He also indicated that, per the Health Minister’s submission, “completion of value-for-money audit following the issuance of insurance coverage by Synosure was done in March 2022.”

“Two solid years to do value for money. Mr Speaker it clearly shows that there was no commitment,” Mr Muntaka added.

He also cited Page 3 of the Minister’s response which reads “following the submission of the advance payment request by the Ministry of Finance to be paid by Stanchart, the lead arranger, it came to light that one of the creditors, as part of the syndicate had gone under liquidation.”

Mr Muntaka questioned the Health Minister for failing to do the necessary checks on the banks to ensure they were capable of providing the funds.

“Mr Speaker you are entering into an agreement with banks and other institutions. What checks did you do on those banks? How sure are you that they were capable of financing it. If it was a syndicate and one has gone into liquidation, what happened to

the rest?” he quizzed.

Mr Muntaka therefore came to the conclusion that the La General Hospital was demolished to enable the government win the 2020 general election.

He based this assertion on aspects of the Health Minister’s chronology of event show that signing of final contract for the reconstruction of the La General Hospital took place in July 2020; demolition of structure to make way for the new facility also in July; sod-cutting ceremony on 11th August, 2020 and commencement of preparatory work, including geotechnical studies, soil testing, and size setup for the office - September 2020.

He noted that after September 2020, “the only time they (government) started doing anything about it was in 2022.”

“I don’t anyone to tell me that all this was done because an election was pending. All it meant was to deceive the people of La,” Mr Muntaka therefore said.

Ending his submission, Mr Muntaka entreated the Health Minister to be sincere with the public and inform them of the challenges being faced.

“Don’t raise hope when you are not sure,” he said.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

## Don’t count yourself an NPP member if you publicly support Alan – General Secretary

General Secretary of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Justin Kodua Frimpong, has declared that any member of the party who aligns with the founder of Movement for Change, Alan Kyerematen, or any other candidate will lose their party membership automatically.

Mr Frimpong, in an interview on Neat FM, explained that the party’s regulations expressly forbid supporting independent candidates when there is an officially endorsed party candidate, who in this case is Vice President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia.

“Anyone who stands as an independent candidate against the officially elected member of the party or who joins or declares support for another political party or an independent candidate, when the party has sponsored a candidate in a general election or bye-election, automatically forfeits his or her membership of the party,” he said.

He added: “You are aware that not long ago, Alan Kyerematen wrote a letter to us expressing his desire to withdraw from the party. As per this policy, he is affected so it means that he is no longer part of the party.

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Justin Kodua Frimpong, General Secretary of the New Patriotic Party (NPP)

# General News

## **Don't count yourself an NPP member if you publicly support Alan – General Secretary**

### **- Continued from page 4**

“We have seen certain videos of people following him and claiming they will vote for both him and the NPP Parliamentary candidate. I will release a letter to such individuals to make it clear that the forfeiture policy is in effect within the party. They are no longer party members.”

His comments come after Former Member of Parliament (MP) for Adentan Yaw Buaben Asamoah was sighted in a viral image adorning

an Alan campaign gear during a Movement For Change event.

After Alan Kyerematen resigned from the party in September due to some challenges with the NPP's electoral process, among others, and announced his decision to run as an independent candidate, Mr Asamoah did not ditch the former Trade Minister, nor did he announce his exit from the party.

The recent comments from the NPP

General Secretary now confirm that Mr Buaben Asamoah is no longer recognized as an NPP member for failing to support the party's flagbearer, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia.

Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia won the New Patriotic Party's presidential election, securing the party's nomination for the 2024 general elections after a total of 203,439 delegates participated in the election held on November 4.

Dr. Bawumia received 118,210 votes, constituting 61.43 percent of the total, while Assin Central MP Kennedy Agyapong garnered 71,991 votes (37.41 percent). Former Agriculture Minister Dr. Afriyie Akoto obtained 1,459 votes (0.76 percent), and former Mampong MP Frimpong Addai-Nimoh secured 781 votes, representing 0.41 percent.

