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General News

SP Kissi Agyebeng must be sacked! - Martin Amidu 'demands'

Former Special Prosecutor, Martin Amidu, has called for the impeachment of the current Special Prosecutor, Kissi Agyebeng, following the latter's recent press conference on November 29, 2023.

Mr Amidu, in a 15-page statement cited by The Independent Ghana, accuses Agyebeng of crossing constitutional boundaries and defying Ghana's 1992 Constitution.

The statement, titled "Kissi Agyebeng, the Special Prosecutor, Has Crossed the Redline by Scandalizing the Administration of Justice and Must Be Impeached: By Martin A. B. Amidu," points out that Agyebeng's press conference aimed to incite the media and the public against the judicial branch, undermining the foundation of the constitution.

Mr Amidu asserts, "The press conference called by the Special Prosecutor... crossed the red line of freedom of speech and expression to subvert the letter and spirit of the foundation of the 1992 Constitution." He further accuses Agyebeng of abusing and scandalizing the court, violating the constitution, and failing in the

duty to protect the independence, dignity, and effectiveness of the courts.

Mr Amidu argues that Agyebeng, as a public officer, violated Article 127 of the 1992 Constitution, which guarantees the independence of the judiciary. He highlights that Agyebeng's conduct is inconsistent with the constitutional duty to protect the judiciary.

The statement contends that Agyebeng intentionally brought undue pressure on judges, violating the constitution and tarnishing the judiciary's reputation. Amidu compares Agyebeng's actions to what would warrant disciplinary proceedings for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

Mr Amidu concludes by urging patriotic citizens to invoke Section 15(3) of Act 959 for Agyebeng's removal, stating, "There is no way Ghana is going to survive should Kissi Agyebeng succeed in using public funds and resources to incite the public to bring the image and integrity of the judiciary down."

In response to Agyebeng's concerns about the courts' actions impacting Ghana's fight against corruption,

Amidu dismisses them as an attempt to instigate the public and media against the judiciary. He labels Agyebeng's appointment by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo as one of the president's worst appointments.

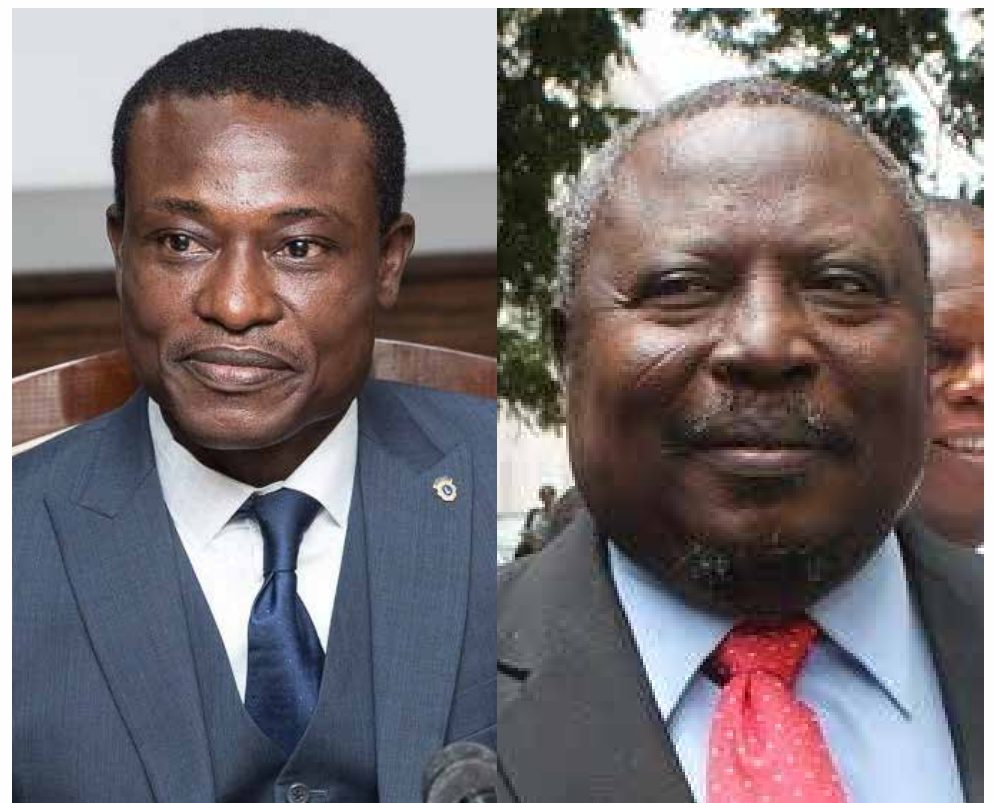
Kissi Agyebeng's press conference on November 29, 2023, addressed ongoing investigations, challenges faced by the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP), and setbacks in

court.

Mr Agyebeng emphasized the court's role in interpreting laws, criticized its interference with OSP investigations, and highlighted efforts to enhance the office's capacity and efficiency.

He called for public support and emphasized the OSP's commitment to combating corruption.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Kissi Agyebeng (L) and Martin Amidu (R)

MPs abroad ordered to fly back for 2024 budget approval

The government has issued a directive for all Members of Parliament (MPs) who are part of the majority caucus and currently abroad to cut short their trips and return promptly.

This urgent call is to ensure their participation in the approval process of the 2024 budget and Economic Policy, scheduled to conclude on December 31, 2023.

This directive, conveyed by Majority Leader Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, aims to secure the full presence of majority caucus MPs during a crucial phase in approving

the government's economic policy.

The urgency behind this call stems from a recent incident during the 2024 budget approval process on November 29, 2023. During this session, Majority MPs walked out after a disagreement over the Speaker's declaration of a voice vote in favour of the budget.

Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta, who presented the budget on November 15, 2023, claimed the budget had been passed based on the Speaker's declaration.

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File photo

General News

MPs abroad ordered to fly back for 2024 budget approval

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However, this triggered a call for a head count by Minority MPs, leading to frustration among the Majority, who subsequently left the chamber.

In response, Speaker Alban Bagbin clarified that the Budget Statement and the Economic Policy for the year ending December 31, 2024, are still under consideration by the House.

He emphasized that the final decision on the budget statement is scheduled for Thursday, December 7, 2023, and directed the Business Committee to reschedule the issue for the specified date.

This clarification followed concerns raised by Minority Leader Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson about public perception, fuelled by Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta, that the budget statement had already

been approved.

Votes and proceedings from Wednesday contradicted this, indicating that the budget had not yet received approval from the Parliament of Ghana.

Speaker Bagbin stressed the gravity of the situation, highlighting the importance of setting the record straight on the status of the budget statement.

He confirmed that the budget is still under consideration by the House, and the final decision will be made in the upcoming week. The Speaker urged the accurate conveyance of information to the public.

