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General News

Politics played a role in ACP Agordza's coup plotting case - Martin Kpebu

Legal representative for ACP Benjamin Agordzo, Martin Kpebu, has characterized his client's trial as politically motivated.

This comes after ACP Benjamin Agordzo, along with two others were acquitted and discharged of all charges in a coup trial which ended on Wednesday, January 27, 2024.

ACP Benjamin Agordzo, along with the late Dr. Mac Palm and eight others, faced charges in 2021 related to conspiracy to commit high treason and high treason.

On January 24, 2024, the High Court ruled on the case, acquitting ACP Benjamin Agordzo and the two others, while six others were

convicted on counts of conspiracy to commit high treason and committing high treason.

During an interview on Eyewitness News on Citi FM, Martin Kpebu asserted that the trial amounted to an assault on freedom of speech.

"It was an affront to free speech to gauge public officers not to complain about President Akufo-Addo's misgoverning. The very Arab Spring that he complained about was the same thing the man [ACP Agordza] was complaining about. Akufo-Addo had said that Arab Spring was in Ghana; and that there was hunger, unemployment, and everything was there to show that citizens would rise up against

the government so they needed to do something about it. So nobody tried President Akufo-Addo in opposition, why do you try ACP Agordzo for Arab Spring?" he asked.

Background:

The charges, initiated on April 24, 2021, implicated Dr. Frederick Yao Mac-Palm, the late Chief Executive Officer of Citadel Hospital, and ACP Dr. Agordzo, along with eight others. The charges included conspiracy to high treason, abetment to high treason, and high treason.

The accused individuals, including Dr. Mac Palm (A1 - now deceased), Donya Kafui alias Ezor (A2), Bright Allan Debrah Ofosu alias Bright

Alan Yeboah (A3), Yohannes Zikpi (A4), Warrant Officer Class Two Esther Saan Dekuwine (A6), Cpl Seidu Abubakar (A7), Lance Corporal Ali Solomon (A8), and Cpl Sylvester Akanpewon (A9), faced charges of conspiracy to commit high and high treason.

Colonel Samuel Kodzo Gameli (A5) and ACP Dr. Benjamin Agordzo (A10) were also charged with abetment during that period.

Source: The Independent / Amanda Cartey



ACP Benjamin Agordzo

K.T. Hammond optimistic of winning Jan. 27 NPP primaries

Trade and Industry Minister Kobina Tahir Hammond, popularly known as K.T. Hammond, has expressed optimism about securing victory in the New Patriotic Party's upcoming Parliamentary Primaries in Adansi Asokwa scheduled for January 27, 2024.

He noted that despite the decision of the leadership of the NPP to qualify all three opponents, delegates will massively vote for him tomorrow.

He, however, voiced his dissatisfaction with the leadership of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), accusing them of a failure to disqualify three individuals challenging him in the Adansi Asokwa constituency primary.

Mr. Hammond's discontentment stems from his initial petition against his main opponent, Sammy Binfoh Darkwa, which was dismissed by the Ashanti Regional Vetting Committee.

Undeterred, the Adansi Asokwa MP escalated the matter to the National Vetting Committee, alleging that all aspirants contesting against him were not card-bearing members of the party.

Expressing his frustration, Mr Hammond highlighted his belief

that the three aspirants have not made significant contributions to the party's progress in the Ashanti Region. He emphasized the need for their disqualification, questioning their eligibility to contest.

"There are rules and regulations that govern the procedures in our party. I wasn't comfortable that all three who appeared to contest me were properly qualified to contest," he stated in an interview on JoyNews.

Despite his discontent with the party's handling of the situation, Mr Hammond expressed optimism about his chances in the upcoming primary scheduled for Saturday, January 27.

"I made a point and at the end of the day, I'm not the arbiter, and so all of them are contesting me. We will resolve these matters ultimately within the structures of the party," he asserted.

Meanwhile, a total of 326 parliamentary aspirants have been cleared for the elections scheduled for January 27, 2024.

Out of the total number of 373 aspirants, who filed to contest the primaries, after vetting, 29 are going unopposed, 11 were disqualified, two were referred to

the National Executive Committee (NEC), two stepped down, one incomplete form and two did not show up for vetting leaving the qualified aspirants for the primaries at 326.

Unopposed

Those who are going unopposed are the MP for Ayawaso West Wuogon and First Deputy Majority Chief Whip, Lydia Seyram Alhassan; MP for Okaikoi Central, Patrick Yaw Boamah; MP for Damongo and Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Samuel Abu Jinapor; MP for Lambussie, Dr Bright Yelviedong Baligi; MP for Nandom and Minister for the Interior, Ambrose Dery; MP for Assin South and Deputy Minister of Education, Rev. John Ntim Fordjour, and MP for Upper Denkyira East, Dr Festus Awuah Kwofie.

