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# General News

## Redevelopment of Asafo market on course as demolition exercise begins

The Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) has commenced the demolition of the unstable main storey-building in Asafo Market to prevent potential disasters.

This effort is part of a broader strategic plan by the KMA, which includes various developmental projects across the Metropolis.

The Assembly has already relocated all tenants for a six-month period to facilitate the construction of new market shops.

Upon completion, the project is expected to mitigate fire risks within the market, as highlighted by KMA Chief Executive Samuel Pyne.

The redevelopment, divided into three phases for minimal disruption, will transform the market with over 3,000 modern shops, dining areas, bulk breaking facilities, and enhanced infrastructure, including a fire station and administrative offices.

Mayor Samuel Pyne emphasised the

focus on modernization and safety, ensuring robust fire detection and combating systems are integrated.

“Our focus is to modernise the market to create a serene trading environment for the trader to trade in peace and tranquility by providing them appropriate security, including protection against fire. It is going to be a modern market; the structures will not be wooden. We are also making sure the contractor will expedite action on-site to meet the terms and agreement in the contract we have signed. We are also going to monitor the work from day one to the end to ensure our expectations are met on the project because I personally don't want the traders to stay home for a longer period.”

Additionally, plans for a new police station near the market aim to bolster security and promote commerce without compromising safety.

“Currently, we are almost getting international funding from our partners to have a beautiful police station around the same area to cater

for the security needs of the people. We have all these in mind to make the place a standard marketplace to promote commerce without any security threat.”

Relocated traders expressed support for the project, urging KMA to expedite construction to avoid prolonged disruptions to business activities.

Their cooperation reflects a shared interest in addressing safety and promoting a vibrant trading environment.

“We are not complaining much about the project and its effect on us because of the fruitful discussions we already had with the management of KMA. The project will serve our collective interest by addressing flooding and fire threats in the market. Our call to KMA is that they should expedite action on-site to meet the six-month deadline for the completion of the project”.

**Source: Independent Ghana/ Sebastian Akaho-Tay**



Asafo market

## 2 students found dead in abandoned galamsey pit at Abasewa

Two final-year pupils of the Abisco M/A Basic School in Abesewa, Dunkwa-Abesewa, tragically lost their lives after falling into an abandoned galamsey pit in the Upper Denkyira East District of the Central Region.

The deceased have been identified as Dominic Abu, aged 15, and Enoch Ogo, aged 16. The incident occurred on Monday, April 8, while they were on their way home from school.

According to reports, one of the pupils fell into the pit, and in a valiant attempt to rescue his friend, the other pupil also entered the water-filled pit and tragically drowned alongside his companion.

Their lifeless bodies were subsequently recovered from the pit, adding to the growing concern among residents about the dangers posed by the abandoned galamsey site.