**Source: The Independent Ghana**

## **2024 Budget: Govt to introduce new taxes to raise GHC11bn – Jinapor claims**

Member of Parliament for Yapei-Kusawgu, John Jinapor, has asserted that Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta intends to introduce a new tax in the 2024 Budget to raise an additional GH¢11 billion.

“We just met the Minister of Finance at the Finance Committee, and the minister indicated that he intends to raise an additional GH¢11 billion, which is about 1 percent of GDP. But we have told him that we think that the people have been taxed so much

that it will be inappropriate to come with new taxes; rather, the minister should look at cost cutting,” Jinapor stated.

He added, “I think that it is improper and unacceptable to further come out with new taxes and increase the tax burden on Ghanaians.”

The Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta, is scheduled to present the government's 2024 Annual Budget Statement and Economic Policy to Parliament on Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

Leading up to the presentation, there are widespread calls for the government to significantly curtail its expenditures to alleviate the struggling economy.

Last week, Kenneth Thompson, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Dalex Finance and Leasing Company Limited, issued a warning about a potential economic downturn in 2024 if the government persists in its current trend of escalating and substantial expenditures.

In related discussions, Member

of Parliament for Dormaa East, Paul Twum Barimah, hinted at the government's potential introduction of an emission tax to address the impacts of climate change.

Also, Albert Sandaare, the Member of Parliament for Daffeeama Bussie Issa, suggested that the government should consider either eliminating the COVID-19 levy or renaming it.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**



**John Jinapor, Member of Parliament for Yapei-Kusawgu**

# General News

## Autopsy results show deceased in Garu assault experienced broken skull, ribs - MP

Member of Parliament (MP) representing Garu, Albert Alalzuuga, has disclosed disturbing details from the autopsy report of an individual who fell victim to military brutality during the recent attack on Garu and Tempene residents in the Upper East Region.

Speaking to the media, the MP indicated that the autopsy report revealed that the victim experienced a skull fracture and broken ribs.

This revelation comes in the aftermath of a military operation in response to alleged assaults on National Security Operatives, which left over 50 individuals hospitalised and one person dead.

Expressing his discontent, MP Albert Alalzuuga expressed frustration with the military's conduct in Garu, pointing out numerous injuries, including broken arms and legs.

"We are very unhappy and very frustrated with the way they behaved

in Garu. Several people have broken arms and broken legs. The one who died according to the autopsy report had a broken skull and two broken ribs. Honourable Minister, if this is how the military retrieves arms, we would want to know how many arms were retrieved from Garu."

"...To say this is the military's style of retrieving arms which we witnessed in Garu is most unfortunate. That, in retrieving arms, you beat and kill, maim people... If you are retrieving arms, you need information," Mr Alalzuuga stated.

The MP criticized the military's method of retrieving arms, stating that resorting to violence and causing harm to civilians in the process was unacceptable.

He urged the authorities to provide information on the number of arms supposedly retrieved from Garu and questioned the necessity of such forceful tactics.

He stressed the importance of gathering information rather than resorting to beating, killing, and maiming civilians during such operations.

advocated for the government to consider covering the medical expenses of the hospitalised victims resulting from the military operation.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku*

MP for Tempene, Lydia Akanvariba, who also joined the discussion,



*Albert Alalzuuga, Member of Parliament (MP) for Garu*

## It's been agreed Bawumia's running mate will be from Ashanti Region - Joe Wise

The demand for Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia's running mate to be selected from the Ashanti region has gained support from First Deputy Speaker Joseph Osei-Owusu.

It is reported that the New Patriotic Party (NPP) is witnessing intense competition among its Members of Parliament vying for the position alongside the newly elected flagbearer, Dr. Bawumia.

Notable names in consideration include Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh, Minister for Energy; Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, Majority Leader; Joseph Osei-Owusu, First Deputy Speaker; and Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, Education Minister.

During a media engagement, Mr. Osei-Owusu affirmed the general consensus within the party to choose a running mate from the Ashanti region.

According to the Bekwai MP, who

is also a potential candidate for the position, this decision is deemed crucial for the party's success in the upcoming 2024 general election.

"It is generally agreed in the party that if Bawumia wins, his running mate should come from the Ashanti region," he said.

Asked whether Dr Bawumia has consented to that agreement, he replied "I think so."