The others are MP for Bosomtwe and Minister of Education, Dr Yaw Osei Adutwum; MP for Abetifi and Minister of Food and Agriculture, Dr Bryan Yaw Acheampong; MP for New Juaben South and Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Michael Okyere Baafi; MP for Upper West Akyem and a Deputy Minister of Transport, Frederick Obeng Adom; MP for Ejisu and a Deputy Minister of Finance, Dr John Ampontuah Kumah; MP for

Effiduasi, Dr Nana Ayres Afriyie; MP for Offinso South, Isaac Yaw Opoku; MP for Akrofuom, Alex Blankson; MP for Tano South, Dr Benjamin Yeboah Sekyere; MP for Dormaa East, Paul Apreku Twum-Barimah and MP for Sefwi Akontombra, Alex Tetteh Djornobuah.

The rest are MP for Tolon and Second Deputy Majority Chief Whip, Alhaji Iddrisu Habib; MP for Karaga and Deputy Minister of State at the Ministry of Finance, Mohammed Amin Adam; MP for Gushegu and Deputy Minister of Transport, Alhassan Sulemana Tampuli; MP for Tatale/Sanguli and Deputy Minister of Roads and Highways, Thomas Mbomba; MP for Techiman South and Deputy Minister of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development, Martin Kwaku Adjei-Mensah Korsah.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Jessie Ola-Morris



K.T Hammond, Trade & Industry Minister

General News

Faulty refrigerator caused Bantama fire incident that destroyed several wooden structures - GNFS

The Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) has identified the cause of the fire incident that destroyed wooden structures and their contents at Bantama, near the Methodist Church in Kumasi on January 24, 2024.

According to the GNFS, a faulty refrigerator plug in one of the affected wooden structures used as a drinking bar sparked the devastating blaze per preliminary investigation.

“Investigators are busy at the fire scene to determine the exact cause of fire,” the Fire Service noted.

On Wednesday morning, fire

ravaged 8 wooden structures despite efforts from firefighters from the Komfo Anokye, Metro and Manhyia Fire Stations, who ensured all surrounding sandcrete domestic buildings and their contents were protected from the fire ruins.

It is almost a month into 2024 and the country has reported on a number of fire incidents. Among the devastating incidents is the Fiapre fire outbreak that claimed the lives of 35-year-old Alex Antwi and his 17-year-old daughter, Sharifa Adiza, who got burn in their four-bedroom house on January 18, 2024.

Preliminary investigations conducted by the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) into the tragic fire outbreak that claimed two lives in Fiapre, Sunyani West Municipality, indicate that the incident was caused by a piece of lighted cigarette.

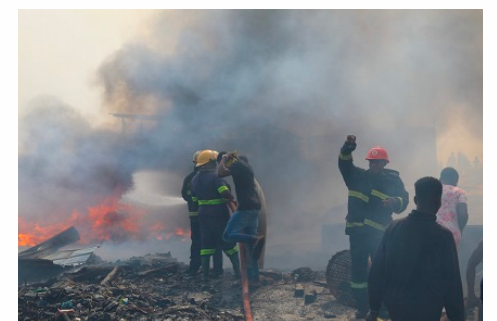
The most recent fire incident took place at a residence in West Legon, near the Westland Junction where three firefighters were rushed to the hospital after being trapped under a collapsed roof on January 24.

They formed part of the team of firefighters dispatched from the Legon Fire Station to douse the

flames.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation, and the GNFS is appealing to the public to cooperate with them and provide any relevant information that could assist in the probe.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



File Photo

VAT on electricity directive cannot be implemented because there are issues - ECG MD

Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), the institution tasked with the implementation of a new Value Added Tax (VAT) on electricity consumption has voiced reservations about the legal framework surrounding the tax.

This comes amidst disagreements over the government's decision to enforce the new tax on electricity consumers beyond the lifeline threshold.

Although ECG and the Northern Electricity Distribution Company (NEDCO) had been instructed to initiate the tax from January 2024, ECG has indicated that it has not yet implemented it.

During an appearance on Joy News' PM Express on Wednesday, January 24, Samuel Dubik Masubir Mahama, the Managing Director of ECG, stated that the company cannot simply comply with the government's directive, especially when there are issues with the provisions in the law passed as far back as 2013.

Mr Mahama explained that in January 2023, he sought the opinion of ECG lawyers regarding the provisions in the law due to identified problems. To substantiate his claim, he presented a document to the

show's host, Evans Mensah, dated January 10, 2023.

“I asked for a legal opinion from the lawyers for ECG, to find out if within the law, this provision is right and in its implementation what it will mean. So let's not take it for granted that even the company ECG or the government itself is not taking proactive measures to close this gap and find a way out of it.

The Managing Director of ECG holds the perspective that the government's letter instructing the implementation of the tax from January 2024 provides an opportunity for additional engagement with stakeholders regarding the policy.

When the host reminded him that the letter from the government was a directive, he retorted, “It's a directive, but if you are giving a directive and there are bottlenecks, you don't go implementing a directive that has bottlenecks. Every directive allows for conversations to be had. ECG itself you have to come to ECG to ask ECG how you are going to implement this. There has to be stakeholder engagement, there has to be some form of sensitization so if you call this as a directive to me, I didn't treat it as a directive” he emphasised.

He mentioned that he has engaged in additional discussions with the Ministers of Energy and Finance to review the law and consider subsequent actions.

“Conversations are far advanced. If this thing would have been charged this year, then by 1st January it would have been charged. Clearly, where we are now, we are finding whether even the law that was passed, what are the restrictions on the law...if it can be passed. We are finding a lot of interpretations.