Source: The Independent Ghana
/Phoebe Martekie Doku

UGMC seeks GHC50m to establish Clinical Trial Unit

The University of Ghana Medical Centre (UGMC) says it needs GHS50m to establish a state-of-the-art Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) to research into new medical treatments and devices.

The centre has now raised a little over GHS1million Ghana Cedis, in its quest to transform a large empty space at the hospital's clinical centre into an operational CTU.

Dr Kwame Anim-Boamah, Medical Director, UGMC, said at a conference in Accra on that Ghana needs a state-of-the-art in-patient CTU where trials would be performed safely to international standards.

A modern CTU, he said, would ensure that medications taken by Ghanaians for chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer are suitable for the population.

He said many medications being used in Africa had the trials done in Europe or America where the genetic makeup of the trial participants was different.

"For instance, it is now clear that certain medications for hypertension do not work as well in black patients, if the trials for these medicines were done here, this situation could have been prevented," he said.

He said many pharmaceutical companies wanted to do trials in Africa but the facilities and personnel to do the trials were not available, "a reason why UGMC

is positioning itself as the hub for international clinical trials in Africa."

Dr Anim-Boamah said there were so many herbal products that could potentially cure many ailments, but the scientific trials had not been done.

He noted that a proper CTU in Ghana could do trials to international standards and help validate some of the herbal treatments.

"Many cancer treatments are now personalized to the patient's genetics, these treatments cannot come to Ghana to help our patients

unless we are able to do the trials right here in Ghana, and at the moment, Ghana and many African countries are missing out on these treatments," he said.

Dr Nana Adwoa Konadu, Deputy Director, Medical and Scientific Research Centre, UGMC, said a hospital based CTU at UGMC would enable the centre to train the next generation of Ghanaian clinical trialists.

She said the COVID-19 pandemic had taught Africa the need to train and perform its own trials, stating that the hesitancy in taking up the COVID-19 vaccine was partly due

to the fact that trials were not done in Ghana.

"The performance of clinical trials requires specific training and skills often not taught during the training of health personnel, unfortunately, Ghana has very few doctors and other health personnel who are trained to perform clinical trials and most of them are retired or near retirement," she said.

Dr Konadu said there was an urgent need to train more personnel, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and trial coordinators for the country.

Source: GNA



University of Ghana Medical Centre (UGMC)

General News

Ghana could be the new Jerusalem, earning \$1.8 billion because of national cathedral – Ofori-Atta

Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta has called for a strategic reassessment of the current discussions on the construction of the National Cathedral, emphasising its potential as a significant driver of economic growth.

During the Ghana Tourism Investment Summit 2023, Ofori-Atta pointed out the cathedral's role as a robust infrastructure that could greatly enhance the tourism sector.

He envisioned the cathedral becoming a pilgrimage destination for millions of Christians across Africa, potentially attracting visitors with an average spending of \$3,000 each, translating into substantial economic benefits for the country.

“As we look at something like the Cathedral that has economic benefits beyond what we see... In Africa, we have some 600 million people who are Christians so imagine Ghana as the new Jerusalem and with these 600 million people floating through with \$3,000 to spend, it is a very different reality.”

Despite the ongoing debates and controversies surrounding the cathedral project, Ofori-Atta urged

a more constructive approach, suggesting that the government should carefully consider the cathedral's potential to contribute to Ghana's economic development.

“Even as we contend with it and fight about it, let's think of this triangle and find a reason why we should also add that as part of the infrastructure base as we build a society with a strong, resilient, and robust future,” he emphasised.

The Finance Minister also reiterated the government's commitment to transforming the tourism and arts industry, recognising its immense economic potential for driving growth and generating employment opportunities.

He acknowledged the multiplying impact of the tourism sector, emphasising its ability to positively influence other industries and enhance overall economic well-being.

The National Cathedral

Conceived as a physical embodiment of unity, harmony and spirituality, the Ghana National Cathedral will be the nation's ceremonial landmark, Ghana's mother Church, where all denominations are welcomed to gather, worship and celebrate in spiritual accord.

The National Cathedral will serve as a venue for formal state occasions of a religious nature such as Presidential Inaugural Services, State Funerals, and National Thanksgiving Services, amongst others.

The cathedral will include; a 5,000 permanent seat auditorium, which expands to 15,000 seats, a Baptistry Chapel, a Conference Centre, a Grand Ballroom and Restaurant, Music and Choir Areas, a National Crypt and Chapels.

Not all Ghanaians are enthused

about the construction of the cathedral amidst an ailing economy. They want the government to focus such resources on more productive sectors of the economy, which would provide more jobs to address the unemployment rate in the country.

So far, millions of dollars have been spent on the construction of the cathedral, which has currently stalled due to lack of funds.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



Ken Ofori-Atta, Finance Minister

Judge found having amorous relationship with petitioner sacked

Chief Justice Gertrude Sackey Torkornoo has officially terminated the services of Jasikan Circuit Court Judge, Alfred Kwabena Asiedu.

The termination, conveyed through a letter dated November 13, 2023, was based on a disciplinary committee report substantiating allegations of abuse of power, malicious prosecution, and impropriety against Judge Asiedu.

The letter, directed to the judge, referred to a petition dated January

16, 2023, from Singari Diana Sadia, outlining accusations of abuse of power, sexual exploitation, malicious prosecution, and impropriety.

“I write with reference to the petition of abuse of power, sexual exploitation, malicious prosecution, and impropriety against you, received from one Singari Diana Sadia, dated 16th January 2023.

“In line with the Disciplinary - continued on page 5



Chief Justice Gertrude Sackey Torkornoo

General News

Judge found having amorous relationship with petitioner sacked

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Procedures of the Service, you were invited to appear before the Disciplinary Committee of the Judicial Council, which had been mandated to investigate the allegations against you.

“The Disciplinary Committee, after investigating the above-mentioned matter, found that you misconducted yourself as a Judge, as there was ample evidence that you were involved in an improper relationship with the Petitioner, who had a Divorce case pending before you. The Disciplinary Committee also established the allegation of abuse of power and malicious prosecution against you as you were found to have caused the arrest and prosecution of the

Petitioner without justification. The Disciplinary Committee consequently recommended that you should be dismissed,” the letter stated.

Following the allegations, Judge Asiedu was summoned to appear before the Disciplinary Committee of the Judicial Council, tasked with investigating the claims.

The committee’s inquiry revealed that Judge Asiedu had conducted himself improperly by engaging in a questionable relationship with the petitioner, who had an ongoing divorce case before him.

The committee further confirmed allegations of abuse of power

and malicious prosecution, as the judge was found responsible for the unwarranted arrest and prosecution of the petitioner.