The First Deputy Speaker expressed his belief that the ideal candidate for the position should embody certain values, including integrity. He emphasised the importance of selecting an individual who commands respect both within and outside the party, aiming to complement the leadership qualities of the newly elected party leader.

According to him, even though the candidates mentioned so far to be

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*Joe Wise, Member of Parliament for Ashanti Bekwai*

# General News

## ***It's been agreed Bawumia's running mate will be from Ashanti Region - Joe Wise***

***- Continued from page 6***

jostling for the position meet the criteria, "they aren't the only group of people who are eligible to be nominated and I think that the field is wide."

Asked why he is taking himself out of the equation although rumoured to be a candidate, he said: "I think that we should allow the man the space to look at the whole game board and select."

"I agree that the person must come

from the Ashanti region because, in our party's dynamics, it would help a lot to select from the Ashanti region," he said.

He explained that the selection of a candidate from the Ashanti region would give "the people in the region confidence that the party values their immense contribution to the party."

In the meantime, Sammi Awuku, a member of the Bawumia campaign team, has dismissed speculations

suggesting that Vice President Dr. Bawumia is actively contemplating his choice for a running mate in the 2024 elections.

During an interview with the media on Monday, November 7, he clarified that the Vice President is not in a hurry to announce his running mate.

According to him, Dr Bawumia is an extremely analytical person and consults broadly on issues, and so "he would be taking the views of people

he knows and when he is ready, when the time comes, he would pick the right man."

"For now, let me issue a disclaimer. The Vice President has not discussed with any member of his inner team or bigger team about his choice that he would be recommending to the National Council," he clarified.

***Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty***

## **Police unable to provide security for planned demo at Jubilee House from Dec.1 - Jan. 5, 2024**

The Ghana Police Service has communicated its inability to furnish security for three groups intending to demonstrate and picket at the Jubilee House from December 1 to January 5, 2024.

The groups, namely the Democracy Hub, recognized for its #FixtheCountry campaign, the Patriotic Hub, and the Patriotic Forum Group, had duly notified the police in accordance with Article 21(1)(d) and (f) of the Constitution, 1992.

However, the police, in a statement

signed by Commissioner of Police (COP) Dr. Sayibu Pabi Gariba, Regional Commander, Accra, informed the groups that their planned demonstration could not proceed.

The police emphasized that the Jubilee House is a security installation, and any protest or picketing in the vicinity may pose a threat to public defense, public order, and public safety.

The statement pointed to operational and security constraints faced by the Regional Police Command during the Christmas/New Year festivities as the

reason for the inability to provide security/protection for the intended demonstration/picketing.

The groups were advised to reschedule the special event in the interest of public defense to any date after January 5, 2024.

The statement conveyed, "The command, in the interest of public defense, public order, public safety among others, requests you to postpone the special event to any date after January 5, 2024."

The police further urged the groups to consider relocating the destination for the intended demonstration/picketing if they intend to proceed strictly in accordance with the Public Order Act.

The statement concluded by assuring the groups of the police's continuous commitment to maintaining law and order within the mandate of the Ghana Police Service.

***Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey***



**Ghana Police Service Personnels**

# General News

## Organized Labor demands base pay increase of over 70% in 2024

Organized Labor has initiated negotiations with the government, proposing a base pay increase of over 75% for the year 2024, citing the necessity to address the escalating cost of living.

As discussions unfolded on Monday, November 13, reports suggest that the labour union initially considered a 60% base pay adjustment.

However, the government's counterproposal stands at a 15% increment. The Deputy General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Joshua Ansah, who shared insights on the situation during an interview with the media said despite labour's willingness to compromise at 60%, the government declined the offer.

"When we tabled the 75.1 %, government came with 10% ... that is why we reviewed our stance to 60%," he explained.

He expressed hope that meaningful progress would occur at the negotiation table on Tuesday, November 14, adding that the labour union would convene to strategize and determine their fallback position.

When questioned about the possibility

of reaching an agreement before the 2024 budget reading, Mr. Ansah emphasised that the budget timeline should not compel labour to accept any government proposal hastily.

