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General News

Cry for roads and potable water when you are ready to pay taxes - Ursula Owusu-Ekufu

The Minister of Communication and Digitalization, Ursula Owusu-Ekufu, has delivered a strong caution to Ghanaians who evade taxes.

The minister emphasised that it is unjust for individuals to demand benefits without fulfilling their responsibilities.

During an interview with Oyerapa TV, she clarified that essential amenities such as good roads, clean drinking water, and reliable networks are not obtained solely through requests.

She underscored that the government can only furnish the nation with fundamental necessities when citizens play their part by fulfilling their tax obligations.

“We are all crying about the hardships in the country. As it stands now, we are unable to finance our debts. So, we need to pay for our development.

“You can’t cry for a road, electricity, water and a good network; where do we go for the money? If you don’t get the money through taxes, where will you get it from?”

“The only way to finance your development anywhere in the world is through either taxation,

through dividends citizens pay to the government or through loans.

“That’s my little knowledge about that. So, if you don’t want to pay taxes, you don’t want the government to also borrow; where will the government get money to finance development?” she said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Minister

of Trade and Industry Stephen Amoah, during an interview before the finance minister’s budget presentation in parliament last week, suggested an increase in taxes by the government.

He opined that the most effective strategy to stabilise the current economic situation is through tax increases.

“If I were the finance minister, there should be an increase in taxes.

“You see, our brothers from the NDC know that the only way to restore and consolidate our fiscal policy now (sic) is to generate revenue internally.”

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Ursula Owusu-Ekufu, Minister of Communication and Digitalization

Pork prices to increase December 1

The Pig Farmers Association of Ghana has declared a 20 percent increase in pork prices, effective December 1, impacting both live-weight and carcass pork.

Kwame Appiah Danquah, President of the Pig Farmers Association, announced the adjustments during this year’s Porktober, an annual event dedicated to raising awareness about pork.

The existing cost of live-weight pork, presently at 25 cedis per kilo, will see a hike to 30 cedis, while carcass pork will rise from

35 cedis to 45 cedis per kilo.

Danquah attributed the price shift to escalating production costs and clarified that these new prices are applicable at the farm gate. He cautioned that additional costs related to transportation and other factors would be incurred when purchasing in Accra.

In a bid to establish fair and competitive pricing, farmers are actively engaged in formulating a comprehensive pricing strategy for pork and its associated products. Simultaneously, efforts - *continued on page 3*



File photo

General News

Pork prices to increase December 1

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are underway to secure funding from partners to alleviate financial pressures on farmers.

Danquah stressed, "The Association is actively seeking

funding opportunities to strike a balance between farmers and consumers, considering market dynamics and production costs."

He identified financing as the

primary challenge faced by pig farmers and highlighted the association's proactive exploration of input financing options to provide capital access and enhance

the pig farming industry in the country.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku

Many MPs to resign soon, ACEPA predicts

The African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA) has issued a cautionary note, predicting a potential increase in the attrition rate within Parliament unless political parties take proactive measures to address the current situation.

Dr. Rasheed Draman, the Executive Director of ACEPA, highlighted the observation that political parties seem to prioritize financially affluent individuals over competent MPs, contributing to the ongoing state of affairs.

This concern arises in response to comments made by the National

Chairman of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), Johnson Asiedu Nketiah, who linked the rising attrition rate in Parliament to the excessive monetization of politics in Ghana.

Mr. Nketiah, speaking on the Citi Breakfast Show on Citi FM, asserted that there has been a departure from the original purpose of serving the nation through law formulation. Instead, MPs are now utilising their parliamentary privileges to recoup campaign investments or advance personal business interests.

Dr. Draman lamented the

prioritisation of money over knowledge and experience by political parties, stating, "In advanced democracies, there are some seats where you don't contest a sitting MP because of the wealth of knowledge or experience that he or she brings to the legislative agenda and the fact that the party needs the person to be in the House. Now the party looks at who has a fat wallet and who can win elections for them, even if the person is not going to bring anything to the table when it comes to the work of Parliament."

He suggests that a reevaluation of the executive positions granted

to legislators is necessary, emphasizing the need for a disconnection in this regard.

Meanwhile, Member of Parliament for the Odododiodio constituency, Edwin Nii Lante Vanderpuye, disclosed the factors influencing his decision to step down from Parliament, citing frustration as a major element.