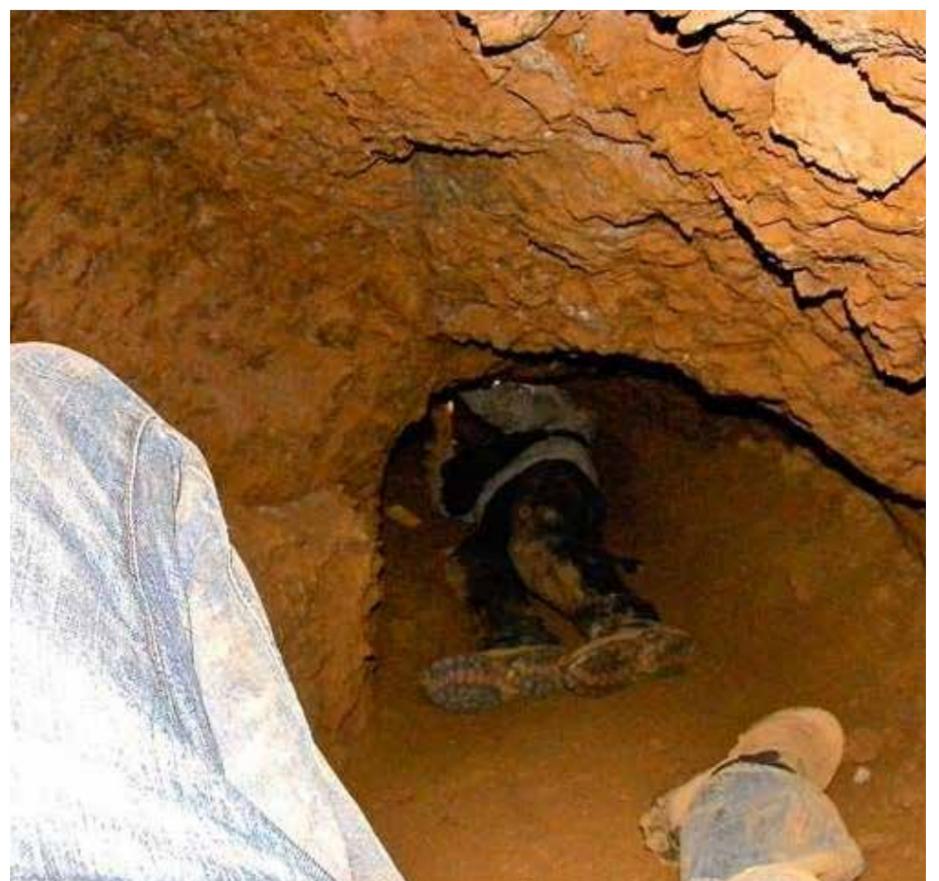
This is not the first time such a tragic incident has occurred in the area. Two years prior, a final-year student from St. Andrews Senior School met a similar fate when he fell into the same pit while attempting to use a shortcut route from Abesewa to Barrier, which was flooded at the time.

Ernest Arkon, the Assemblyman for the Compound Electoral Area, expressed dismay over the recurring deaths at the galamsey site.

In response, he issued a stern ultimatum to the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) and the Member of Parliament for Upper Denkyira East, demanding action to reclaim the land within four months.

Failure to do so, he warned, would result in a massive demonstration led by him and concerned residents.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku**



File photo



# General News

## Global Fund halts shipment of medical supplies over delays at Tema Port

The Global Fund has ceased the shipment of vital medical supplies to Ghana due to delays in clearing previous donations stuck at the Tema Port. This suspension includes urgently needed antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS patients.

The Africa Center for Health Policy Research and Analysis (ACHPR&A) has expressed deep concern over the government's failure to expedite the release of these donated supplies.

Executive Director of ACHPR&A, Dr. Thomas Anaba, has strongly criticized the government's slow approach in addressing the issue of clearing vital health commodities. Dr. Anaba emphasized the urgent nature of the situation, noting that even a visit from a delegation of the Global Fund yielded no progress.

The delays have also raised concerns within the Ghana AIDS Commission and a coalition of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) focusing on HIV, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.

In response to the prolonged detention of essential medical supplies, the CSOs have announced plans for a protest

scheduled for April 17.

"A 12-member delegation from the Global Fund paid a working visit to this country to follow up on the locked-up commodities. Despite all their efforts, they did not make any headway and the commodities still

remain uncleared at the ports."

"They have therefore indicated that Ghana risks losing all Global Fund Support if the government fails to act on the matter. To start with, they have already suspended all commodity shipments to the country until the

ones at the ports are cleared."

"This development has dire consequences for the hundreds of thousands of our compatriots on free medications donated by Global Fund."

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



Tema port

## Provide a 24-hour advance notice of load management - ECG tells GRIDCo

The Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) swiftly responded to allegations made by the Ghana Grid Company (GRIDCo) regarding ECG's alleged non-compliance with load management instructions.

In a letter dated March 28, 2024, GRIDCo expressed concerns about ECG's lack of adherence to load management directives from GRIDCo's System Control Centre (SCC), suggesting that ECG's actions could jeopardize the country's power generation.

ECG, while emphasizing its commitment to working with GRIDCo and maintaining operational cohesion within the electricity value chain, expressed shock and concern over the

allegations.

According to ECG, GRIDCo's portrayal of the situation lacks context and fails to acknowledge the operational challenges faced by ECG.