Meanwhile, Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, Bright Wireko-Brobby, has appealed

to the labour union to reconsider the percentage increase they are seeking.

Mr Wireko-Brobby acknowledged the government's understanding of the labour union's challenges but emphasised the importance of reaching an agreement that the government can feasibly fulfil.

He said "We are praying for them to accept something that will not break the back of the government. For me, I cannot give a figure to you now but we are working with them".

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty*



*Joshua Ansah, Deputy General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC)*

## Govt secures €50 million in local funding for reconstruction of La General Hospital

The Minister of Health, Kwaku Agyemang-Manu, has announced that the Finance Ministry has successfully secured €50 million in local funding for the reconstruction of La General Hospital.

The hospital, demolished in 2020 due to reported severe structural damages, has seen a lack of progress in the reconstruction project. However, during a parliamentary session on Tuesday, the minister informed members that the Finance Ministry has identified a local alternative funding source for the initiative.

"At the 37th session of the cabinet, the president directed the Ministers of Trade and Industry, Health, and Finance to find alternative sources of

funding to recommence the project.

"Through the efforts of the three-man committee, the Minister of Finance has now identified funds locally to continue the project with the same simple work scope but a reviewed price of 50 million euros," he said.

This announcement follows public outcry, warnings from the minority to frustrate the passage of the 2024 budget, and threats from the youth of La to the government.

In response, the Health Minister emphasised on the floor of parliament that processes were underway to ensure the contractor's payment,

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*Proposed plan for La General Hospital*



# General News

## Govt secures €50 million in local funding for reconstruction of La General Hospital

- Continued from page 8

expressing the expectation that work would commence soon.

Despite this assurance, the Minority in Parliament criticised the Minister for not providing clear timelines for the project's resumption. Kwabena

Mintah Akandoh, the Ranking Member on the Health Committee of Parliament, dismissed the Health Minister's statement, labelling it as deceptive due to a track record of unmet assurances.

In response to these accusations, Agyemang-Manu defended the government, stating that his claims were not intended to deceive the public.

"We don't intend to deceive anybody;

we don't; we pulled down the building with good intentions, but I'm very sure that we will work to give La the hospital that La deserves."

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*

## Ghanaian haulage truck drivers still stuck at Niger border - GSA

Head of Freight and Logistics at the Ghana Shippers Authority (GSA), Fred Asiedu Dartey, has disclosed that several Ghanaian haulage truck drivers remain stranded in Niger close to 2 months after the closure of its borders with Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) States.

Highlighting the plight of haulage truck drivers, Mr. Dartey conveyed their frustration at being stuck at the border for an extended period, preventing them from unloading goods and earning income.

The drivers, facing financial strain after spending all their money during the extended wait, had to take up minimal employment opportunities to sustain themselves.

"There was also the case of haulage truck drivers complaining about

life at the border because you were supposed to do a journey for 7 days and here you are, two months, and you are stuck at the border. A number of them said all the money they had had been spent so some of the drivers had to subject themselves to minimal jobs just to survive in space," he added.

Mr. Dartey indicated that the drivers expressed concerns about potential non-payment for their trips and damage to goods and vehicles.

This revelation emerged during a media session organized by the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority's media platform, "Eye on Port," on October 22, 2023.

Some drivers, he said, reported the impact of heavy rains on the salt they were transporting, resulting in the dissolution of the salt and rusting of their vehicles while stranded at the

border.

Mr. Dartey further, highlighted instances of Ghanaians experiencing hostility from locals who viewed Ghana, as a member of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), as a political adversary.

He underscored the complex trade dynamics between Ghana and Niger, with Ghana exporting items like salt, rice, sugar, flour, and tea, while Nigeriens exported onions, beans, millet, and groundnuts to Ghana.

On the other hand, the National President of the Borderless Alliance, Ziad Hamoui, emphasized the food security challenges arising from the Niger border closure in the Sahel region.

Mr. Hamoui urged nations to reconsider their strategies for food

security, warning of potential unrest and destabilization resulting from food insecurity.

He raised questions about Ghana's efforts to ensure food sufficiency by producing strategic food items domestically rather than relying on imports.