Consequently, in a unanimous decision during a meeting on October 25, 2023, the Judicial Council concurred that Judge Asiedu’s conduct constituted misbehavior, leading to his dismissal in accordance with Article 151 (1) of the 1992 Constitution.

The termination letter directed Judge Asiedu to promptly surrender all official properties, including the official vehicle, dockets, and record books, to the Judicial Secretary.

Additionally, the Director of Human Resource has been instructed to

promptly remove the judge’s name from the payroll of the Service.

“You are, therefore, removed from Office as a Circuit Court Judge, with immediate effect. You are directed to hand over all official properties in your possession, including your official vehicle, dockets, and Record Books to the Judicial Secretary forthwith.

“By a copy of this letter, the Director of Human Resource is requested to ensure that your name is deleted from the payroll of the Service with immediate effect,” the Chief Justice ordered.

Source: The Independent Ghana /Phoebe Martekie Doku

Forestry Commission signs \$50m Emission Reduction Payment Agreement under LEAF Coalition

The Forestry Commission has entered into an Emission Reductions Payment Agreement (ERPA) with Emergent Forest Finance Accelerator Incorporated (Emergent), a US-based non-profit organization.

Emergent serves as the convenor and coordinator of the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance (LEAF) Coalition.

This agreement entails Ghana receiving payments of up to US\$50,000,000 for emission reductions amounting to five million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. The unit price for each tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent is set at US\$10.

Signed on December 1, 2023, during the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of Parties (COP28) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), this agreement positions Ghana as the first country globally to sign an ERPA under the LEAF Coalition.

The initiative aims to supply high-integrity jurisdictional REDD+ emission reductions and removals credits. Costa Rica also signed a similar agreement with Emergent,

valued at Fourteen Million US Dollars (US\$14,000,000.00), making these two countries the only ones to achieve this significant milestone.

Launched in April 2021 by the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Norway, along with leading global companies, the LEAF Coalition is a voluntary global initiative designed to unite companies and governments in providing finance for tropical and subtropical forest conservation. The aim is to align efforts with the scale of the climate change challenge.

The Coalition strives to elevate global climate ambition and contribute to halting tropical and subtropical deforestation and forest degradation by 2030. It seeks to achieve this by ensuring that tropical and subtropical forest jurisdictions have access to large-scale, predictable performance-based finance, enabling them to invest in reduced deforestation and sustainable rural development.

After a Call for Proposals, in which 30 countries participated, Ghana, Nepal, and Ecuador were selected as the first countries to sign a Letter of Intent with the

Coalition, marking initial steps toward signing a binding Emission Reductions Payment Agreement (ERPA) to access funds from the Coalition.

Ghana, becoming the first country globally to sign a binding ERPA, exemplifies the nation’s focused efforts at revamping its forest landscape restoration with sustainability protocols. The ERPA, valued at up to US\$50,000,000,

will support Ghana in extending climate action beyond its Carbon Fund area.

The Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Samuel Abu Jinapor, emphasized the critical importance of forest and nature-based solutions to climate change. He highlighted how the new agreement complements other ongoing initiatives in Ghana, such

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Lands Minister Samuel Abu Jinapor (L) and United Kingdom’s Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero, Hon, Graham Stuart (r)

General News

Forestry Commission signs \$50m Emission Reduction Payment Agreement under LEAF Coalition

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as the Green Ghana Project, Ghana Forest Plantation Strategy, and the Ghana REDD+ Strategy.

Mr Jinapor called on the global community to collaborate in scaling up forest and nature-based climate action, emphasizing the urgency to address climate change. He acknowledged the support received from the LEAF Coalition and expressed optimism about delivering effective forest solutions

to climate change.

The Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Emergent, Mr. Eron Bloomgarden, congratulated Ghana for its achievement and commended the commitment and efficiency of the Ghanaian team in reaching the agreement promptly.

The United Kingdom's Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero, Hon. Graham Stuart, underscored

the critical role of halting tropical deforestation in addressing climate change.

The Minister for Climate and Environment of Norway, Mr Andreas Bjelland Eriksen, expressed excitement about Ghana and Costa Rica signing ERPA under the LEAF Coalition. He urged governments and the private sector to increase public and private finance for forest countries,

encouraging them to partner with the LEAF Coalition to deliver high-quality forest carbon.

Forest and nature-based solutions to climate change have been prominent at successive COPs since 2021, with the potential to contribute up to a third of global climate solutions.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty

Oppong-Nkrumah criticises insufficient action against media attackers

Minister of Information, Kojo Oppong-Nkrumah, has voiced his concerns about the growing incidents of violence against journalists and called for more robust actions against those responsible.

He emphasised the importance of swift and decisive justice, urging judges to expedite severe penalties for attackers. Oppong Nkrumah underscored that justice should prevail, irrespective of the social status or political affiliations of the culprits.

"Freedom of expression is the cornerstone of every democratic society; it is a fundamental right that must be protected and upheld."

"We cannot, however, discuss freedom of expression without press freedom and recognising the important role journalists play in our society."

The Minister added, "It is our duty to create an environment where journalists can carry out their work without fear of violence or intimidation."

"We must condemn any form of violence against journalists and take concrete steps to provide them with the necessary protection and support."

The appeal was issued at the commencement of a training workshop for judges on Monday, December 4, 2023, in Accra.

The workshop aimed to underscore

the vital role of upholding freedom of expression and ensuring the well-being of journalists.

Emphasizing the commitment to fostering a secure environment for journalists, the Minister stated that the government, through the Ministry of Information, has implemented various programs to support the media sector.

Since 2019, these endeavours have led to the establishment of key interventions addressing the challenges confronting the media industry.

A notable initiative was the establishment of the Office of the Coordinated Mechanism on the Safety of Journalists (CMSJ) under the National Media Commission (NMC).

This office operates within a framework intended for use by all stakeholders to create a safe atmosphere for journalism practice, prevent violence against journalists, safeguard those at risk, and prosecute individuals responsible for acts of violence.

Through its Media Capacity Enhancement Programme (MCEP), the ministry is actively engaging in the training of 250 journalists on emerging issues in journalism.

This collaborative initiative seeks to strengthen the sector, which has encountered growing challenges in recent times.

Furthermore, the comprehensive implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Law involves the training and deployment of RTI

officers in nearly 600 government offices across the country.

The establishment of the RTI Commission has played a pivotal role in ensuring adherence to the RTI Act by public offices.

In addition, the Ministry facilitated an extensive consultation on a new Broadcasting Bill, crafted to enhance the regulatory capabilities of state institutions in overseeing the broadcasting sector effectively.