As outlined in ECG's response, the main issue is about the timing and adequacy of load management requests received from GRIDCo.

While ECG acknowledged receiving directives to drop loads at specific Bulk Supply Points (BSPs), it highlighted discrepancies in the timing of these requests and their impact on operational planning.

ECG stressed the importance of GRIDCo providing advance notice of

- continued on page 4



ECG



# General News

## **Provide a 24-hour advance notice of load management - ECG tells GRIDCo**

**- Continued from page 3**

load management requests to enable effective planning and execution without unduly impacting customers.

"We however wish to reiterate our request that the Notice to our System Operators for load management should be received before 3:00pm for peak load and 4am for off-peak load management or to be received 24 hours ahead in each case, as what is happening now is no longer an emergency operation but seemingly a routine daily activity," the letter signed by ECG's Chief Executive, Ing. Ebenezer Kofi Essienyi said.

Also, ECG provided detailed statistics on load management requests

received from GRIDCo between January and March 2024.

They demonstrated instances where requests were received shortly before peak or off-peak periods, limiting ECG's ability to plan and inform customers adequately.

"It is a fact that GRIDCo routinely directs ECG's System Operators to drop load at some of our Bulk Supply Points (BSPs), but the issue has been the inadequacy between the time these requests are received and the time these requests must be effected to sustain the integrity of the power system and also for ECG to inform its customers.

"It is worthy to note that, between January and March 2024, sixty-four (64No.) requests were received from GRIDCo for load management. Out of this, forty (40No.) were for peak periods (18:00 - 24:00 hrs) and twenty-four (24No.) for off-peak (06:00 - 18:00 hrs) load management.

"Out of the forty (40no.) peak load requests, thirty-five (35No.) (88%) of them were received within an hour to the peak period. There were only five (5No) (12%) instances where ECG received the request within 2-3 hours of the peak period.

"Out of the Twenty-Four (24No) off-peak load requests, three (3No)

(13%) of them were received within 30 minutes to the off-peak period while the remaining Twenty-One (21 No.) (87%) instances were received far into the off-peak period," the power distributor said.

ECG also highlighted specific incidents in March 2024 where operational challenges within its network led to a lower compliance rate with GRIDCo's load management directives.

The power distributor reiterated its commitment to collaborate with GRIDCo and other stakeholders to ensure transmission system stability.

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

## **Ejisu by-election slated for April 30**

The Electoral Commission (EC) has scheduled a by-election in Ejisu for April 30, 2024, following the passing of John Ampontuah Kumah on March 7, 2024.

Dr John Kumah, 45, passed away after a brief illness, leaving behind a wife and six children. His death has left Ejisu constituents with no representative in Parliament.

Clause 5 of Article 112 of the Constitution (amended) states that

"whenever a vacancy occurs in Parliament, the Clerk of Parliament shall notify the Electoral Commission in writing within seven days after becoming aware that the vacancy has occurred; and a by-election shall be held within thirty days after the vacancy occurred except that where the vacancy occurred through the death of a member, the by-election shall be held within sixty days after the occurrence of the vacancy."

Ahead of the by-election, the NPP opened nominations on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, and all nine candidates had filed by the closing date on Thursday, April 4.

All nine aspirants seeking to contest in the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) Parliamentary primary in the constituency were cleared by the vetting committee on Saturday, April 6, 2024.

The NPP is expected to elect a

parliamentary candidate for the constituency on Saturday, April 13, 2024. Among those vying for the NPP ticket is former President of the Ghana Football Association, Kwesi Nyantakyi.

As of now, no other political party has expressed interest in the by-election. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) has stated that it is still deliberating whether to participate.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku**



**Late John Kumah, former MP for Ejisu constituency**



# General News

## Stop campus operations at SHSs, non-tertiary centres - GTEC directs universities

The Ghana Tertiary Education Committee (GTEC) has instructed all universities to halt operations at satellite campuses situated on Senior High School (SHS) premises and other unauthorised sites.

This directive is based on the view that such activities are unlawful, as these universities are operating beyond their accredited facilities.

Head of GTEC's Institutional Accreditation Department, Harry Kwame Opoku, disclosed in an interview with the media that several universities, including the University of Cape Coast, have begun to comply with the directive.