The Borderless Alliance appealed to leaders to reconsider the impact of the border closure on trade, emphasizing the socio-economic consequences it posed.

The closure, triggered by a military coup in Niger in July, disrupted trade activities, leaving truck drivers stranded with loaded goods and prompting calls for a comprehensive reassessment of the situation.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku*



File photo

# General News

## South Tongu residents displaced over dam spillage yet to receive relief items due to lack of money for fuel

**D**istrict Chief Executive (DCE) of South Tongu, Seth Kwesi Agbi, has cited a lack of funds for fuel as the reason for the delayed distribution of relief items to victims of the Akosombo dam spillage in the area.

The South Tongu District Assembly has been holding onto these relief items intended for the victims over the past few weeks.

The DCE acknowledged the availability of the items but explained that the assembly has been unable to transport them to the affected individuals due to a shortage of funds for fuel.

“We have items at the assembly, but there is no money to hire a car for delivery. That’s the fact. We need money to fuel the car and send the items to the victims,” he stated, adding, “I have been calling the VRA and NADMO for relief items, but as of today, I have received only GH¢20,000. We have spent that amount already, but the items are available. We need financial support to transport them.”

Mr. Agbi clarified in an interview on Citi FM that the Assembly possesses vehicles but is grappling with insufficient funds to fuel them for transporting the relief items. He appealed to benevolent organisations and individuals to assist in overcoming this financial challenge, ensuring the timely delivery of the items to the

victims.

Meanwhile, some victims affected by the flooding caused by the Akosombo dam spillage are now returning to their residences, as the floodwaters have receded and several communities have undergone fumigation in the weeks following the incident.

National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) had previously indicated that the Volta River was displaying signs of receding and maintaining its regular course. Consequently, stagnant floodwaters in certain areas are subsiding.

Deputy Director General of Technical and Reforms at NADMO, Seji Saji Amedonu, said, “We have some structures that were completely covered, some structures that the water was at the base level and some structures that the water was at the window level, some also less than the window or about two feet. Those ones have the residents moving back immediately the water depleted.”

“When the water receded, some places were completely dried out and those one are the areas that some fumigation were done but there is still pools of water in the Mepe township. We are working very hard now and for four or five days we have been pumping the water into a channel that will lead it back into the river. So for returning to their homes, quite a lot of people have returned to their homes,” he added.

The Volta River Authority (VRA) initiated the spilling of excess water from the Akosombo and Kpong Hydro Dams on September 15 due to escalating water levels. The spillage was brought to a halt on October 30, 2023.

In the aftermath of the prolonged spillage, numerous inhabitants residing along the Lower Volta Basin witnessed the loss of their residences and agricultural lands to the ensuing floods.

The spillage affected a total of nine districts, with particularly devastating impacts felt in the South, Central, and North Tongu districts within the Volta

Region.

Once vibrant communities such as Battor, Tefle, Mepe, Sogakope, Adidome, and Anlo found themselves submerged.

According to the National Disaster Management Organisation (NaDMO), over 26,000 individuals were displaced and left homeless as a consequence of this calamity.

In response, various organisations and individuals have extended support by providing essential relief items to assist the affected residents.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty*



*Donations made to Akosombo dam spillage victims*

## Teaching and learning resumes in 81 schools affected by VRA spillage

**D**irector-General of the Ghana Education Service (GES), Dr Eric Nkansah, says teaching and learning have resumed in 81 out of 108 schools affected by the Volta River Authority (VRA) spillage.

“We are also making good progress working with key stakeholders to restore teaching and learning in the remaining 27 schools within the North Tongu District, which, for the most part, are used as camps and safe havens by displaced households”.

“Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that all

schools affected by the floods resume teaching and learning activities within the shortest possible time,” he added.

Dr Eric Nkansah disclosed this to the media over the weekend after a three-day working visit to nine districts affected by the spillage.

Dr Nkansah’s visit was a follow-up to evaluate the implementation of the Education in Emergency Plan put in place by the Ghana Education Service.