“If this law has to go back to parliament for it to be looked at and reconsidered then yes, so be it. It should be a national consensus, so we need to applaud the TUC [Trades Union Congress] for what they are doing and also be clear that, if the thing is not being implemented and the last paragraph said, transfer the revenues collected from the implementation of the VAT on the subject matter as a domestic VAT collection, there are processes that need to be outlined.”

As per the Managing Director of ECG, implementing the VAT on pre-paid electricity consumers will pose a particular challenge.

“It's a technical difficulty; it's a nightmare. How do you go about

this?” he quizzed.

“First of all, one of the biggest challenges that will come up is this; are we charging the VAT on residential customers? If yes, are they on pre-paid meters? Yes. So, are you charging per the money or the consumption? Because with pre-paid the consumption will be known at the end of the day, so I will only know your consumption after you have consumed. So, if I charge you the VAT when you are about to pay that will not be fair if I am charging on consumption.

“If I am to implement it that means that at the end of the day, when you are about to purchase again you will actually have a debt that needs to be settled. There's a lot of stakeholder engagement that has to go into something like this. So, I see more of this letter as a letter setting in motion an enquiry into all of this” he reiterated.

Source: The Independent / Amanda Cartey



Samuel Dubik Mahama, ECG's MD

General News

Court issues 72 hour ultimatum to OSP to return Cecilia Dapaah's seized funds

An Accra High Court has ordered the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP) to return seized funds of former Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources, Cecilia Dapaah, to her within 72 hours.

This directive comes as a result of an application by the OSP to confirm freezing and seizure orders related to bank accounts and assets at Dapaah's residence.

During a press conference on Thursday, January 25, 2024, the Special Prosecutor, Kissi Agyebeng, revealed that the OSP has discontinued its application for the confirmation of seizure and freezing orders.

Instead, the case will be handed over to the Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO) for further investigation. Mr Agyebeng emphasized that his

probe has uncovered evidence pointing towards a suspected case of money laundering, a matter more appropriately handled by EOCO.

"A little over an hour ago, the Office discontinued its application that was pending before the High Court for confirmation of the seizure and freezing orders in pursuance of the referral of the case to EOCO. The court ordered that the office should return the cash sums and defreeze the accounts of an investment of Mrs. Dapaah within 72 hours," Mr Agyebeng stated.

The Special Prosecutor highlighted the cross-border nature of the investigation, which led to the involvement of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from the United States back in October 2023.

The collaborative efforts sought to unravel the legality surrounding

the wealth amassed by Cecilia Dapaah and her associates, spanning both Ghana and the United States.

Speaking on the matter, Mr Agyebeng expressed the intent to maintain close collaboration with EOCO and continue working with the FBI as the case progresses.

Background:

The saga surrounding Cecilia Dapaah initially surfaced during the trial of two house helps, Patience Botwe and Sarah Agyei, accused of stealing significant sums and items from the minister's residence. The alleged thefts, which occurred between July and October 2022, involved personal effects valued at GH¢95,000 and US\$95,000, among other items.

Following the arrest of the house helps, the case took a complex turn, implicating additional individuals, including one of the

accused's current and former boyfriends and her father, on charges of dishonestly receiving stolen money. The accused individuals were arraigned before an Accra Circuit Court in July 2023, and the case garnered public attention with calls for thorough investigations into the source of the funds.

As the legal matters regarding Cecilia Dapaah's case continues to evolve, Ghanaians await further developments from EOCO and the potential reexamination of the source of the funds that sparked this high-profile investigation.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Jessie Ola-Morris



Cecilia Dapaah, Former Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources on the left & Kissi Agyebeng, Special Prosecutor

Akufo-Addo appoints Maj. Gen. Opong-Peprah as Chief of Defense Staff

Effective Thursday, February 1, Major General Thomas Opong-Peprah, the Chief of Army Staff, will assume the role of Chief of Defence Staff of Ghana.

This follows his appointment by President Akufo-Addo. The announcement came through a press statement issued on Wednesday, January 24, by the Director of Communications at the Office of the President, Eugene Arhin.

The statement emphasized that the appointment is subject to consultation with the Council of State, as outlined in Article 212 of the Constitution of the Republic.

Major General Thomas Opong-Peprah joined the Ghana Armed Forces in 1986 under Regular Career Course 26, starting as a Second Lieutenant in the Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment. Over the years, he has pursued various civil educational qualifications and career progression courses to enhance his expertise.

His educational achievements include a Master of Arts in International

Security and Strategy from Kings College, London (2013-2014), an Executive Master of Business Administration (Human Resource Management) from the University of Ghana, Legon (2006-2007), a Bachelor of Science degree in Administration (Human Resource Management) from the University of Ghana (1999-2004), and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Public Administration from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (1998).

Major General Opong-Peprah's career advancement courses include the Combined/Joint Forces Land Component Commanders Course at the USA Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania (April 2021), Defence Studies at the Royal College of Defence, London, United Kingdom (2013-2014), Senior Intelligence Course at the Joint Intelligence Centre, Strasbourg, France (2010), Law of Combating Terrorism at the Defence Institute of International Legal Studies, Newport, Rhode Island, USA (2009), and Senior Command and Staff Course at the US Army Command and General Staff College,

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA (2000-2001).