He expressed his discontent with the difficulties encountered by Members of Parliament (MPs) in carrying out their responsibilities during a media engagement.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Dr. Rasheed Draman, Executive Director of ACEPA

General News

GWCL's 'Pay or Get Disconnected' operation begins today

Effective today, Monday, November 20, the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) is initiating the "Pay or Get Disconnected" operation, targeting customers who have neglected their water bill payments.

In collaboration with the Ghana Police Service, GWCL aims to execute this nationwide revenue mobilisation effort, issuing a stern warning to both individual and corporate water users with outstanding balances to settle their dues promptly to avoid potential confrontations with the taskforce.

Deputy Managing Director of GWCL, Collins Nuamah, advised customers to download the company's app from Google play/Apple stores for a hassle-free bill

payment experience.

Speaking on Peace FM's morning show "Kokrokoo" on Friday, November 17, Nuamah assured customers that settling their bills would be convenient.

He cautioned those who disregard this instruction, emphasising that disconnection will incur a fee for reconnection.

"If you owe us, note that from Monday, our taskforce will disconnect you if you don't pay up. If we disconnect you and you come for reconnection, you will also pay a reconnection fee. Since the exercise is across the country, if you sit aloof for us to disconnect you, you cannot be guaranteed that we will reconnect you in a week or

two," he emphasized.

With the nationwide scope of the exercise, GWCL highlights that delayed action on disconnections may result in prolonged reconnection timelines.

Customers are urged to comply promptly to avoid inconvenience and additional charges.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



File photo

Police to halt December demonstrations by Democracy Hub, others

The Ghana Police Service has submitted an application to the High Court, seeking an order to prevent three groups from organizing demonstrations in December this year.

These groups, Democracy Hub, Patriotic Hub, and the Patriotic Forum for Accountable Governance, had informed the police about their planned protests at the Jubilee House throughout December 2023.

While two of the groups aimed to demand the resignation or impeachment of President Akufo-Addo, the Patriotic Forum for Accountable Governance intended to express gratitude to the president for guiding the country through the COVID-19 pandemic and initiating economic recovery.

In a statement released on Friday, the Ghana Police Service explained that it conducted a security threat assessment, noting common destinations, overlapping timelines, and conflicting objectives among the planned demonstrations.

"Undertook a security threat assessment of the proposed common destination, overlapping timelines and conflicting objectives for the three planned demonstrations."

"The Police Command, after the security assessment, has reasonable grounds to believe that the three special events, if held around or at the forefront of the Jubilee House, and at the given time-lines, especially around the Christmas and New Year Festivities, may endanger public safety, public defense, public order, the running and delivery of essential services and violate the rights and freedoms of other persons among others."

The police expressed concerns that holding these events around the Jubilee House during the Christmas and New Year festivities might jeopardize public safety, defense, order, essential services, and infringe upon the rights and freedoms of others.

The police engaged with the organizers, explaining the challenges and their inability to

provide adequate security.

They requested the organizers to postpone the protest until after January 5, 2023.

However, the organizers declined, subsequently, on November 15, 2023, the Police Command filed an application at the High Court seeking an order to prohibit the events.

The court process has been served to the organizers, and the application is scheduled for a

hearing on Tuesday, November 21, 2023.

The Ghana Police Service has reassured the public of its commitment to fostering democratic freedoms, emphasizing its dedication to providing necessary security for individuals and groups to exercise their constitutional right to protest safely and peacefully, in accordance with the laws governing protests.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Ghana Police Personnels

General News

First-ever off-pump heart surgery successfully conducted at UGMC

The University of Ghana Medical Centre (UGMC) has achieved a historic milestone with the successful completion of the first-ever Off-Pump Coronary Artery Bypass surgeries in the country.

These groundbreaking procedures, performed on beating hearts, highlight UGMC's medical excellence and dedication to state-of-the-art cardiovascular care.

As part of a group of six individuals undergoing intricate cardiac surgical interventions, two patients have emerged from the procedure with successful outcomes.

Examinations and investigations by

the doctors revealed severe triple vessel coronary disease, impacting the left anterior descending artery, circumflex artery, and the right coronary artery.

A three-hour emergency surgery was performed on a beating heart, marking the first-ever Off-Pump Coronary Artery Bypass Graft conducted in Ghana.