*- continued on page 11*



*Director-General of the Ghana Education Service (GES), Dr Eric Nkansah giving learning materials to school children*

# General News

## Teaching and learning resumes in 81 schools affected by VRA spillage

- Continued from page 10

The Director General, together with support from development partners, donated some relief items comprising tents to be mounted as temporary classrooms, and 3,000 school uniforms.

The rest were 800 packs of teaching

and learning materials, 10 boxes of school-in-a-box kits, 36 packages of recreation kits, and 32 Early Childhood Development kits.

Following the spillage of the Akosombo Dam by the Volta River Authority as their routine exercise to help save the

dam from collapse, some communities were submerged by the large volume of water travelling downstream.

The flooding left in its trail collapsed buildings, including schools and displaced thousands of people along the bank of the Volta downstream.

This led to the Government working through the Education Minister to put in place the implementation of the Education in Emergency Plan to restore teaching and learning in the affected communities and schools.

**Source: GNA**

## \$9m spent on Ghanaians studying in US on scholarship as number rises by over 31% - Report

The recently released 2023 Open Doors Report reveals a notable trend in Ghanaian students' preference for the United States as their top choice for undergraduate and graduate studies.

In the academic year 2022-2023, over 6,400 Ghanaian students pursued education in the U.S., marking a significant 31 percent increase compared to the previous academic year.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) publishes the Open Doors Report annually, examining the statistics of international students studying in the United States.

"U.S. colleges and universities offer world-class educational opportunities and Ghanaian students in the United States are deepening the ties of friendship, family, and business between our countries.

We are so happy to see Ghanaians seeking to learn, develop their skills, and return to Ghana to benefit their communities," said U.S. Ambassador to Ghana Virginia Palmer.

According to the 2023 Open Doors Report, Ghana has made its way into the top 25 countries worldwide for sending students to the United States.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, a record number of 6,468 Ghanaian students pursued studies in the United States, marking a significant 31.6 percent increase from the prior academic year.

Among these students, 4,140 were enrolled in graduate degree programs, positioning Ghana as the 14th largest source of graduate students in the United States. The academic year saw Ghanaian students receive nearly \$9 million in scholarships, spread across 700 higher educational institutions

across all 50 states.

To accommodate this growing trend, the U.S. Embassy processed a record number of student visa cases in the previous fiscal year.

The United States retains its status as the top destination for international students, with a total of over one million (1,057,188) international students enrolled in the 2022-2023 academic year, marking a 12 percent increase from the preceding year.

A significant number of international students pursued studies in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields. In particular, mathematics and computer science continued to lead as the most sought-after fields of study for international students in 2022/23.

The U.S. Embassy in Ghana organised the largest EducationUSA college fairs held in Accra and Kumasi this year,

attracting over 13,000 attendees, including students, parents, and academic professionals.

EducationUSA, the U.S. Department of State's network of education advisers, serves to guide qualified individuals through the application process to U.S. colleges and universities.

Ghana presently operates two EducationUSA Advising Centers: one at the U.S. Embassy in Accra and the other at ACE Consult in Asokwa, Kumasi.

EducationUSA Advisors assist students in navigating the college or university application process and supported thousands of Ghanaian students in applying for admissions to numerous accredited U.S. higher education institutions over the past year.

**Source: The Independent Ghana**



Ghanaian students studying in the United States

# Business

## Tax-strained companies find relief as GRA extends support

The Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) Commissioner-General Rev. Dr. Ammishaddai Owusu-Amoah has declared that the Authority will support financially troubled businesses in their efforts to recover.

Despite the fact that the tax authority is ready to carry out the legal compliance measures, he stated that the main objective is to assist in the resuscitation of businesses and guarantee continuous production, particularly in light of the recent economic challenges.

“The fact is that whatever compliance measures are available in the law, GRA is ready to implement them to the letter. But while we are committed to enforcement, we also aim to revive companies and ensure continuous production,” the Commissioner-General stated during a working visit to B5 Plus Limited – a steel manufacturer located in Tema.

“Whether small or large, we are ready to ensure the collection of taxes in full. But at the same time, we are also concerned that production should continue and people not be laid off,” he added.

Sol Cement Shut Down by GRA for Unsettled Tax Debt Exceeding GH¢700 Million; VAT Violations Uncovered in 12 Accra Businesses in August.