His diverse career appointments include roles such as Aide-de-Camp to the Chief of the Army Staff and Chief of the Defence Staff (1995-1997), Operations/Training Officer at the 64 Infantry Regiment (1999-2000), Commanding Officer of the 64 Infantry Regiment (2002-2009), and Commanding Officer of the Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (2004-2005).

He has held key positions, such as Coordinator of State Transport Security (2001-2008), Director of Strategic Intelligence Assessment at the Defence Intelligence Department, General Headquarters (2009-2011), and Director of Operations and Plans at the Defence Industries Department, General Headquarters (2011-2013).

Maj Gen Opong-Peprah has also contributed to international peacekeeping operations, serving in roles such as Humanitarian Officer in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (June to December 1994),

Military Observer in the United Nations Aouzou Strip Observer Group in Libya/Chad (March to May 1994), G4 Transport and Plans in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (1993), and Detachment Second-In-Command/Troop Leader in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon/Israel (1987, 1989, 1992).

In his personal life, Major General Thomas Opong-Peprah is a married father of five. His interests include horse riding, soccer, traveling, watching movies, and jogging.

Additionally, he has served as a board member of the Governing Council of the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO). Presently, he holds the position of Chief of the Army Staff, having been appointed in March 2020."

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Major Gen. Opong-Peprah, Chief of Defense Staff

General News

Media assault: Give total media blackout to Hawa Koomson - GJA president tells media houses

The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) has initiated a media blackout against Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Mavis Hawa Koomson in response to the assault on one of its journalists, David Kobbina.

This means the media will not cover news related to or statements made by Hawa Koomson, possibly as a form of protest.

The unfortunate attack on David Kobbina occurred on January 4, 2024, sparking widespread condemnation. The attackers accused David Kobbina of insulting Hawa Koomson on a TV show, a claim the victim denied, clarifying that he worked as a morning show host of a radio station.

In reaction, the GJA president, Albert Kwabena Dwumfour, called

on the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to investigate and take action against those linked to the attack, while also calling on the Ghana Police Service to swiftly address the incident.

With both the NPP and the police failing to act, the GJA has now declared a media blackout against the NPP MP for Awutu Senya East, Hawa Koomson, during a press conference on Thursday, January 25, citing concerns about the safety of journalists.

Mr Dwumfour emphasised the minister's association with individuals posing a threat to the media.

"This is the height of impunity, and we can no longer tolerate the same. We hereby serve notice that if by the close of Friday, January 12, 2024, these demands (sanctions)

have not been met, we shall advise ourselves accordingly," the GJA president said in reaction to the assault.

The blackout, endorsed by international stakeholders and senior journalists, is set to continue unless tangible actions are taken against the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, Hawa Koomson has denied any involvement in the assault, labelling the accusations

as politically motivated attempts to tarnish her reputation.

In a related event, the GJA, in urging solidarity among journalists, has emphasised the need for prioritising safety in the upcoming NPP parliamentary primary elections while maintaining the highest levels of professionalism.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Mavis Hawa Koomson, Minister for Fisheries & Aquaculture

Akufo-Addo refuses GRA's request for SML to continue monitoring system amidst KPMG audit

President Akufo-Addo has rejected the Ghana Revenue Authority's (GRA) request to allow the continuous operation of SML's monitoring system during the ongoing audit conducted by KPMG.

The President has specified that the suspension should persist until KPMG completes its audit and submits the findings for review.

This decision was communicated by Eugene Arhin, the Director of Communications at the Office of the President, through a press statement issued on Wednesday, January 24.

"The President has denied GRA's request and has directed that the status quo, with respect to the suspension of the performance of the contract, should remain in effect until the completion of the audit and, subsequent, submission of the audit report by KPMG," an excerpt of the release said.

Initially set for completion by Tuesday, January 16, 2024, the new deadline for KPMG's work is now Friday, February 23, 2024.

This extension follows a request from KPMG to the President, seeking additional time beyond the initial two-week period provided for the task.

"KPMG is to submit its final report no later than Friday, 23rd February 2024," the statement added.

In a December 2023 investigative report, The Fourth Estate implicated Strategic Mobilisation Ghana Limited (SML), the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), and the Ministry of Finance in a contentious contract.

The report alleged that GRA had granted SML a purported 10-year contract with an annual payment of \$100 million, raising concerns about possible irregularities. SML refuted this claim, asserting that it had a five-year contract instead.

The GRA, in a statement on December 20, 2023, maintained that proper procurement procedures were followed. On January 3, 2024, SML welcomed President Akufo-Addo's directive to suspend its ongoing revenue assurance operations and undergo

an audit of its contract with the GRA and the Ministry of Finance.

President Akufo-Addo appointed KPMG, an audit, tax, and advisory services firm, to conduct an immediate audit.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP) has initiated an investigation into the controversial contract between

Strategic Mobilisation Ghana Limited (SML) and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA).

The focus of the probe is on potential breaches of procurement processes and allegations of corruption and corruption-related activities.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana

General News

Ghana to allow visa-free entry for all Africans worldwide soon

President Akufo-Addo has announced his government's commitment to implementing a visa-free policy for all Africans travelling to Ghana in 2024.