During the procedure, the left internal mammary artery was intricately connected to the left anterior descending artery, while a reverse Saphenous graft was applied to the circumflex and right coronary arteries.

The surgical team comprised Prof

Enoch Akowuah, Dr Baffoe Gyan, Dr Gordon Offei-Larbi, and Prof Andrew Owens.

Dr Ernest Ofosu Appiah played a crucial role in the anaesthesia

responsibilities as part of the dedicated medical team.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



File photo

Parliament/STAR-Ghana to organise forum to commemorate 30 years of uninterrupted democracy

Ghana's Parliament will on Monday, November 20, 2023, partner STAR-Ghana Foundation to organise a breakfast forum to commemorate 30 years of uninterrupted parliamentary democracy under the Fourth Republic.

The event, which would coincide with the fifth anniversary of the STAR-Ghana Foundation, is in recognition of the need for more effective engagement with the public and wider participation in the work of Parliament, having been ranked first in Africa.

A press release by Mr David Sebastian Damoah, Director of Media Relations, Parliament, said about 150 participants from Parliament, Civil Society Organisations, Think Tanks, Trade Unions, and the media, among others would attend the forum.

The forum, dubbed: "Thirty Years of Parliamentary Democracy under the Fourth Republic: Reflection on citizens engagement and the way forward", would have Mr Alban Sumana Kingsford, the Speaker, deliver the keynote address whilst guest speakers would be Professor

Akosua Darkwah, University of Ghana and Dr Rasheed Draman, Africa Centre for Parliamentary Studies, the press release said.

It said the Speaker's breakfast forum was to consolidate the relationship between Parliament and CSOs by exploring new ways of working together for accountable governance.

It said for more public participation

in the work of Parliament, it would set up a "Citizens' Bureau," within Parliamentary Service to institutionalise Parliament-citizens' engagement through partnerships with the media, CSOs and think tanks.

The Bureau, the release said would develop and maintain a database of CSOs with the opportunity to easily share information and research findings with Parliament whilst

accessing relevant information from Parliament to support their work.

It said such engagements would reduce the misunderstanding between Parliament and the public as well as serve as an early warning signal to the elected representatives of the people on vexed issues for early resolution.

Source: GNA



Parliament House

General News

NPP will lose 2024 elections to the NDC - EIU, Fitch Solutions project

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and Fitch Solutions, two UK-based research firms, are both predicting a victory for the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), led by former President John Mahama, in the upcoming 2024 Presidential elections.

The EIU forecasts a transfer of power from the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), which will be represented by Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, its flagbearer, to the NDC.

This shift, according to the EIU, will be driven by factors such as declining living standards, limited job opportunities, and poor public services.

Fitch Solutions also suggests that the ruling party is unlikely

to retain power, with former President Mahama expected to secure victory in the swing regions by nearly 48 percent compared to Vice President Bawumia's 29%.

According to BMI, a Fitch Solutions company, the NPP is unlikely to stay in power after the 2024 election.

Data from Global Info Analytics and their own sources indicate that the NDC is ahead of the NPP in the Volta-Oti regions, Northern regions, swing regions, and Akan regions.

The EIU report forecasts that the Ghanaian cedi will regain some of its lost value following a debt restructuring deal and is expected to end 2024 below 12 cedis to the dollar.

Source: The Independent Ghana



John Dramani Mahama, Former President of Ghana

“My sincerest apologies to you” - Kwami Sefa Kayi sorry for remarks to deputy finance minister

Renowned radio broadcaster and host of the Kokrookoo morning show on Peace FM, Kwami Sefa Kayi, has issued an apology to Deputy Minister of Finance, Abena Osei-Asare, citing miscommunication regarding her absence on the show on November 16, 2023.

On that morning, the deputy minister was scheduled to appear at 9 a.m. to discuss the budget presented by the finance minister to parliament on November 15.

Sefa Kayi disclosed that the minister had indeed come to the studios but requested permission to attend the funeral of the late Theresa Kufuor.

This led to criticism from other panellists, who questioned her decision to prioritise the funeral over explaining the budget to the public.

Sefa Kayi clarified that the misunderstanding arose due to miscommunication between the minister and the production team

and extended an apology to her for any offence caused.

“Yesterday, I and the Deputy Finance Minister, Abena Osei-Asare, were supposed to have a discussion that couldn't come on.

I said some things that I should not have said. This was due to a miscommunication. It could have gone better.