In August, the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) closed down Sol Cement for failing to meet tax obligations, revealing an outstanding tax debt of over GH¢700 million. Additionally, VAT infractions were identified in 12 businesses in Accra, ranging from failure to register for VAT to non-issuance of VAT documentation.

Despite these actions, the GRA emphasized its focus on supporting struggling companies for a potential turnaround, considering closures as a last resort.

The GRA has established a revenue target of GH¢106 billion, with the Customs Division aiming to collect GH¢28.5 billion in 2023. A total of 93 businesses in the capital have been identified for enforcement and compliance efforts this year.

### The United Steel Company story

As of 2020, United Steel Company Limited carried an outstanding tax liability principal of approximately GH¢149 million, with accrued interest and penalties exceeding GH¢400 million dating back to 2018.

The company also had outstanding debts to banks and other creditors.

In collaboration with financial institutions, the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) engaged the services

of an administrator to assume control of the factory.

“We then placed the factory for sale and advertised it in the papers; we succeeded in getting B5 Plus to buy the company,” the GRA’s Commissioner-General recalled.

“And after they bought the company, they paid the tax liabilities in full because the administrator had then applied for and took advantage of the waiver of interest and penalties. And so, the GH¢149 million we had been chasing from 2020 was fully paid in 2023,” he added.

Explaining further, he said, “The factory has also, as you saw today, been completely put back on its feet and is able to produce; and we’ll be getting over GH¢100 million annually in terms of taxes. We are more interested in seeing companies grow to meet their tax obligations. So the mentality or sad notion that GRA is only interested in getting the money, and not so interested in whether the company will survive or not is not true”.

### US\$35million invested to revamp the factory

Mukesh Thakwani, Chief Executive Officer of B5 Plus Limited, commended the favourable domestic investment environment and emphasised the numerous opportunities available.

He revealed that his company has already injected over US\$35 million into the revitalization of the factory. Furthermore, he stated that with the planned expansion of the production line over the next two years, an additional investment of US\$10 million is on the agenda.

“It has been quite challenging for us. What we expected and what we found on the ground was quite different; but a lot of credit goes to the entire team for being positive and optimistic, and we are really looking forward to the future.

“I think this is one of the reasons that though we are working 24 hours it has still taken six months – and it will take another one and a half months for us to start this plant. Our target is that before December we should at least be able to make some trials, so that from next year we are able to run this plant successfully and make everyone proud,” Mr. Thakwani said.

The company presently employs 420 workers, but this number could soon increase to over 500 as additional product lines are introduced.

“We are not only targeting Ghana and the West Africa sub-regional market, but the whole Africa; we want to take advantage of AfCFTA,” he added.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey*



Rev. Dr. Ammishaddai Owusu-Amoah, Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) Commissioner-General

# Business

## Government must revive Ghana Airways, Black Star Line, TOR - IEA

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) has asked government to include clear investment plans in the 2024 budget to revive three key national assets -the defunct Ghana Airways, the Black Star Line, and the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR).

Reviving the national airline, shipping line and the country's refinery, the policy Think-Tank said, would not only be critical in addressing the persistent foreign exchange pressures, but help in generating more domestic revenue.

Their revival would also contribute to economic stability and sustainable development, while creating high income-earning jobs for Ghanaians, leading to better living conditions.

That formed part of the key recommendations of IAE ahead of the 2024 budget, expected to be presented on Wednesday, November 15.

Ghana Airways, the country's flag carrier ceased operation in 2004 with plans to revive it yet to come alive, while the operations of the Black Star Line fizzled out in the late 1990s.

The Tema Oil refinery last refined crude oil in April 2021, and had since been utilised for the storage of various refined petroleum products for onward supply to customers, the Board and Management of the company said on June 24, 2023.

Expressing concern about the defunct air and shipping lines, IEA asked: "What happened to important assets like the national airline - Ghana Airways, and the national shipping line - Black Star Line?"

"Why can't we restore them since they provide important services and their absence means that we have to pay huge amounts of foreign exchange for travel, freight and insurance services to foreign companies when we could rather have earned income from these services?"