Speaking on January 25, at the opening of the 2024 Africa Prosperity Dialogue under the theme "Developing Prosperity in Africa: Produce, Add Value, and Trade," which is being held at the Peduase Lodge, the President revealed that the necessary processes for the policy's execution have been initiated.

In his address to participants, he acknowledged the visa requirements for attending the event and highlighted a special arrangement made for the conference, reducing the visa acquisition fee by 50%.

"We reduced the visa acquisition fee by 50%, and we were thus able

to receive your visa on arrival. The Government of Ghana is committed to ensuring visa-free access for all Africans travelling into our country, and the process has begun to implement the policy this year."

President Akufo-Addo emphasised the government of Ghana's dedication to providing visa-free access to all Africans visiting the country, with the implementation process set to commence this year, 2024.

Encouraging a critical examination of such dialogues, the President stressed their importance in meeting the demands of the private sector.

"These dialogues have to critically examine the responsibilities and expectations of the private sector demand the same of the public sector and expect that both can

work as partners to achieve the Africa we want.

We must strengthen our resolve to work hand in hand with our governments in free and fair democratic systems of governance that promote safe and sound legal and institutional frameworks. Let us work to get the buy-in of the small trader, builder, farmer, and seamstress and make them believe that having a single market can benefit them as well," he entreated.

The two-day Africa Prosperity Dialogue, themed "Developing Prosperity in Africa: Produce, Add, Value, and Trade," is being held at the Peduase Lodge.

Organized by the APN in collaboration with the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat and the Government of Ghana, the event serves as an annual platform for business

executives, thought leaders, and political figures to collaborate on advancing the goal of building the world's largest single market in Africa.

The Africa Prosperity Dialogues were officially adopted by the African Union on February 19, 2023, as a crucial instrument for mobilizing private sector support for the continent's AfCFTA project.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana

Injunction by group puts NPP Primaries in Asante Mampong on hold

The parliamentary primaries of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in Asante Mampong have encountered a roadblock, as 35 dissatisfied party members successfully obtained an injunction against the ongoing process.

Disputes within the Mampong NPP branch, rooted in discontent among members questioning the legitimacy of polling station elections, have persisted since February 2022. The prolonged legal battle concluded with a High Court dismissal in Mampong, permitting the party to proceed with elections for electoral area coordinators and constituency executives.

Following the unfavorable High Court ruling, dissatisfied plaintiffs sought a separate injunction to prevent polling station executives from participating in the NPP's 2023 presidential primaries. Despite their efforts, the polling station executives took part in the presidential primaries as the plaintiffs failed to serve the party

on time.

Undeterred, led by Kofi Sarpong, the plaintiffs have now secured a fresh injunction from the Court of Appeal against the scheduled January 27 parliamentary primaries in Mampong. This action

follows the filing of an appeal on the previously dismissed case by the High Court.

Alhaji Malik Agyei, the Asante Mampong Constituency Secretary of the NPP, confirmed the suspension of the elections

after the party received the injunction.

He stated, "We await the court to sit on the injunction to pave the way for the primaries."

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



File Photo

General News

‘Angry’ Maurice Ampaw threatens to sue Ashanti Chief for defamation over Asantehene-Wontumi brouhaha

Legal practitioner Maurice Ampaw has announced his intention to drag an Ashanti Chief to court over a remark the latter made against the former in reaction to derogatory allegations against the New Patriotic Party’s (NPP) Ashanti Regional Chairman, Bernard Antwi Boasiako.

The Divisional Heads of the Kumasi Traditional Council again have expressed indignation about the purported use of two of Kumasi-based radio stations owned by Chairman Wontumi by Maurice Ampaw, to further denigrate chiefs in the Ashanti region.

The duo have been summoned to appear before the Council on Monday, January 29, 2024.

But ahead of this meeting to address the matter, Mr Ampaw has recounted an incident where he was referenced by one of the Chiefs in a manner he found derogatory.

In an interview on Kasapa FM, Mr Ampaw, on Thursday, January 25, noted that he would not take the

comments likely and is considering a class action suit.

“The constitution guarantees us all a fair hearing, and for someone you summoned me and the party came to plead on his behalf, and you sit right there to judge the person and someone referenced me, one of the Chiefs saying, ‘Lawyer Ampaw, is he a lawyer in a car?’ That’s how that chief addressed me, saying he doesn’t know the type of Lawyer I am, imagine making such utterances.”

“You have made bad utterances about me on social media, trying to get my reaction as a chief and rubbish my credentials. I can sue the Chief in court, and it’s an option I am considering,” he added.

Despite the initial tension, Mr Ampaw assured that he would honour the Chiefs’ invitation.

“Everything that I have said will be subjected to strict proof. I am going there happily because will explain everything to them. I will wear white-white. I am ready,” he added.

In a surprising turn of events, Maurice Ampaw has issued an apology to the Chiefs of the Ashanti region, retracting one of his earlier statements he deemed extreme.

“I am using this platform to tell Nananom (chiefs) that if my utterances were extreme and they see it very offensive, I retract and apologize.

“I believe that let Asanteman move on, there is so much to do in the Ashanti Region and there is so much at stake in this political area and my love for Bawumia and NPP still stands.