Collectively, these initiatives underscore the government's unwavering commitment to supporting and reinforcing the media landscape amidst evolving challenges.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



Kojo Oppong-Nkrumah, Minister of Information

General News

Govt releases GH¢20m to settle capitation grant arrears

Government has announced the disbursement of GH¢20 million to settle the capitation grants for public basic schools nationwide.

The capitation grant system was introduced to eliminate fees imposed on parents in public basic schools, aiming to enhance accessibility to education and support initiatives for improving school performance.

The release of these grants comes after a two-year period during which payments had fallen into arrears. This delay prompted concerns from the Minority in Parliament and various stakeholders in the education sector, who argued that the backlog was adversely affecting education at the basic level.

Addressing questions on the floor of Parliament, Education Minister Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum assured that

concerted efforts have been made to rectify the arrears, signalling a commitment to addressing the challenges associated with the delay in capitation grant payments.

“Mr. Speaker, capitation grant arrears of GH¢15 million were disbursed to schools in May 2023 and the remaining arrears of last year amounting to GH¢20 million have been released by the Ministry of Finance and are currently being processed for disbursement. In addition, GH¢4.2 million of this year’s capitation is also being processed for disbursement.”

About capitation grant

Capitation grants were implemented by the government in 2005 in order to allow disadvantaged and underserved children to attend public elementary schools fee-free. The government allocates a fixed amount per student per term

to cover operational costs and mitigate the financial burdens of parents.

However, challenges such as insufficient budget allocations, bureaucratic processes, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, and instances of corruption have hampered the timely and complete

disbursement of the grant, leading to arrears and debts. These delays have adversely affected schools, straining their ability to cover essential expenses such as utilities, maintenance, and teaching and learning materials, among others.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, Education Minister

We are not serious about fighting galamsey - Inusah Fuseini reacts to Aisha Huang’s jail term

Former Member of Parliament for Tamale-Central, Inusah Fuseini has contended that Ghana’s strategy in combating illegal mining reflects a lack of determination to eradicate the menace.

He specifically pointed to the lenient sentence given to a notorious figure in illegal mining, Aisha Huang, as evidence that the country is not fully committed to putting an end to the problem.

“I think the Aisha Huang case and the conviction and the sentence is another vivid demonstration of our lack of commitment in fighting this canker. The first arrest of Aisha Huang was under a legal regime that imposed or criminalised illegal mining and imposed a sentence that was higher than four and half years,” he said at “JoyNews National Dialogue of Illegal Mining” on December 4.

A former Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Mr. Fuseini, expressed his response to a recent Accra High Court verdict in which the ‘galamsey queen,’ a Chinese national known as En Huang (Aisha Huang), received a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence and a GH¢48,000 fine.

En Huang faced charges related to engaging in mining without a license, facilitating others in illegal mining operations, employing foreigners unlawfully, and entering Ghana despite being prohibited from re-entry.

The ex-minister emphasized that during his tenure at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, it was recognized that the existing sentencing structure was insufficient and lacked the necessary deterrence.

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Inusah Abdulai Bistav Fuseini, Ghanaian lawyer and politician

General News

We are not serious about fighting galamsey - Inusah Fuseini reacts to Aisha Huang's jail term

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As a result, amendments were made to address this issue. Consequently, Mr. Fuseini argued that the court's decision to apply the old mining regime was concerning and did not send a strong signal, given the efforts made to strengthen the legal framework during his time in office.

"We seemed to be suggesting that

this canker can be tolerated," he added.

Furthermore, he asserted that environmental crimes, on a global scale, are tantamount to crimes against humanity and should not be justified under the guise of mineral exploitation. To support his argument, he shared a video depicting a woman who

experienced a stillbirth, attributing it to the adverse effects of residing in a community affected by illegal mining.

Mr. Fuseini contended that this issue goes beyond mere economic considerations; it poses a direct threat to both our existence and the country's economy. He emphasized that the ramifications of illegal mining are immeasurable

and expose the nation to dangers that cannot be easily quantified.

The former legislator insisted that a more concerted and resolute effort is required to confront this pervasive problem, echoing the determination demonstrated by other nations facing similar challenges.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku

Be ready to pay tax for CO2 emissions - Bright Simons warns GHACEM, other industries

Vice President of IMANI-Africa, Bright Simons, has responded to the government's proposed taxes for 2024, specifically addressing the introduction of an environmental tax targeting emissions.

Manufacturers, according to Simons, will be hit with an \$8 tax for each tonne of CO2 emitted during their processes. In a critical tone, Simons questioned the Association of Ghana Industries' apparent support for the government's proposal for the Import Restrictions Bill.

Simons commented on X: "Remember AGI was recently praising the government of Ghana for the import restrictions list? Okay, their time has come. Govt is slapping ~\$8 tax for every tonne of CO2 emitted by manufacturers. Cement, fuel, steel, aluminum, and all high-energy industries should get ready to be smacked!"

Furthermore, Simons revealed that the Ghana Revenue Authority would be responsible for measuring the CO2 levels and taxing companies accordingly. He highlighted the potential impact on major manufacturers like GHACEM, stating that they could be paying up to \$24 million in taxes annually when the new measures take effect.

"If GHACEM, Ghana's largest cement corp, with ~50% share, continues hitting its 3 million metric tonnes a year target, it will face new taxes of \$24 million a year if Ghana strictly enforces the new carbon taxes it

is introducing. If the Kumasi plant comes on stream, carbon taxes will total \$36 million. AGI dey?"

In a related development, Minority Leader and Member of Parliament for Ajumako-Enyan-Esiam, Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, disclosed a list of purported new taxes that the government plans to introduce in

the upcoming year.

Among these proposed taxes, Dr. Ato Forson highlighted a 20% levy on the local spirit 'akpeteshie' and a GH¢100 annual tax on all petrol and diesel cars. This tax, applicable to various vehicle types, aims to encourage the use of cleaner and more eco-friendly energy

sources, such as electric vehicles. Additionally, the government is seeking to introduce a GH¢100 per tonne carbon dioxide emission tax on all companies in the country.

Source: Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo / The Independent Ghana



Bright Simons, Vice President of IMANI-Africa

General News

Sunon Asogli makes U-turn on plant shutdown for a week after govt intervention

Sunon Asogli Power (Ghana) Limited, an independent power producer, has extended the suspension of its plant shutdown for an additional week.

The company initially declared an indefinite closure of its 560 Megawatts power plant on Monday evening. This decision was attributed to the outstanding debt owed to the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG).

“This difficult decision became necessary due to avoidable delays in payment from the GOG/ Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) for power supplied, as well as, the unproductive engagements to find an amicable solution,” portions of the statement said.

The company said this was its last resort as “the accumulating bills have significantly impacted our operational capacities, making it unsustainable to continue

without addressing these financial challenges.”