"It has come to the attention of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission that public institutions are operating campuses at the premises of senior high schools, junior high schools, and non-tertiary centres, non-tertiary institutions, the centres of non-tertiary

institutions, which we thought was bringing out the quality of education. So when this came to our attention, we invited the vice-chancellors of these institutions to talk and find a way out of this problem."

"They have done so by signing a memorandum of understanding to ensure they adhere to the order. So what we did was to give some MoU for the vice-chancellors to come over and sign toward cessation of this activity. So what we have done is that for students who have already been admitted to these centres, they will be sorted out."

Harry Kwame Opoku added, "We are going to give them a four-year plan to teach the students. We have directed that these institutions do not admit or do not engage in fresh admission of students. We are also going to conduct an academic audit based on all the expenses."

Source: *The Independent Ghana*



Professor Ahmed Abdulai Jinapor, Director-General of GTEC

## NDC petitions OSP to probe Registrar of Scholarship Secretariat over alleged corruption

Deputy National Youth Organizer of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), Osman Ayariga, has urged the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP) to investigate head of the Ghana Scholarship Secretariat, Dr. Kingsley Agyemang, following a recent scandal exposed by the media.

Mr Ayariga's call for an inquiry follows reports from the media revealing alleged misconduct within the Secretariat under its current leadership.

He has formally submitted a petition to the OSP, stressing the urgency of thoroughly examining the activities of the Registrar and other staff regarding scholarship allocations. This petition, presented on Tuesday, April 9, underscores the imperative need for swift investigation.

Mr Ayariga emphasized the necessity of ensuring fair distribution of

scholarships to deserving Ghanaian students, rather than favoring individuals based on political affiliations or wealth.

He urged the OSP to expedite the investigation to prevent further misuse of resources within the Scholarship Secretariat.

The demand for investigation stems from recent media exposés revealing disparities in scholarship allocation, which seemed to benefit affluent individuals with connections.

In response to the scandal, the Minority in Parliament is demanding the immediate suspension of Dr. Kingsley Agyemang, asserting that the investigation findings necessitate decisive action to rectify unfair practices that disadvantage deserving Ghanaian students.

Meanwhile, the Registrar of the Scholarship Secretariat, Dr. Kingsley Agyemang, has emphasized the

urgent need for legislation to govern scholarship distribution. He highlighted the challenges faced by officials in determining eligibility due to the lack of clear legislative guidelines, emphasizing the

importance of transparent eligibility standards to ensure fairness and eliminate ambiguity in the allocation process.

Source: *The Independent Ghana* / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Osman Ayariga, Deputy National Youth Organizer of the NDC



# General News

## You can't be faithful to a nation if you cheat on a woman - Abu Sakara

**A** member of the new alliance called the Alliance For Revolutionary Change (ARC), Dr. Michael Abu Sakara Foster, believes that a man who cannot be faithful to his wife cannot be faithful to his country.

According to him, a man's home is where he demonstrates his authority and manages affairs. Therefore, if a man cannot remain faithful to his partner, it raises doubts about his commitment.

"I believe that if you cannot be faithful to your woman, you cannot be faithful to a nation. That is your core, that is your house and how you run your household, and the commitment you have to it tells me about the commitment you can have to the nation," he said.

Alan Kyerematen's Movement for Change (M4C) has announced its

partnership with the National Interest Movement (NIM) for the upcoming 2024 elections.

Led by former Convention Peoples Party (CPP) flagbearer Dr. Michael Abu Sakara Foster, the National Interest Movement will collaborate with M4C under the banner of the Alliance For Revolutionary Change (ARC).

According to a statement from the Movement for Change Secretariat, the alliance will officially launch on April 17, 2024.

The statement also noted that the alliance aims to elect the first Independent Candidate as President of the Republic of Ghana, marking a significant shift from the dominance of the two major political parties, the NDC and NPP.