“Abena Osei Asare, if you're listening to this, I would like to

render my sincerest apologies to you if I said some things that were not good or did not go down well with you,” he said.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Kwami Sefa Kayi, Radio broadcaster and host of the Kokrookoo morning show on Peace FM

General News

'Ghost' workers on government's payroll still receiving salaries - EOCO

The Economic and Organised Crime Office (EOCO) has revealed that a significant number of individuals fraudulently have been listed on the government's payroll.

According to an official with EOCO, Patrick Senyo Amegago receives monthly salaries without performing any work.

Speaking to the meaning, Mr Amegago explained that, in collaboration with agents, these individuals manage to infiltrate the payroll system and unlawfully receive salaries for non-existent employment.

He highlighted ongoing efforts by EOCO to address this issue, noting that some individuals involved in such fraudulent activities have already faced prosecution, while

others are currently undergoing legal proceedings.

"You have people who are not working as state employees but find themselves through crooked ways and enter the Government of Ghana payroll. They have their agents wherever they are. So people are on the Government of Ghana payroll who are not working. We have several of them in court being prosecuted," he revealed.

He emphasized that EOCO's primary focus is not only on recovering misappropriated funds but also on prosecuting those responsible for the fraud.

He stated, "over the years, we have been focused on recovering stolen monies back to the state. That doesn't mean that if we take the money from you, you are going

scot-free.

"We have recovered a lot for the state, and these people are facing prosecution."

The persistent challenge of "ghost names" on the government payroll has been a longstanding concern

for the government.

Previous efforts to eradicate these fictitious entries from the payroll have experienced limited success.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Ghana Cedi Notes

Heal Komfo Anokye Project: NPP General Secretary and National organiser donate GHC 200,000

General Secretary of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Mr. Justin Frimpong Kodua, and the National Organiser, Henry Nana Boakye, have donated GHC 200,000 towards the renovation of the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital.

This follows the launch of a campaign dubbed, "Heal Komfo Anokye" by the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II to raise \$10 million dollars to renovate the 70 year-old facility.

Speaking at a brief ceremony to present the cheque, Mr. Kodua said they followed proceedings during the official launch of the renovation project two weeks ago and decided to contribute their quota knowing that it would take a collective effort to prosecute the agenda.

"To have seen our King, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II lead the charge for this laudable initiative, we the direct beneficiaries of the project and indigenes of Asanteman could not sit aloof but had to come here

this morning and pay our due so that we can also help Prof Otchere Addai-Mensah to give this place the befitting facelift it deserves," the General Secretary stated.

He expressed his commitment towards the project and noted that he would impress upon members of the NPP as well as government appointees to donate towards the Project.

The NPP as an organisation, he disclosed, would soon donate, adding that the Vice President who leads the party would be briefed about the project to ensure they showed up big time.

"I would suggest that the CEO initiates a Scheme so that people in the region and indigenes elsewhere could contribute monthly so as to enable KATH carry out its own retooling and maintenance to keep the hospital in shape," he suggested.

Receiving the cheque on behalf of KATH, Professor Otchere Addai-Mensah said the Board and

Management were grateful for the generous gesture by the two individuals.

He noted that referrals from 12 regions of the country were brought to Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital daily.

He indicated that the situation often stretched the hospital to its limits of having to attend to all these cases and maintain the facilities at the same time.

"Government cannot do these renovations and maintenance alone and so we were glad that the Asante King decided to lead this Heal Komfo Anokye initiative so we can get KATH in a proper shape to respond to cases more confidently and provide the best environment for visitors and staff," the CEO stated.

Source: GNA



General Secretary of the NPP, Mr. Justin Frimpong Kodua, and the National Organiser, Henry Nana Boakye, making a donation to Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital

General News

Ghana exceeds UN's target in deploying female military personnel for peace missions - Akufo-Addo

Ghana has not just met but exceeded the expectations set by the United Nations (UN) regarding the deployment of female military personnel for peacekeeping missions.

The nation is actively engaged in 15 global peacekeeping missions, showcasing its commitment to international peace and security with a total deployed strength of 2,500 military personnel.

The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) has notably surpassed the UN's target of nine percent female troops by deploying an impressive 19 percent.

President Akufo-Addo announced this while addressing the 2023 graduation parade of the Ghana Military Academy in Accra.