In a subsequent statement released on the evening of Monday, December 4, the company announced the suspension of the shutdown, citing assurance from the Minister of Finance as the reason for the decision.

The statement said, “In view of the intervention and assurance from the Hon. Minister for Finance and Hon. Minister of State, we have resolved to suspend the plant shut down for one (1) week.”

Without giving further details about the exact assurances from the Minister of Finance, it noted in the statement that, “Kindly confirm our understanding that we shall be paid an interim sum of \$60 million in two tranches. The first tranche \$30 million to be paid this week, and the second tranche in the week of 11th December 2023.”

In recent times, Ghanaians have faced intermittent power cuts, despite reassurances from power sector authorities that they are managing the situation and that the country will not return to the severe power cuts era known as ‘dumsor.’ Concurrently, around the time of the Asogli Power Plant’s 560 Megawatts shutdown, certain areas of the country were disconnected from the national grid, indicating the immediate impact of this decision.

Independent power producers have been grappling with the government’s outstanding debts and their consequential effects on their operations. These producers have intermittently threatened to close their plants if efforts are not made to settle the accumulating debts.

On December 1, the Independent Power Generators, Ghana, formerly the Ghana Chamber of

Independent Power Producers, cautioned the government against restructuring energy debts amounting to approximately \$2.3 billion. The power generators argued that restructuring is practically impossible, given their significant indebtedness to suppliers and banks.

During a public forum organized by Think Progress Ghana, Elikplim Apetorgbor, the Chief Executive of the Chamber of Independent Power Generators, Ghana, stated that association members cannot accept any debt reduction since their suppliers and bankers are pressuring them to settle substantial debts and loans. As of November 30, 2023, the government’s outstanding debt to the IPPs stood at about \$2.35 billion.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Sunon Asogli Power (Ghana)

General News

This time, you have gone overboard - Amidu to SP over presser 'attacking' Judiciary

Former Special Prosecutor Martin Amidu has accused Special Prosecutor Kissi Agyebeng of deliberately scandalising and inciting the media against the judiciary service.

In a comprehensive 15-page document, Mr Amidu claimed that Agyebeng had crossed a red line and violated the 1992 Constitution.

This accusation stems from Agyebeng's press conference on November 29, 2023, during which he expressed concerns about what he perceived as an increasing trend of dismissive rulings in corruption cases he was handling.

According to Amidu, this action by Agyebeng constituted a defiance of constitutional principles.

"The press conference was called by the Special Prosecutor, Kissi Agyebeng, a public officer and member of the executive branch of government, on November 29, 2023, with malicious intent to incite the media and the public against the judicial branch of government and bring the administration of justice into disrepute before ordinary members of Ghanaian and world society crossed the red line of freedom of speech and expression to subvert the letter and spirit of the foundation of the 1992 Constitution," the statement mentioned.

He further went on to highlight that the powers of the OSP are just "delegated investigatory and prosecutorial powers" given by the Attorney-General hence the need for the OSP to stay within its jurisdiction.

"The Special Prosecutor and the OSP exercise just an infinitesimally small fraction of the delegated investigatory and prosecutorial powers of the Attorney-General dealing only with corruption and

corruption-related offences and cannot do or be allowed to do what the delegating authority cannot do," he stated.

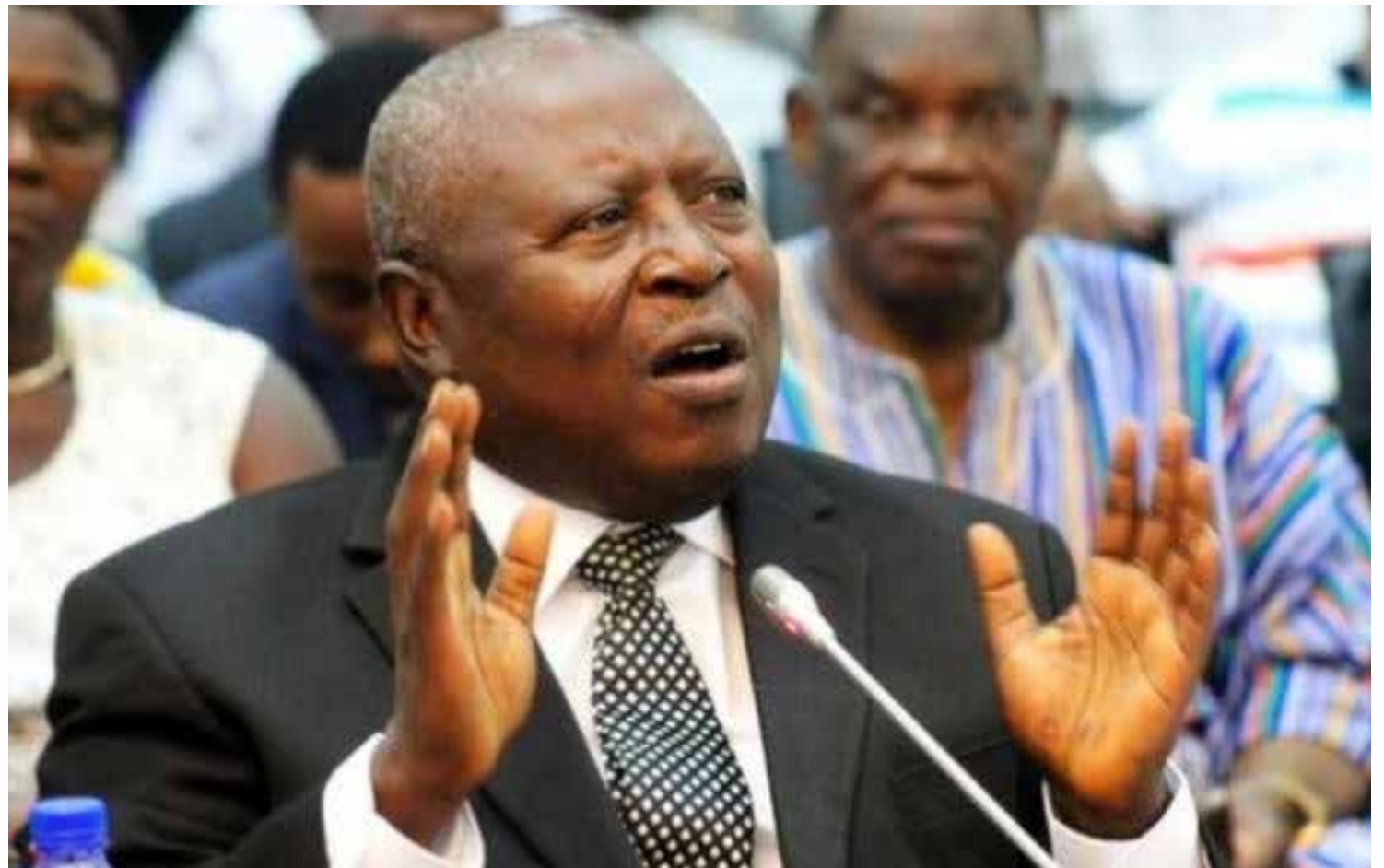
Among some of his concerns, Kissi Agyebeng warned that the action of the courts could spell dire consequences for Ghana's fight against corruption.