*Source: The Independent Ghana*



*Dr. Michael Abu Sakara Foster, member of Alliance For Revolutionary Change (ARC)*

## SHS student jailed 15 years for stealing teacher's rice and stew, Infinix phone, others

**A**n 18-year-old student from Adanwomase Senior High School has been sentenced to 15 years of hard labor by the Circuit Court in Old Tafo, Ashanti Region, for the theft of a teacher's belongings.

Judge Festus Nukunu imposed the sentence on Gabriel Osei Kwame for his involvement in the robbery of Matilda Boatema, a teacher at Gyaman Pensan Senior High School.

Gabriel confessed to the robbery charge under section 149 of the Criminal and Other Offences Act (Act 29) of 1960.

The incident occurred on the morning of March 4, 2024, around 7:30 am when Gabriel assaulted Matilda with a jackknife near her residence in Adanwomase, Ashanti Region.

According to reports by the media, the SHS student stole her Infinix Hot 9 smartphone valued at GH¢700, cash totaling GH¢570, as well as rice, stew, and some documents. Matilda promptly reported the robbery to the Asonomaso police.

Upon investigation, the complainant's bag was found abandoned in a nearby bush, although the phone and cash were missing. The police collected evidence from the scene for further inquiry.

On March 25, 2024, Matilda identified Gabriel in the company of a friend in Adanwomaso, leading to his arrest

and subsequent handover to the Asonomaso police. Initially, Gabriel denied any involvement in the robbery but later confessed to the police.

According to the police, the accused admitted to robbing the complainant and disclosed that he sold the stolen phone at Adum PZ for GH¢250.

State prosecutor, Inspector Alfred

Aruk, informed the court that Gabriel was unable to assist the police in recovering the phone.

Following the investigation, he was charged with robbery and brought before the court.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey*



*File photo*



# General News

## Ghana faces economic and security implications over power cuts to Burkina Faso - Kwabena Donkor

**F**ormer Power Minister, Dr. Kwabena Donkor, has cautioned that Ghana could encounter economic and security challenges due to a decrease in electricity exports to Burkina Faso.

He emphasized that despite Ghana's contractual obligations with the neighboring country, failure to fulfill these agreements might prompt Burkina Faso to seek alternative solutions.

Dr. Donkor warned that if Burkina Faso decides to construct a dam as an alternative, it could impact Ghana's electricity production.

Speaking on JoyNews, he explained, "For example, Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, other than solar, is totally dependent on power

from Ghana 100%. If you give Burkina Faso and Sunnabel zero (power) whether peak or off-peak, it means they are in darkness.

"It has both economic and security implications, as well as even strategic implications. Let's take the strategic implication first. If I were Burkinabe or was in the leadership of Burkina Faso, one I will say supply from Ghana is unreliable, why don't you look for alternate sources?"

His remarks come after a directive was issued to limit electricity exports to other countries until Ghana's power crisis is resolved.

Samuel Atta Akyea, Chairman of the Mines and Energy Committee of Parliament, hinted at reducing power exports as a measure to tackle the

erratic power supply.

However, Dr. Donkor criticized this approach as short-sighted and potentially problematic. He highlighted concerns about breaching contractual obligations and the impact on Ghana's domestic supply.

Dr. Donkor also noted the challenge of erratic payments for power purchased by the Electricity Company of Ghana from the Bui Power Authority, which threatens the authority's operations.

"And the alternate sources could be building more dams, mini dams in Burkina. Remember, the Volta takes its source outside Ghana. So if they begin to build more dams, it will affect our generation. So we must always have that in mind."

"And it was so short-sighted. Okay, in order to boost domestic supply, let's breach our contractual obligations. [But wouldn't that come with implications?] Absolutely," he added.

"Bui, there was an overdrafting of Bui late last year till now, so Bui's generation has to slow down and it's slowing down because if it doesn't slow down, then the reservoir will run out. So Bui's contribution now, in terms of quantum, is going down.

"Well, Bui has a challenge. ECG is Bui's only off-taker. And when ECG is unable to pay, in fact, there have been months when Bui has had to take a bank overdraft to pay salaries. Because ECG was unable to pay them."