“It is my prayer that we all support

Chairman Wontumi to bring victory to the party and also support Otumfuo to bring development to the Ashanti Region and Ghana as a whole,” he said in an interview on Asempa FM.

In an earlier interview with Aduanaba Kofi Asante Ennin on GhanAkoma, Mr Ampaw stated that “We are going to talk law, and no one is above the law. I will honour the invitation; you will clap for lawyer Ampaw on Monday. I am going with the truth. Otumfuo supports the truth, and I am going to lay bare the facts.”

Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Maurice Ampaw, Legal Practitioner

UG announces operations of new satellite campuses in Kumasi and Takoradi

UG announces operations of new satellite campuses in Kumasi and Takoradi

Ghana’s premier tertiary institution, the University of Ghana (UG), has gained accreditation and began operations at satellite campuses in Takoradi and Kumasi.

This information was disclosed by the Vice-Chancellor (VC), Professor Nana Aba Amfo, during the second session of the graduation ceremonies for the School of Graduate Studies in Accra, which forms part of a series of 15 congregational ceremonies this week.

In an address delivered on behalf of the VC, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Prof. Gordon A. Awandare mentioned that admissions to the newly established campuses are

currently open.

“The take-off of the new campuses will further consolidate the UG brand and standards in the Ashanti and Western regions and will also open up more places for the admission of undergraduate students,” she said.

The two new satellite campuses, i.e Kumasi and Takoradi, add to the already existing campuses, namely Accra City Campus, Korle Bu Campus and the Distance Education Campus all located in Greater Accra region.

Meanwhile, the VC went on to laud the university’s efforts in widening its educational landscape over the years, mentioning that about 14,000 students have gained admission and accepted the offers so far in the 2023/2024 academic year.

“We have just completed

undergraduate admissions and, so far, a total of 14,072 students have accepted the offers made and enrolled in programmes at the university. This brings the current total enrolment to 63,820 for the first semester of the 2023–2024 academic year.”

“This figure reflects a gender distribution, with 49.7 percent male and 50.3 percent female students, showcasing our commitment to gender balance,” she said.

Professor Amfo mentioned that

the enrollment data indicates a ratio of 9 undergraduate students to 1 graduate student.

Meanwhile, the university is having its week’s graduation ceremonies to celebrate the academic achievements of 15,549 students who have successfully completed various study programmes, including 120 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), 3,389 Master’s, 10,504 undergraduate, and 611 non-degree-level students.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



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Business

Reduce policy rate to help struggling businesses boost production – BoG told

The Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GNCCI) is advocating to the Central Bank for a reduction in the policy rate, currently at 30 per cent, to support business growth. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of Ghana (BoG) is currently meeting to review developments in the Ghanaian economy, and an announcement on the policy rate is expected by Monday, January 29, 2024.

In a statement, the GNCCI highlighted that Ghanaian businesses are grappling with a significant increase in borrowing costs, mainly due to the high monetary policy rate.

It emphasized that the elevated interest on commercial loans, averaging 32.0% in 2023, compounds the already high utility tariffs and excessive taxes, making the cost of doing business in Ghana exceptionally high.

“The costly business environment has contributed to a significant decline in production, the collapse of many businesses; the rise in non-performing loans; the relocation of businesses to other African countries, and as a whole led to the significant decline in the growth of the private sector and the economy. From a GDP [Gross Domestic Product] growth rate of 6.1% in the 4th quarter of 2021 to 2.0% in the 3rd quarter of 2023”, it mentioned.

“As the representative body of the business community in the Country, the GNCCI is very mindful of issues that specifically impact the operational costs of businesses. With the 116th Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting ongoing to discuss the policy rate adjustments, the GNCCI emphasizes the need for the review to favor the growth of businesses. The GNCCI urges the MPC to take into account the cost-

push impact of a high policy rate”, it added.

Considering the relative stability in the forex market and the substantial decline of 30.4% in domestic inflation from 53.6% in January 2023 to 23.2%, implying that the Real Interest Rate in Ghana is now positive, the GNCCI proposed that the Bank of Ghana lowers the existing policy rate.

“We believe the reduction will induce commercial banks to also lower their lending rate to enable businesses to access funds for expansion in the short to medium term,” the Chamber added.

“As Ghanaian businesses endeavor to actively engage in the AfCFTA, the cost of borrowing will play a crucial role in defining their competitiveness. With Ghana’s interest rate being the highest in Africa, we urge the Monetary Policy Committee to lower the policy rate. In the chamber’s estimation,

anchored on the stability in the forex market, decline in inflation and the projected GDP growth rate of 2.7%, we propose a reduction of not less than 2 percent or 200 basis points in the policy rate for the start”, it continued.

The GNCCI concluded that it will continue to engage stakeholders in the public and private sectors to ensure a thriving business environment that delivers shared growth and prosperity for all.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



Ernest Addison, Governor, Bank of Ghana

Ghana is attractive for global trade, investment - German Ambassador

German Ambassador to Ghana, Mrs Sivine Jensen, has encouraged the global business and investing community to consider Ghana as a choice for mutual benefit.

She said Ghana’s demography and proximity to Europe amid current global economic and political development, makes it “an attractive option” for doing business and investment.