Meanwhile, addressing challenges faced by the office in the fight against corruption, Agyebeng cited legal, logistical, and financial

constraints affecting operational effectiveness.

Critically, the OSP called out the judiciary for undermining its authority, citing injunctions and interlocutory reliefs granted without due consideration of merit and public interest. Notably, former Minister's Cecilia Abena Dapaah and Charles Bissie sought legal measures against the OSP.

Source: Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo | The Independent Ghana



Martin Amidu, Former Special Prosecutor

MyNHIS app achieves over 50,000 downloads

Northern Regional Office of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) has announced that the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) mobile application has surpassed 50,000 downloads within its inaugural year.

Claims Processing Centre Director of the Northern Regional NHIA, Mr. Isaac Gideon Akonde, shared this milestone, noting that reaching such a significant number in the

first year signifies substantial public interest in the application and the services provided by the scheme.

He made this known following a float organised by the NHIS as part of its 20th-anniversary celebration, focusing on educating Tamale residents about the processes involved in downloading and utilising the "MYNHIS" application, available on Google and Apple Play Stores.

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My NHIS App Icon

General News

MyNHIS app achieves over 50,000 downloads

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Mr. Akonde highlighted that the application was introduced to enhance accessibility to NHIS services for subscribers, offering essential information about the scheme at their fingertips.

The application details the covered services and medications, serving

as a preventive measure against the potential exploitation of clients at healthcare facilities.

“People are disadvantaged at hospitals because they do not know what they are entitled to; however, this app has drug and service lists to prevent such cases,” he said.

He further mentioned that the application includes a comprehensive list of healthcare centres with proximity indicators, enabling users to conveniently choose options based on their proximity. Additionally, it features a module for communication with NHIA staff.

Mr. Akonde expressed optimism that the number of downloads would continue to rise, given the extensive public awareness efforts conducted to promote the application.

Source: The Independent Ghana

AG to appeal Aisha Huang’s sentence for at least 15-year-jail term

Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Godfred Yeboah Dame, has announced his intention to challenge the trial court’s decision regarding the sentencing of illegal miner Aisha Huang under the Minerals and Mining (Amendment) Act, 2015 (Act 900).

Mr Dame plans to appeal the judgment at the Court of Appeal, aiming to ensure that the updated sentencing provisions introduced by the Minerals and Mining (Amendment) Act, 2019 (Act 995), are applied to Aisha Huang.

Aisha Huang was sentenced to four and a half years in prison on December 4, 2023, for mining without a licence, along with a GH¢48,000 fine. The judge, considering both prosecution and defence arguments, found Aisha Huang guilty.

Notably, the accused had previously been acquitted of similar charges, but the judge could only impose a four-year sentence due to the older legal regime, which had a maximum penalty of five years.

The new Act introduces a significantly higher jail term of over 20 years for such offences.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Attorney General acknowledged the efficiency of the justice delivery system in Aisha Huang’s trial.

“Whilst applauding the efficiency of the justice delivery system witnessed in the trial of Aisha Huang, the Attorney General will

however test the soundness of the decision of the trial court to punish the accused person under Act 900, by filing an appeal at the Court of Appeal, against the sentence to ensure that the new sentencing regime imposed by Act 995 is applied to the accused person.”

However, he expressed the intention to test the trial court’s decision by filing an appeal at the Court of Appeal.

The objective is to ensure

that the updated sentencing regime stipulated by Act 995 is appropriately applied to Aisha Huang.

Additionally, Mr. Dame appealed to the public, urging caution in commenting on the judgment.

He highlighted concerns about misleading comments and emphasized the need to avoid statements that could undermine the efficient administration of justice and the ongoing fight

against illegal mining (galamsey).

“The Attorney-General hereby, respectfully, entreats members of the public, including lawyers, to be mindful of the facts stated above and desist from comments which not only jeopardise the sound and efficient administration of justice but also undermine the fight against illegal mining (galamsey),” Mr Dame said.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Aisha Huang

Business

High reliance on food imports making Ghana susceptible to external shocks - ISSER

The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) has expressed apprehension regarding Ghana's ongoing reliance on food imports, asserting that the nation is highly susceptible to external shocks.

In its evaluation of the Impact of the 2024 Budget on the Private Sector, ISSER emphasized the need for Ghana to boost the production of grains and meat products while minimizing imports to ensure stability in the exchange rate and

to keep inflation low.

Since 2022, food has been the primary driver of inflation, averaging a 60% rate. Currently, Ghana imports 22.8% of cereals and grain products, 12.7% of animal and vegetable products, 9.5% of meat, and 8.5% of fish.

ISSER recommends that Ghana fosters intra-African trade, particularly with countries like Nigeria, as currently, there is minimal trade activity between them.

"We should promote intra-African

trade – very little trade between Ghana and Nigeria, East Africa etc. Why is it cheaper to import from Brazil than from Nigeria or other African countries?"

Regarding trade relations with Africa, South Africa stands out as Ghana's primary importer, representing 20.5% of total imports, while South Africa is also the leading exporter, contributing 55.4% to Ghana's total exports. Meanwhile, the Agriculture sector is projected to decelerate in 2024,

primarily due to reduced growth in the crops, livestock, and fishing sub-sectors.

Nevertheless, the growth is anticipated to rise to 4.5% during the medium-term (2024-2027), with the observation that the "2024 projections only slightly exceed those of 2023."

With medium-term growth of 4%, the growth rate for 2023 was predicted to be 2.6%.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



File photo

Business

Ghana exploits local feed resources to increase fish production

Ghana and Norway are partnering to increase the development of on-farm fish feed using locally available feed ingredient resources.

Ghana's new Aquaculture Development Plan envisions increasing the country's fish farming output from 89,376 tonnes to 211,697 tonnes by the end of 2028, a 136 per cent increase.

Mrs. Mavis Hawa Koomson, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, stated at an awards ceremony to end the 39th National Farmers' Day Celebration in Tarkwa, Western Region, that the vision was to ensure the availability of high-quality feed to all fish farmers at an affordable cost.

She said the country abounds in viable sources of fish feed ingredients; therefore, the partnership with Norway would make a significant difference in national aquaculture output.