**Source: *The Independent Ghana***



**Dr. Kwabena Donkor, Former Power Minister**



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# Business

## BOG considers handing Gold for Oil implementation policy to commercial banks

The Bank of Ghana (BoG) is considering a new approach to its Gold for Oil Policy, contemplating the possibility of involving commercial banks in its implementation.

This potential shift in strategy comes as the Central Bank reassesses its role, aiming to focus more on essential functions like monetary policy and maintaining price stability.

Governor of the Central Bank, Dr. Ernest Addison, emphasized the strategic value of the Gold for Oil Policy in bolstering the country's reserves.

"It is a programme that we recommend to continue because it helped us in the period of crisis. We only want to make sure that this is done by a commercial bank so that we can have time to focus on our operations as a central bank. So this is the discussion that we are holding going forward but the ability to be able to exchange our natural resource directly for

oil when oil prices get out of hand, we think that it is a very innovative programme," he explained.

Dr. Addison emphasized the long-term benefits of the initiative, stressing its positive impact on Ghana's economic stability and development.

"So it is really about the central bank spreading itself too thin by trying to add gold for oil also into our business but we are fully focused on buying gold to build our reserves", the Governor said to the Public Accounts Committee in Parliament.

Addressing the Public Accounts Committee in Parliament, Dr. Addison elaborated on the rationale behind the potential transition, emphasizing the need to streamline the central bank's focus while ensuring the continuity of a valuable program.

Despite acknowledging some limitations, Dr. Addison reaffirmed the Central Bank's support for the Gold4Oil policy, citing its critical

role during economic challenges. "This is an intervention which was very critical in the heat of the crisis, yes the foreign exchange market is functioning better than it was in 2022. Oil prices have come down much better than they were in 2022. The situation is much better now than it was in 2022 when the Gold4Oil policy was introduced.

"However, we think that it's still an important programme for the government to have that option and to be able to empower commercial banks to undertake their activities. Should market sentiments change, which do every day, we don't know what will happen tomorrow. And we will wake up and if we find ourselves in a situation where the prices are driving the pumps to where they were again. The government has an option to fall on. It's a very innovative instrument."

He highlighted the program's effectiveness in managing oil price fluctuations and hinted at potential enhancements to Ghana's gold

reserves.

"There is going to be a big jump in gold holdings for Ghana," he assured.

The proposed involvement of commercial banks represents a strategic realignment aimed at improving operational efficiency within the banking sector while safeguarding Ghana's energy needs.

The Gold for Oil (G4O) program in Ghana operates as a cyclical policy facilitating the exchange of gold for oil, providing a strategic approach to oil import transactions.

Initiated by the Bank of Ghana (BOG) and Precious Minerals Marketing Company (PMMC), the program involves purchasing gold in cedis under a petroleum purchasing agreement, part of which is used to secure oil, leveraging the dual status of gold and oil as international reserves.

**Source: Independent Ghana/ Sebastian Akaho-Tay**



**Dr. Ernest Addison, Governor of the Central Bank**



# Business

## Ghanaian cocoa farmers earn \$47 more per tonne than Ivorian counterparts – COCOBOD

The Public Relations Officer of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Fiifi Bofo, has lauded the achievements of the Akufo-Addo government in the cocoa sector, despite criticism from the minority in Parliament.

Speaking on The Point of View on Citi TV, Bofo defended the government against accusations of shortchanging cocoa farmers. He highlighted a 58% increase in the producer price for cocoa.

Bofo pointed out that Ghanaian cocoa farmers have consistently received higher payments than their Ivorian counterparts over the past seven years, except for 2023.

“The difference between how much Ghana is paying cocoa farmers, and the Ivorians are paying cocoa farmers, we’re paying \$47 more to our Ghanaian farmers compared to Ivorian farmers. And the people who told us to replicate what the Ivorians have done, now say that what we have done is wrong and we are cheating the cocoa farmers. If I’m asked to do something someone is doing and I do the same, do you accuse me of doing the wrong thing, no.

“Last year [2023] due to the exchange rate, the Ivorians’ price got better than Ghana’s. But the government in the last 7 years, with the exception of last year [2023], has paid better prices to cocoa farmers as compared to the

Ivorian counterparts,” Fiifi Bofo stated.