“Due to the political situation in Europe and the rising challenges in the relations with China, companies are looking for alternative markets to invest in and trade,” she noted.

She expressed confidence that “with the right reforms in the business landscape, Ghana can achieve its goals of prosperity and growth for all”.

The Ambassador encouraged the government to work on making the implementation of trade and investment laws attractive, particularly with tax collection.

With the coming of the second tranche of US\$600 million from the International Monetary Fund

(IMF), she urged the government to quickly resume all stalled infrastructure, including road networks to facilitate doing business in the country.

Finance Minister, Mr Ken Ofori-Atta, described the over 60-year relations between Ghana and Germany as “unique,” noting that as of 2023, 3.1 per cent of Ghana’s exports to Europe went to Germany.

That, he said made Germany the eighth largest European export market for Ghana, with the Ghana Investment Promotion Authority (GIPC) also ranking it eighth among the top 10 sources of investment for Ghana.

“Amidst all the global economic uncertainty, Ghana has emerged as a new ray of hope for the African continent. Consequently, it’s become crucial to maintain this positive momentum,” Mr Ofori-Atta said.

“The need for deeper cooperation between German and Ghanaian businesses is more critical than ever... I believe that such collaboration will be the key

to driving sustainable and inclusive growth,” he noted.

The Finance Minister explained that it was against that backdrop that the discussions with the German business community were held to ensure that German companies were supported enough to champion Ghana’s economic recovery.

“I envision a future where German technology and expertise merged with Ghanaian innovation and local knowledge to create solutions that connect our economies, cultures, and peoples,” he said.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), Mr Yofi Grant, said Ghana, being latitude zero and longitude zero made the country the centre of the world and, therefore, an entry point for business and trade in Africa, and the rest of the globe.

He reiterated that the enormous resources of the country [including gold, cocoa, and diamond] offered opportunities for investment, particularly in value addition, through mutual partnerships.

He stated that the implementation of reforms in the country’s investment laws would create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and make investors gain good returns on investments in Ghana.

The discussions between the government and German business communities, he said, were critical in assessing and resolving specific challenges related to German businesses and investors.

He said Africa would soon grow by one-third of the world’s population, “so you cannot do business and not have a presence in Africa”, and urged businesses not to lose sight of Ghana – the headquarters for the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Source: GNA



Mrs Sivine Jensen, German Ambassador to Ghana

International

30 killed in latest herder violence in Nigeria's Plateau State

At least 30 people have been killed in renewed violence in Nigeria's central Plateau State, where clashes between Muslim herders and Christian farming communities have erupted for years, a community organisation and an aid group source said on Thursday.

Despite a 24-hour curfew imposed on Tuesday in Plateau's Mangu local district, schools, places of worship, and homes have been burned and ransacked in more attacks, community leaders said.

The Mwaghavul Development Association, an organisation for ethnic Mwaghavul people who are mostly Christians, blamed Fulani Muslim herders for attacking Kwahaslalek village, killing approximately 30 people.

"At the moment, our people are left at the mercy of God and the little they can do in self-defence," the association said in a statement.

That figure was confirmed by a

local rescue official and a source at an aid group working on the ground, who spoke to the news agency AFP on condition of anonymity. The aid source said more than 100 people had been wounded.

Security personnel are yet to comment on the death toll from the most recent attacks.

Two camps for the displaced have been set up in Mangu town, for about 1,500 people, local chairman of Nigeria Red Cross Nurudeen Husaini Magaji told AFP.

Plateau's governor announced the curfew on Tuesday after another clash that officials blamed on a dispute between a herder moving his cattle and other residents using the road.

The state lies in the Middle Belt, a region seen as the dividing line between Nigeria's mostly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south. Intercommunal violence

has been common in the region, which is home to dozens of ethnic minorities like the Mwaghavul.

Clashes in the region and the northwest are rooted in community tensions over land between nomadic herders and indigenous farmers, but exacerbated by the effects of climate change and population rise in the region. Multiple local reports have attributed the farmers as saying they have had to organise into self-defence vigilante groups to fend off attacks by the herders.

The situation has been worsened by reprisal attacks and a web of broader criminality. Heavily armed gangs, known locally as bandits, raid villages especially in the northwest states, looting and kidnapping for ransom. The conflict has also seeped into parts of southwest and southeast Nigeria.

In recent times, tensions have soared since nearly 200 people

were killed over Christmas in raids on mostly Christian villages.

The Jama'atu Nasril Islam, a Muslim community organisation, also said that clashes erupted between Tuesday and Wednesday in Mangu town, with places of worship and faith-based schools attacked.

"We call on the government and security agencies to intensify their efforts in securing the lives and properties of the inhabitants of Mangu and other flash points," JN's state director Salim Musa Umar said.

"All concerned should also do everything possible to prevent any possible escalation."

Source: Al Jazeera and News Agencies



File Photo

12 killed at Gaza shelter as fighting rages - UN

At least 12 people were killed and 75 injured when a UN facility sheltering civilians was struck in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, the UN's Palestinian refugee agency says. UNRWA said two shells hit its Khan Younis Training Centre during fighting in the city's western outskirts.

Its commissioner condemned the "blatant disregard of basic rules of war".