Mrs. Koomson, speaking at an awards' ceremony to climax the commemoration of the 39th National Farmers' Day Celebration, at Tarkwa, Western Region, said the vision was to ensure the availability of high-quality feed to all fish farmers at affordable cost.

The steps being taken by the authorities are anticipated to go a long way to reduce the cost of producing cultured fish, thus enhancing the profit margin for fish farmers.

While locally produced and imported feeds are widely available on the market, most small pond farmers find them expensive and avoid the problem by using self-formulated feeds.

The Minister said the ministerial directive on trawl gear specifications was yielding positive results.

This has reduced the catching of juvenile and small pelagic fish by industrial trawlers and the transshipment of such species at sea between trawlers and canoes.

Ms. Koomson said the government made aquaculture a top priority to sustain per capita fish consumption.

She said the goal was to address the deficit in the country's fish

requirements to ensure the availability of fish for current and future generations.

According to marine development experts, Ghana's fish populations are in serious decline, and local demand for fish has outstripped supply due to a combination of factors, including overfishing.

To address fleet overcapacity and reduce fishing pressure on fisheries resources, the government instituted a three-year moratorium on new canoe entrants.

This would be reviewed annually during the period.

Ms. Koomson said the country was developing innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, citing the construction of the National Aquaculture Centre and Commercial Farms to provide aquaculture skill training.

The scope of training encompasses production, farm management,

fish health, feed formulation, and processing for the youth to take up aquaculture as a viable enterprise.

Also, the Ministry has introduced tarpaulin tanks for fish farming and re-circulatory aquaculture system.

The technology has low water usage, energy efficient and easy to harvest fish.

Vice-President Alhaji Dr. Bawumia gave an address at the awards ceremony on behalf of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, outlined the government's programmes and policies aimed at ensuring food security in the country.

Charity Akortia, a 57-year-old teacher from Agona West in the Central Region was named the 2023 National Best Farmer. She was given a one million Ghana Cedis cash prize.

Other awardees are Kwesi Mensah, National Best Fisher, Grace Tsali, National Best Fish Processor, Godfred Dadson, National Best Aquaculture

Farmer, John Osabutey, National Best Inland Fisher, Charlotte Ndah, National Best Fisheries Extension Officer, and Adwoa Sintim, National Best Cocoa Farmer.

Edith Weatland emerged as the National Best Female Farmer, Augustine Asubonteng, National Best Livestock Farmer, Kwame Boafo, National Best Coffee Farmer, and George Opoku, National Best Promising Young Cocoa Farmer.

A total of 16 farmers were awarded at the programme, which was held on the theme, "Delivering Smart Solutions for Food Security and Resilience".

The award winners were honoured with cash prizes, plaques, tractors, sprayers, and trucks.

The National Farmers' Day was instituted by the Government in 1985 in recognition of the vital role farmers and fishermen play in the Ghanaian economy.

Source: GNA



Mrs. Mavis Hawa Koomson, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development

International

Nigeria airstrike ‘mistakenly’ kills worshippers at religious festival

At least 85 civilians were killed in Kaduna state, north-west Nigeria, in an airstrike during a Muslim religious celebration on Sunday, the local emergency management authority said.

The civilians were killed in a “bombing mishap”, President Bola Tinubu said without giving a death toll.

State Governor Uba Sani had earlier said they were “mistakenly killed” by a military drone “targeting terrorists and bandits”.

Dozens were also wounded.

The defence ministry termed the operation a “needless tragedy” adding that a routine mission against militants “inadvertently affected members of the community”.

Nigeria’s military has for years been battling armed criminals and

militants who has been operating in parts of northern Nigeria, raiding villages and kidnapping residents for ransom.

Defence spokesman Maj Gen Edward Buba said Sunday’s airstrike was based on credible intelligence about the presence of “terrorists” in the area.

President Tinubu has asked for a “thorough and full-fledged investigation into the incident and calls for calm while the authorities look diligently into the mishap” a statement from his office said. The governor has also called for an investigation.

The airstrike happened when villagers from Tundun Biri gathered for a religious festival on Sunday evening.

“The Northwest Zonal Office has received details from the local authorities that 85 dead bodies have so far been buried while

search is still ongoing,” a statement from the National Emergency Management Agency in the federal capital, Abuja, said.

“It is worthy of note that the casualties ranged from children, women and the elderly.” The death toll has not been confirmed and estimates vary from 30 to more than 85.

One man, who witnessed what happened, told the BBC’s Hausa service, that there were two attacks.

“The aircraft dropped a bomb at the venue, it destroyed and killed our people including women and children,” he said.

“The second bomb was dropped on some of us who went to bring dead bodies of the victims of the first blast. We lost about 34 people in my family and we have 66 injured people in the hospital.”

A woman who saw the aftermath of the bombing told the BBC that bodies were strewn all over the place.

“Some women died holding their babies, some of the babies survived while others died along with their mothers,” she said.

The Nigerian military has in the past been accused of causing civilian casualties while battling militia gangs, known locally as bandits, in the north-west of the country. The government has labelled the gangs “terrorists”.

In 2021, at least 20 fishermen were killed accidentally in a Nigerian fighter jet strike on a jihadist camp in north-east Nigeria.

Over 300 people have been killed since 2017 in accidental strikes by the Nigerian forces, a report by SB Morgen, a research firm, said.

Source: BBC



File photo

International

Israeli forces storm Gaza's Khan Younis, hospitals overrun

Israeli forces launched their storm of the main city in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday, where hospitals were overrun with scores of Palestinian wounded and dead.

In what appeared to be the biggest ground assault since a truce collapsed last week, residents said Israeli tanks had entered the eastern parts of Khan Younis for the first time, crossing from the Israeli border fence and advancing west.

Some took up positions inside the town of Bani Suhaila on Khan Younis' eastern outskirts, while others continued further and were stationed on the edge of a Qatari-funded housing development called Hamad City, residents said.

The Israelis, who seized the northern half of Gaza last month before pausing for the week-long truce, say they are now extending their ground campaign to the rest of the enclave to fulfill their objective of annihilating its Hamas rulers.

"We're moving ahead with the second stage now. A second stage that is going to be difficult militarily," government spokesperson Eylon Levy told reporters in a briefing.

Israel was open to "constructive feedback" on reducing harm to civilians as long as the advice is consistent with its aim of destroying Hamas, he said.

At Khan Younis' main Nasser hospital, the wounded arrived by ambulance, car, flatbed truck and donkey cart after what survivors described as a strike that hit a school being used as a shelter for the displaced.

Inside a ward, almost every inch of floor space was taken up by the wounded, medics hurrying from patient to patient while relatives wailed.

A doctor carried the small limp body of a dead boy in a track suit and placed him in a corner, arms splayed across the blood-smeared tile. On the floor next to him, surrounded by discarded bandages and rubber

gloves, lay a wounded boy and girl, their limbs tangled with the stands holding the IV drips in their arms.