Bofo refuted claims of exploitation, stating that Ghanaian cocoa farmers receive \$47 more than those in Cote d’Ivoire, challenging accusations of cheating farmers.

“The premium levels are different I admit, but in Côte D’Ivoire, there’s nothing like cooling down periods for cocoa farmers. There’s nothing like subsidized fertilizer given to cocoa farmers. All interventions COCOBOD is giving to farmers in Ghana, the Ivorian counterparts are not enjoying the same.”

“We’re treating more of our farms affected, you can say today that the numbers are not looking good, but it’s as a result of an action taken to

ensure going into the future, we are in a better position to produce cocoa,” he said.

Regarding lower production levels in Ghana compared to Cote d’Ivoire, Bofo attributed this to factors like infested farms, swollen shoot disease, and adverse weather conditions.

He emphasized the government’s actions for long-term sustainability in cocoa production.

Bofo also addressed allegations of cocoa smuggling, clarifying that the major smuggling point is at the Togo border, not the Ivory Coast.

**Source: Independent Ghana**



**Fiifi Bofo, Public Relations Officer of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD)**



# International

## Nigeria recovers \$24m in poverty minister investigation - EFCC

**N**igeria has recovered 30bn naira (\$24m; £19m) as part of an ongoing corruption probe into a suspended minister, the financial watchdog says.

The funds were traced to more than 50 bank accounts, it said.

Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation Minister Betta Edu was initially suspended in January over the alleged diversion of \$640,000 of public money into a personal bank account.

President Bola Tinubu then ordered an investigation into her ministry.

At the time Dr Edu, 37, denied any wrongdoing. Her office said she had approved the transfer into a personal account, which was not

in her name, but said it was for the "implementation of grants to vulnerable groups".

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) said during its nearly six weeks of investigating so far, it had found "many angles" to examine.

"As it is now, we are investigating over 50 bank accounts that we have traced money into. That is no child's play. That's a big deal," its chairman Ola Olukoyede said in the latest edition of the agency's monthly e-magazine, EFCC Alert.

He urged Nigerians seeking redress to give the agency time to finish its probe thoroughly.

"We are exploring so many discoveries that we have stumbled

upon in our investigation. If it is about seeing people in jail, well let them wait, everything has a process to follow," he said.

The EFCC chairman gave an assurance that the recovered funds

were "already in the coffers of the federal government".

The suspension of a minister is a rare occurrence in Nigeria.

**Source: BBC**



**Betta Edu, Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation Minister**

## South Africa's Jacob Zuma wins court bid to contest upcoming election

**A** South African court has ruled that former President Jacob Zuma can run for office in the country's upcoming general election, overturning an earlier decision that had barred him from contesting the polls.

The Electoral Court decision on Tuesday paves the way for Zuma to run for president on behalf of the uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MK), a political organisation that he joined last year after denouncing the governing African National Congress party that he once led.

The electoral commission had earlier ruled that Zuma could not run for office due to his criminal record after it received an objection to his candidacy.

"The decision of the Electoral Commission ... is set aside," the court wrote in its ruling.

South Africa is to hold a general election on May 29 in what is expected to be the most competitive vote since the advent of democracy in 1994.

Zuma was sentenced to 15 months

in jail in June 2021 after refusing to testify to a panel probing financial corruption and cronyism under his presidency.

On Monday, his lawyers told the court the sentence did not disqualify the veteran politician as it followed civil, rather than criminal, proceedings and it had been shortened by a remission.

Jajra Omarjel, a South African political analyst, said that Tuesday's decision was highly unexpected.

"Jacob Zuma continues to leave us in shock as he did during his nine years as the president of South Africa," she said.

The ruling comes with the ANC struggling in the polls amid a weak economy and allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

Some opinion polls put MK at above 10 percent nationwide, a share that would make it the third or fourth political force behind the ANC and the liberal Democratic Alliance.

The party is projected to make a particularly strong showing in the battleground region of KwaZulu-Natal - Zuma's home province.

It largely relies on the considerable political clout still wielded by Zuma, who despite scandals and corruption allegations is still popular, particularly among the

country's more than 10 million Zulus.