Israel's military said it had ruled out that the incident was the result of an air or artillery strike by its forces.

It added that it was reviewing Israeli operations nearby and examining the possibility that it was " Hamas fire".

Israeli troops have been battling Hamas fighters as they advance into western Khan Younis, a day after the military said it had completely encircled the city.

Clashes and bombardment around the city's two main hospitals have

also left thousands of patients, staff and others unable to leave.

The conflict was triggered by an unprecedented cross-border attack by Hamas gunmen on southern Israel on 7 October, in which about 1,300 people were killed and about 250 others taken hostage.

More than 25,700 people have been killed in Gaza since then, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

An estimated 1.7 million people - nearly three-quarters of the population - have also been displaced by the past 12 weeks of fighting and many of them are sheltering inside UN facilities or near them.

The Khan Younis Training Centre is one of the largest UNRWA shelters, with between 30,000 and 40,000 people said to be living inside its grounds.

UNRWA said the compound was clearly marked, that its coordinates had been shared with

Israeli authorities, and that it and the civilians inside had to be protected under international law.

However, at least six displaced people were killed and many more injured when the training centre was struck on Monday during intense fighting in the surrounding area, according to the agency.

On Wednesday afternoon, UNRWA's Gaza director, Thomas White, said a building at the facility that was housing 800 people from northern Gaza was hit.

In an interview with the BBC from Rafah in the evening, he said the building was struck by "two tank rounds" and that at least nine people were killed.

On Thursday morning, Mr White issued a statement saying the building was "hit by two shells and caught fire". Twelve people had now been confirmed dead and 15 of the injured were in a critical condition, he added.

"A number of missions to assess the situation were denied. Yesterday

evening, the UN finally managed to reach the affected areas to treat trauma patients, bring medical supplies and evacuate injured patients to Rafah."

He added: "The situation in Khan Younis underscores a consistent failure to uphold the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law: distinction, proportionality and precautions in carrying out attacks. This is unacceptable and abhorrent and must stop."

In response to UNRWA's initial reports, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said: "After an examination of our operational systems, the IDF has currently ruled out that this incident is a result of an aerial or artillery strike by the IDF."

"A thorough review of the operations of the forces in the vicinity is under way," it added. "The IDF is also examining the possibility that the strike was a result of Hamas fire."

Vedant Patel of the US state department repeated Washington's

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International

12 killed at Gaza shelter as fighting rages - UN

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calls for the protection of civilians in Gaza.

"We deplore today's attack on the UN's Khan Younis training centre," she said, and called it "incredibly concerning".

The IDF also said on Wednesday afternoon that its troops had "launched a divisional manoeuvre on West Khan Younis" that was targeting Hamas "outposts, infrastructure, and command and control centres".

"Dismantling Hamas' military framework in western Khan Younis is the heart of the logic behind the operation."

The IDF added that Hamas "exploits the civilian population, exploits shelters and hospitals" - something the group has denied.

Gaza's health ministry meanwhile accused the IDF of "isolating hospitals in Khan Younis and carrying out massacres in the western area of the city".

The Palestine Red Crescent Society

(PRCS) said the al-Amal Hospital, which it runs, and its local headquarters were under "siege" by Israeli forces, trapping patients, wounded people and an estimated 13,000 displaced people.

The organisation alleged that three displaced people were killed after being targeted at the entrance to the headquarters on Wednesday morning.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) warned on Tuesday night that its staff inside the nearby Nasser Medical Complex - the largest hospital still partly functioning in Gaza - had reported bombing and heavy gunfire nearby.

"They are currently unable to evacuate along with the thousands of people in the hospital, including 850 patients, due to roads to and from the building being either inaccessible or too dangerous."

The IDF has issued evacuation orders for western parts of Khan Younis, including those where Nasser and al-Amal are located.

The UN estimates there are about 88,000 residents and 425,000 displaced people in the area.

Mr White told the BBC that tens of thousands more people were now on the move, heading south to Rafah, on the border with Egypt, where as many as 1.4 million are already sheltering.

In another incident in Khan Younis on Tuesday, a cameraman for the UK's ITV News filmed a Palestinian civilian being shot dead on a main road about 1.7km (1 mile) south of the UNRWA shelter.

Five men are seen walking towards the combat zone holding a white flag, before there is a burst of gunfire and one of them falls to the ground. It was not clear who opened fire.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was asked in the Parliament on Wednesday whether such pictures would prompt him to push for a ceasefire in Gaza.

He replied: "No-one wants to see this conflict go on for a moment

longer than is necessary and we do want to see an immediate and sustained humanitarian pause."

Efforts involving several countries to try to reach a ceasefire are ongoing, with one plan said to include a month-long truce and phased release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners.

But both Israel and Hamas appear to have rejected proposals, and hopes of any progress have been dampened.

Egypt's President, Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, meanwhile accused Israel of deliberately holding up aid deliveries at the Egyptian-controlled Rafah border crossing as "a form of pressure on the Gaza Strip and its people over the conflict and the release of hostages".

However, an Israeli defence ministry agency co-ordinating the deliveries with Egypt and the UN rejected the claim, insisting that "there is no limit to the amount of aid that can enter Gaza".

Source: BBC



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