Two young girls were being treated, still covered in dust from the collapse of the house that had buried their family.

"My parents are under the rubble," sobbed one. "I want my mum, I want my mum, I want my family."

Outside, men carried corpses in white and bloodied shrouds to be taken away for funerals. Around a dozen bodies lay on the ground. Five or six were taken away in a motorcycle cart.

Aisha al-Raqb, a 70-year-old woman, said her son Iyad was among the dead and held out a blood-stained hand.

"This is his blood. This is his precious blood. May Allah have mercy on his soul. My darling. I (want to) smell his scent, smell his scent, oh God, oh God," she said.

Gaza health ministry spokesperson Ashra al-Qidra said at least 43 corpses had already reached Nasser hospital that morning, and dozens more were feared trapped under rubble or in locations unsafe for ambulances to recover them. "Hospitals in the southern Gaza

Strip are totally collapsing, they cannot deal with the quantity and quality of injuries that arrive at the hospitals," he said.

WASHINGTON URGES LESS HARM TO CIVILIANS

Washington has called on its close ally Israel to do more to reduce harm to civilians in the next phase of the Gaza war, which Israel launched in retribution for an Oct. 7 attack by Hamas fighters who rampaged through towns, killing 1,200 people and seizing 240 hostages according to Israel's tally.

Israel's unprecedented bombardment of the Gaza Strip has since driven 80% of its 2.3 million residents from their homes, most now crowding into the southern areas now in the firing line.

According to Gaza health officials deemed reliable by the United Nations, more than 15,800 people are confirmed dead, with thousands more missing and feared buried under rubble.

Israel says blame for harm to civilians falls on Hamas fighters who operate among them, including from tunnels below ground that can be destroyed only with huge bombs. Hamas denies this.

Since the truce collapsed, Israel has been posting an online map to tell Gazans which parts of the enclave to evacuate. The eastern quarter of Khan Younis was marked out on it on Monday, and is home to hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom took flight on foot.

"What civilians should do to stay safe is listen to the instructions that are coming out from our Twitter accounts, from our website, and also to look at the leaflets that are landing in their areas," Israeli military spokesperson Richard Hecht told reporters on Tuesday.

Gazans say there is no safe place left to go, with remaining towns and shelters already overwhelmed. Israel has continued to bomb the areas where it is telling people to go, including the city of Rafah, next to the Egyptian border south of Khan Younis.

"The situation is getting worse by the hour," Richard Peeperkorn, WHO representative in Gaza, told reporters via video link from southern Gaza. "There's intensified bombing going on all around, including here in the southern areas, Khan Younis and even in Rafah."

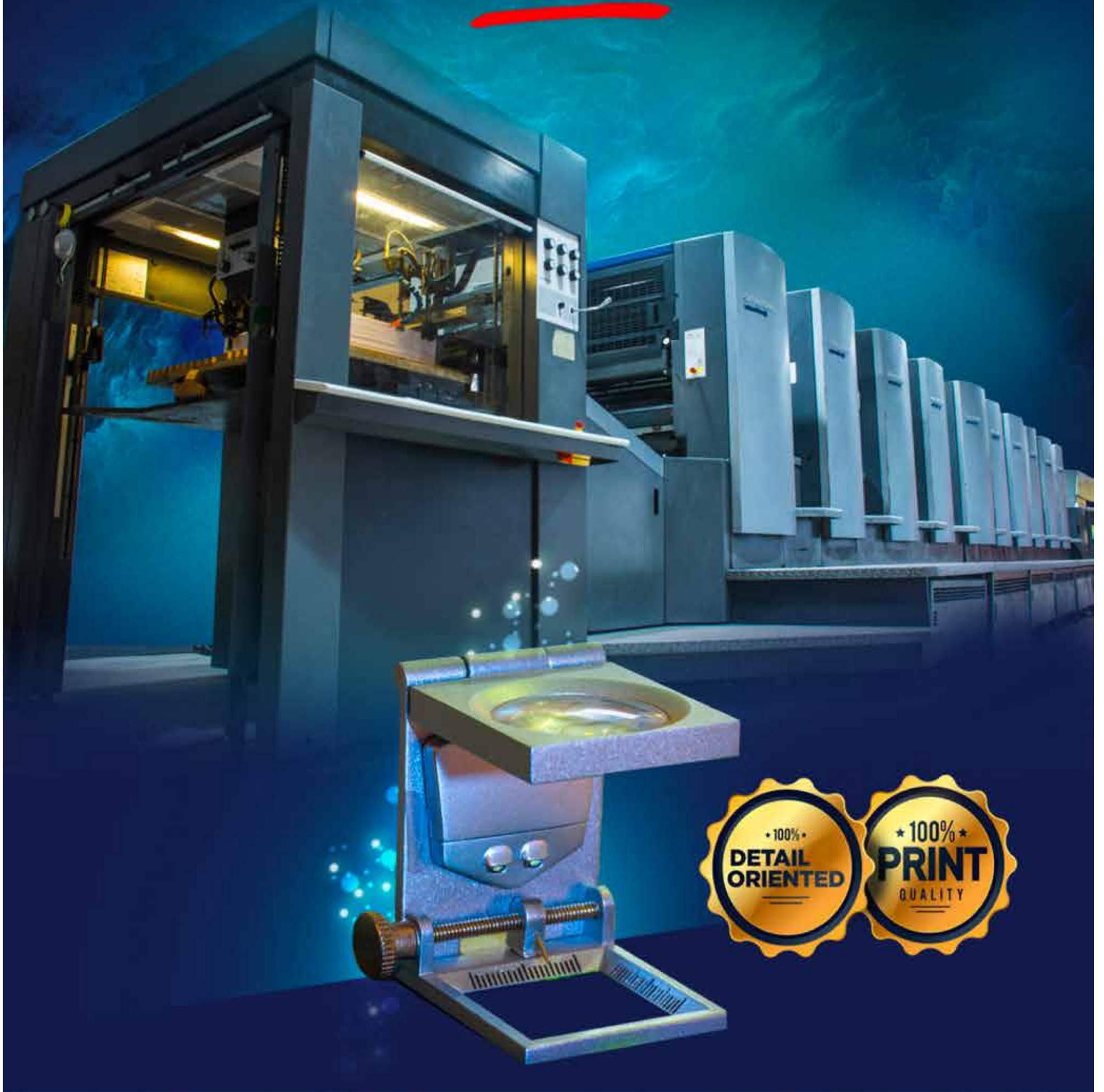
Source: Reuters



Palestinians mourn the death of loved ones following Israeli bombardment in southern Gaza, Palestine

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