Ghana's dedication to global peace and security dates back to 1960 when the country first participated

in a UN peacekeeping force deployed in the Republic of Congo (now DR Congo).

"Today's parade is a special one. The number of officers being commissioned into service is the highest in the history of the GAF," President Nana Akufo-Addo, who is also the Commander-in-Chief, stated.

Since then, the GAF has consistently demonstrated its dedication to the cause of peace, currently ranking ninth among the largest troop-contributing countries by the UN in peace support operations.

Ghana, having gained independence from Britain on March 8, 1957, was admitted to the United Nations just two days after achieving independence.

President Akufo-Addo noted that the 2023 graduation parade was particularly special, witnessing

the commissioning of the highest number of officers in the history of the GAF.

A total of 292 officer cadets, including 217 males and 75 females, passed out during the ceremony.

The President highlighted the significance of commissioning such a large number of officers into the Armed Forces, especially in a time when resources are limited.

This strategic move aims to prepare the nation for emerging security threats faced today.

Addressing the security situation in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel, President Akufo-Addo stressed the need to enhance the entire security architecture of the country.

The Armed Forces, he noted, are strategically dispersed across the country to ensure continuous

surveillance and capability to safeguard Ghana's territorial integrity.

In continuation of its commitment to peacekeeping missions, Ghana is set to partner with the UN to host a joint Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting in December of this year.

The gathering will focus on crucial aspects such as civilian protection, addressing misinformation and disinformation, promoting safety and security, protecting mental health, and reinforcing the pivotal role of women in the UN.

This ministerial summit, the first to take place in Africa, underlines Ghana's dedication to strengthening UN peacekeeping in alignment with Action for Peacekeeping and A4P+.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Female Military Personnel

General News

Oti Region: NPP clears 21 parliamentary candidates to contest in primary

Twenty-one parliamentary aspirants of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the Oti Region have been cleared by the vetting committee to contest the upcoming primary on December 2.

They signed an undertaking to remain resolute behind the party, irrespective of whoever emerges as the winner.

The committee was under the chairmanship of Mr Salam Mustapha, the National Youth Organiser of the NPP, Dr Asiedu Kokro, the Deputy Director of Communications, and Mr Abdul Taric Bonsu, the Deputy Nasara Coordinator.

Mr Mustapha, in an interview with the Ghana News Agency after the vetting, appealed to the candidates to conduct their campaigns in a civilised and mature manner.

He urged them to refrain from insults, acrimony, and false accusations against each other.

Mr Evans Yaw Dapaah, the Regional Chairman of the NPP, emphasised on the Party's mission to 'break the eight' and nobody should do anything to jeopardise that goal.

He gave the assurance that the regional executives were fully prepared to support the constituencies to win the seats.

He urged the executives of the constituencies to remain neutral, fair, transparent, and ensure a level playing field for all aspirants.

The NPP was poised to capture

all the parliamentary seats in the region, he said, and called for all hands-on deck to realise that dream.

Source: GNA



NPP Supporters

Ignore NAM1's list for the GH¢2.5m disbursement; it cannot be trusted – Aggrieved Menzgold customers warn AG

The Coalition of Aggrieved Customers of Menzgold, Ghana, has issued a warning to the Attorney General, urging caution in disbursing the GH¢2.5 million provided by Nana Appiah Mensah (NAM1), the embattled CEO of the now-defunct Menzgold company.

The funds, currently deposited in an exhibit account at the Bank of Ghana, have been presented to the authorities by NAM1.

The coalition's advice stems from their inability to verify the credibility of the list containing the names of clients provided by NAM1 for disbursement. In their petition dated November 17, the group expressed concerns over potential discrimination and emphasised that all customers should be entitled to their funds simultaneously.

"The Coalition of Aggrieved Customers of Menzgold, Ghana, wishes to appeal to the Attorney General and Minister for Justice not to succumb to any pressure from NAM 1 nor any amorphous group to disburse the GH 2.5 million paid by NAM 1 to the so-called attached list since we cannot verify the

credibility of the so-called names," the petition stated.

The coalition further cautioned the Attorney General against yielding to any pressure from NAM1 regarding timelines and client-specific disbursements. They vowed to resist any attempt by NAM1 and Menzgold to discriminate against customers in the payment process.

"Nana Appiah Mensah should

never be allowed to determine who should be paid first or last. As a coalition, we will resist any attempt by NAMI and his Menzgold to discriminate against customers in the matter of payment," parts of the statement read.