IEA also asked: "What is going on with another important asset, Tema Oil Refinery (TOR)? Why can't we find the money required to rehabilitate it so that we can refine our own oil as well as other countries' oil for profit?"

The Board and Management of the refinery, which has not refined crude

oil for the past two and half months [since May 2021], said: "TOR is saddled with enormous debt that extended beyond US\$400 million."

It was explained that: There are reconciliation issues with customers related to product accounting and the Company is unable to meet its ongoing operational expenses from internally generated cash flow."

The Think-Tank's expectation is for the government to use the 2024 budget to start the process of restoring the Ghana Airways, Black Star Line, and TOR, which it said "are key to our economic growth and development".

The IEA noted that the ongoing US\$3 billion loan-support programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had some spending restraints.

It, however, said: "We cannot allow the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) programme to stand in our way in pursuing these important national goals."

The IEA observed that government had initiated some expenditure cuts under the ECF, including a

cut on executive pay and limits on expenditures by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

It, however, said downsizing government and the Office of Government Machinery would be necessary in reducing the overall government expenditure, adding that, "doing so will send the right signal about the need for belt-tightening by all in these difficult times."

The Institute also called for streamlining of the country's tax system, and tapping into natural resource receipts intensely, as a way of intensifying domestic revenue mobilisation.

"A stronger fiscal adjustment, entailing a strong revenue mobilisation drive combined with an equally strong expenditure control and rationalisation effort, could reduce the debt significantly during the period, while at the same time creating space for the under-funded development and social spending," the IEA.

**Source: GNA**



File photo

# International

## Mass grave being dug at Gaza hospital as Israel confirms hostage death

Within Gaza City's largest hospital, Al-Shifa, 200 bodies have been buried in the hospital grounds.

It took around 100 of the hospital's medical team six hours to bury the 200 bodies, according to head of the orthopaedic surgery department, Dr Adnan al-Bursh.

"We started off at 08:30 in the morning and finished around 15:00 local time," he says.

Al-Bursh says bodies "have been left for days until decomposed" and so medics were left with little choice but to make a mass grave.

He says they "were not able to open the windows in the buildings because of the bad smell coming out of the courtyard" - adding that around 120 dead bodies were out there, before being buried.

Another 80 were in the morgue, he says, with mostly women and

children among the dead.

The Red Cross warned the medics to leave them due to safety fears from ongoing shelling, "but we took the responsibility [to bury them]," Al-Bursh says.

Fighting between Israel and Hamas is raging in Gaza City, including at the hospital site. Israel has accused

Hamas of running a command centre under Al-Shifa - which the hospital and Hamas deny.

The hospital's lack of fuel means premature babies and dialysis patients can't get treatment, the UN warned earlier. Meanwhile, Israel confirms the death of 19-year-old Noa Marciano, a soldier who was kidnapped by Hamas last month.

Israel began striking Gaza after the Hamas attacks on 7 October, in which 1,200 people were killed and more than 200 taken hostage. The Hamas-run health ministry says more than 11,000 people have been killed in Gaza since - of whom more than 4,500 were children.

*Source: BBC*



*A mass grave is being dug at the Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City*

## Google to stop routing users through South Africa township over insecurity

The Google navigation apps Waze and Google Maps will stop directing road users through Cape Town's Nyanga township and surrounding areas amid rising insecurity, the company's South Africa head Alistair Mokoena said on Monday.

Last week, a US tourist was robbed and shot in the face in Nyanga after a navigation app directed him to drive through the township as it offered the most direct route to the city from the Cape Town International Airport.

In September, 40-year-old British surgeon Kar Hao Teoh was shot dead in the same township during a protest by taxi operators.

Local media say a few other people, mostly tourists, have been attacked or killed while driving through the township, some

following the recommendations of navigation apps.

After Mr Teoh's killing, the UK government warned citizens visiting South Africa to "be careful

when following GPS navigation" and "avoid taking alternative routes away from main roads as this can often take you into less secure areas".

It added that "most violent crimes occur in townships on the outskirts of major cities or in isolated areas".

*Source: BBC*



*Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille and Director of Google South Africa Alistair Mokoena in Parliament*

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