South Africans will be voting for a new parliament, which in turn will elect the president.

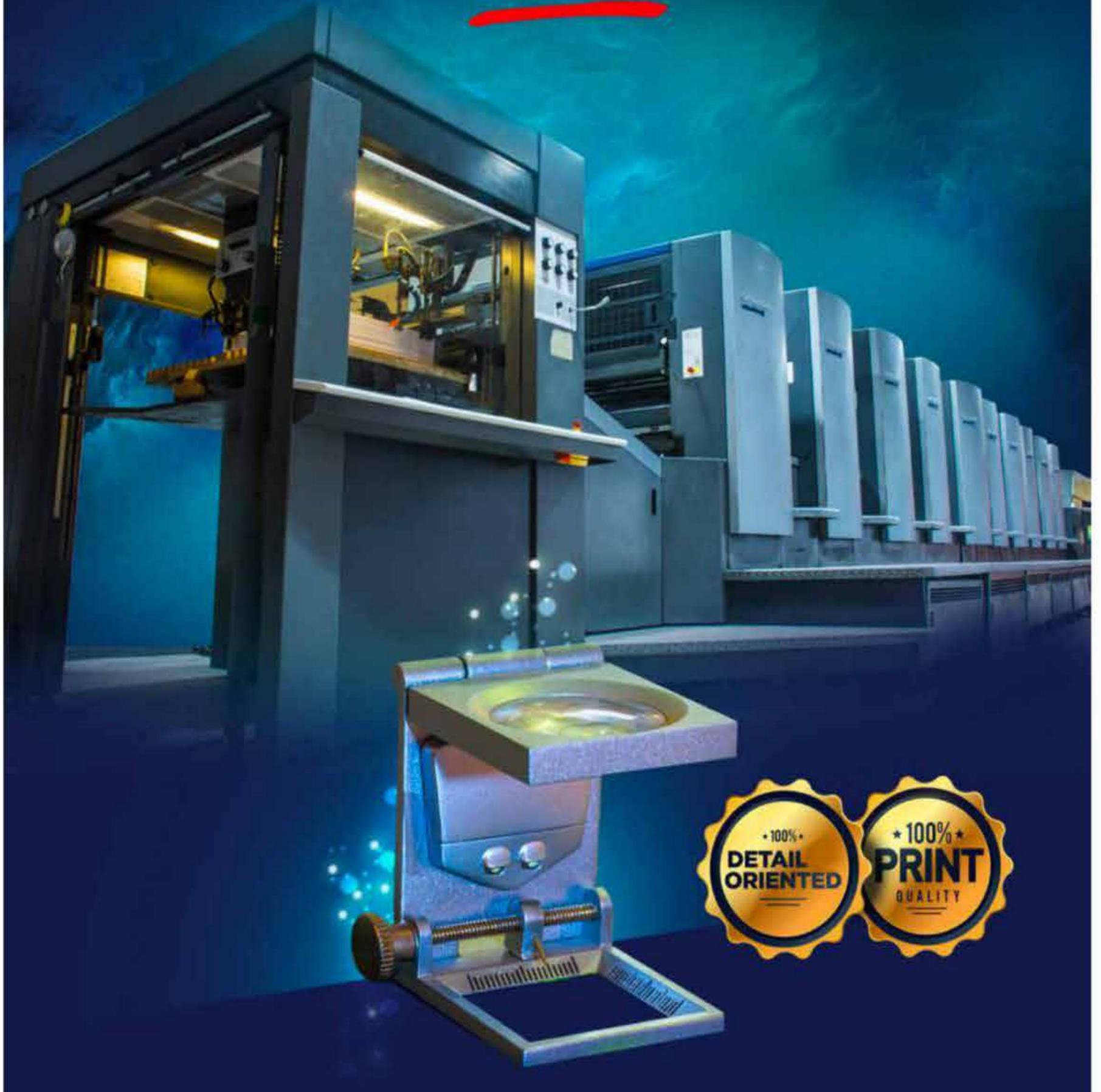
**Source: Al Jazeera and News Agencies**



**Jacob Zuma, former President of South Africa**

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