However, the coalition expressed support for the initial decision by the Attorney General and the Ghana Police Service to retain the funds in the exhibit account due to ongoing

legal proceedings surrounding the Menzgold case.

"We do agree with the initial decision taken by the Honourable Attorney General and Ghana Police authorities that the money be kept in the exhibit account since the matter is pending before the court," the coalition added.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Aggrieved Menzgold customers

General News

Deputy Education Minister slams Mahama for threatening to cancel teacher licensure policy

The Deputy Minister of Education, John Ntim Fordjour, has sparked controversy with his criticisms aimed at former President John Dramani Mahama and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) presidential flagbearer.

The comments from Ntim Fordjour were prompted by Mahama's recent promise to cancel teacher licensure exams during a Facebook Live session, citing a need for improvement in teaching quality and examination standards at Colleges of Education.

In response, Ntim Fordjour took to social media, specifically X (formerly Twitter), accusing the former president of lacking vision and posing a threat to Ghana's progress.

He alleged that Mahama has a track record of cancelling beneficial opportunities, including allowances, the free Senior High School (SHS) policy, and the teacher licensure policy.

"There are leaders who establish policies and introduce new systems for the good of our people and for

the development of our nation. This one lacks vision. He only cancels and threatens to cancel good policies at every opportunity. He cancelled allowances for nursing and teacher trainees. He's threatened to cancel free SHS. Now he's further threatening to cancel the game-changing teacher licensure policy," Ntim Fordjour remarked.

Labelling Mahama as a significant threat to Ghana's progress, Ntim Fordjour accused him of being desperate for power and lacking a clear vision.

He posted, "Mahama is by far the biggest threat to Ghana's progress. The alternative is empty! No vision, just desperate for power, which was once incompetently handled. #SayNotoMahama."

The exchange highlights the ongoing debate surrounding education policies in Ghana and the political tension as the country heads towards elections.

Source: *The Independent Ghana*



John Ntim Fordjour, Deputy Minister of Education

Business

\$800m loan for COCOBOD approved by Parliament

Parliament has given the green light for an \$800 million loan agreement between the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), a consortium of banks and financial institutions, to finance the purchase of cocoa beans for the 2023/2024 crop season.

The loan facility will cover about 47 percent of the expected procurement of 850,000 tonnes of cocoa beans from farmers through the Licensed Buying Companies (LBCs) for the upcoming cocoa season.

The approval comes amid concerns raised by Reuters about a reported \$200 million borrowing by COCOBOD from cocoa traders to address funding gaps. COCOBOD has denied the report and assured that it has secured enough funds for the 2023/2024 crop season.

COCOBOD explained that it has adopted a two-prong financing strategy and has received firm commitments from its bankers regarding timely fund availability. It also said that it has presented a "Cocoa Syndicated Loan" to Parliament for consideration and approval.

The loan agreement stipulates that the \$800 million will be disbursed for various purposes related to cocoa purchases and operational activities.

These include farmers' services costs, cocoa disease and pest controls, fertilizer distribution and application, farmer pension schemes, cocoa roads, industry inputs (such as jute sacks, twine, stencil ink, passbooks), child education support, and several other essential components of the

cocoa industry's value chain.

The loan facility is expected to boost the productivity and profitability of the cocoa sector, which is a major source of foreign exchange and employment

for Ghana. It is also expected to enhance the welfare and livelihoods of the cocoa farmers and their communities.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Parliament House

Finance Minister, 'appeals' to Speaker, Minority, to approve 2024 budget

Minister for Finance, Ken Ofori-Atta, appears to live in the shadows of the delay in approval of the Electronic Levy, which was initially announced on November 17, 2021, as part of the 2022 budget statement, but took months to gain the approval of the Minority in Parliament.

The contentious levy led to the rejection of the 2021 budget by the House. The Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, initially presided over the rejection, but his first deputy, Joseph Osei-Owusu, overturned it in the absence of the speaker.

During the opening ceremony of the Post Budget Workshop in Parliament, Ofori-Atta appealed to the Minority not to repeat the E-levy episode, considering the current challenges facing the country.

According to information provided by Mr. Ofori-Atta, the government wants to raise 0.9% of GDP through revenue bills that will

be submitted to parliament for approval.

"Mr. Speaker, we are therefore calling on you to support us once again, like we have done in the past, to pass the proposed measures in the 2024 budget on time.

"Mr. Speaker, there is a time and season to tear and a time to mend; there is a time for war, a time for peace, a time to scatter and a time to gather. Mr. Speaker, this is the time to gather, this is the time to mend and also a time for peace," the Finance Minister pleaded.

Speaker of Parliament Alban Bagbin, on his part, charged Members of Parliament (MPs) to take into consideration the sentiments of the public in their deliberations, arguing this year's budget is a very critical one.

"It is our duty to strive to improve the welfare of our people, even though we see this as the usual business of Parliament. This time around is more critical than

before; this budget is a critical budget and I want us to have time because leadership has discussed it with me and we have enough time to deliberate on the budget," he added.

On Wednesday, November 15, 2023, Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta presented the 2024 budget and economic policy of the government before Parliament, as mandated by Article 179 of the 1992 Constitution and

Section 21 of the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921). Dubbed the Nkunim budget, which translates to victory in Twi, it aimed to consolidate Ghana's fiscal space and establish the groundwork for higher and more inclusive growth.

The budget also outlined projections, including a GDP growth target of 7.5 percent and a fiscal deficit of 5.5 percent for the year 2024.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Ken Ofori-Atta, Finance Minister

International

Abbas urges Biden to stop 'Israeli ongoing genocide' in Gaza

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas urged US President Joe Biden on Saturday to "immediately intervene to stop the ongoing Israeli genocide of the Palestinian people," according to the official Palestinian news agency, WAFA.

Abbas also urged Biden "to press for the entry of badly needed humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip," during a televised speech.

"President Biden, I call on you, with all your official and humane qualities, to stop this humanitarian catastrophe, this genocide against our innocent people. History will not absolve anyone of these crimes," he said.

Abbas stressed that "the Palestinian people deserve to live in their

homeland with freedom and dignity."

Israel has killed more than 12,300 Palestinians in its air and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip since an Oct. 7 surprise offensive by the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas. The official Israeli death toll, meanwhile, stands at about 1,200. Thousands of buildings, including hospitals, mosques and churches, have been damaged or destroyed in Israel's relentless strikes on the besieged enclave.

An Israeli blockade has also cut Gaza off from fuel, electricity and water supplies and reduced aid deliveries to a trickle.

Israel has rejected growing calls for a cease-fire until the release of hostages held by Hamas.

Source: AA.com



Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian President

Tanzanian student taken hostage by Hamas confirmed dead

The Tanzanian government has confirmed the death of a student taken hostage in the Hamas attack on Israel.

Clemence Felix Mtenga, 22, was one of two Tanzanians taken by the group on October 7. It is unclear how he died.

The country's foreign ministry said it was in touch with Israel over the other Tanzanian hostage, Joshua Mollel.

More than 230 hostages were taken in the assault by Hamas, and at least 1,200 people killed.

Israel says the hostages, - which were taken from Israel to the Gaza Strip - come from 25 countries, including one South African who is yet to be identified.

Approximately 260 Tanzanians study agriculture in Israel, and both Mr Mtenga and Mr Mollel had been in the country as part of an agricultural internship programme, Israel's foreign ministry said on X.

The pair had only landed in Israel in

September and were due to study there for 11 months.

Mr Mtenga had been living on Kibbutz Nir Oz and working at a dairy farm in the afternoons, a friend and fellow student told the BBC.

When news of his kidnapping broke last month, his sister said his whole family was worried about him but remained hopeful he would be rescued.

She said: "He should be courageous where he is, know that we love him and that we pray for him day and night, hoping that he will be back soon."

Tanzania's foreign ministry said Mr Mtenga's family had been informed and that officials were liaising with the Israeli government to send his body home.

Mr Mollel's situation is currently unclear.

Before it was confirmed that he had been taken hostage, his father told the BBC that he could not eat or

sleep because he was desperate to know what had happened to him.

The last words he said to his son before he disappeared were: "Be on your best behaviour because you're somewhere new, and make the most of the internship you're there to do."

A total of four hostages have been

released so far, with another being freed by Israeli forces.

Hamas - considered a terrorist organisation by the UK, the US and some other countries - says it has hidden the hostages in "safe places and tunnels" within Gaza.

Source: BBC.com



Mr Mtenga

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