



I won't discriminate; I'll serve the Ghanaian youth - George Opare Addo vows

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Lower cost of living; check inflation and cedi depreciation - Mahama charges Finance Minister

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General News

Ensure your appointees declare their assets before swearing them in - Domelevo to Mahama

By **Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey**

Former Auditor-General Daniel Domelevo has urged President John Mahama to ensure that all appointees declare their assets before being sworn into office. Mr. Domelevo commended the President for directing six new ministers to declare their assets during a swearing-in ceremony on Wednesday at the Jubilee House but emphasized that this requirement should be fulfilled before they assume office.

"If I were the president... I would have told them, after going through vetting and all of that, go and declare your assets and liabilities before I swear you in," Domelevo stated in an interview on JoyFM on Thursday. He argued that this approach would demonstrate a stronger commitment to good governance and set a higher standard for public officials.

Mr. Domelevo also stressed the need for robust enforcement of asset declaration laws in Ghana. He called on institutions like the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to ensure compliance and hold public officials accountable. Proactive enforcement, Domelevo

believes, would deter corruption and enhance confidence in the governance system.

To solidify this practice, Mr. Domelevo urged President Mahama to institutionalize a policy requiring pre-swearing-in asset declarations for future appointments. "This simple yet powerful measure can serve as a cornerstone in Ghana's fight against corruption and set the tone for a more accountable government."

Asked how practical it is for nominees to comply with the requirement given the apparent short notice between their nomination and assumption of office, Domelevo argued that declaring assets is a quick process. He added that it is better to uphold the law regardless of perceived challenges.

"Well, practicality is one thing; the requirement of the law is another. But let me tell you, unless you are a multimillionaire billionaire, declaring your assets doesn't take more than an hour to complete. I have declared my assets twice. Are you saying that as a minister, you are so busy that you cannot spare an hour or two to fill out that form? That

is a constitutional requirement," he said.

"The question is, what is enough time? The Constitution says before you take office, so you hold on and declare before you take office. Are you saying to me that if they offered you US\$1 million or GH¢1 million, contingent on declaring your assets and liabilities before the close of today, you wouldn't be able to do it?" he added.

Ghana's Constitution, in Article 286 (1), requires a significant number of public office holders to submit to the Auditor-General "a written declaration of all property

or assets owned by, or liabilities owed by, them whether directly or indirectly: (a) within three months after the coming into force of this Constitution or before taking office, as the case may be; (b) at the end of every four years; and (c) at the end of their term of office."

Mr. Domelevo expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) has managed cases of non-declaration of assets. He contended that the Commission's efforts in this area have been inadequate and require significant improvement.



Daniel Domelevo, Former Auditor-General

Lower cost of living; check inflation and cedi depreciation - Mahama charges Finance Minister

By **Phoebe Martekie Doku**

Okyenhene Osagyefuo Amoatia Ofori Panin has directed all operators of mining equipment along the Birim River to remove their machinery by Friday, February 28, or risk confiscation.

This directive follows mounting concerns over the deteriorating quality of the river's water, which serves as the main source for the Kyebi water treatment plant.

In a statement issued by the Public Affairs Directorate of the Akyem Abuakwa State, the Council declared: "A task force has been constituted to rid the Birim River of illegal miners. All owners of

excavator machines are hereby ordered to remove them on or before February 28, 2025. Failure to comply will result in the removal and confiscation of equipment without further recourse to their owners."

The move comes in response to complaints from residents about chemically contaminated and visibly dirty water flowing from their taps. Investigations have revealed the resurgence of illegal mining activities along the river, causing extensive damage to the water source and surrounding environment.

The Okyenhene, in consultation with the Akyem Abuakwa

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Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson, Minister of Finance

General News

Lower cost of living; check inflation and cedi depreciation - Mahama charges Finance Minister

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Traditional Council, emphasized the urgent need to protect the community's water bodies. He further highlighted the critical role of local leadership in safeguarding the environment, especially when state security agencies appear unable to effectively address the

issue. The Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) has expressed concern over the rising turbidity levels in the Birim River, which have hindered the Kyebi water treatment plant's ability to process clean water for the community. Officials warned that, if unchecked,

the plant could become inoperable, severely disrupting water supply to Kyebi and its surrounding areas.

The government has taken steps to combat illegal mining activities, including the formation of task forces to confiscate

mining equipment and stricter enforcement of mining regulations. Public awareness campaigns and community initiatives have also highlighted the devastating impact of galamsey on water bodies, forests, and the environment at large.

I won't discriminate; I'll serve the Ghanaian youth - George Opare Addo vows

By Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

George Opare Addo, Minister responsible for Youth Development and Empowerment, has pledged to lead with fairness and inclusivity, vowing to prioritize the needs of Ghanaian youth without bias or favoritism.

During his vetting before Parliament's Appointments Committee on January 22, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) Youth Organiser assured the committee of his unwavering dedication to the newly established ministry's objectives.

"I started by saying that the day His Excellency nominated me, I put out a statement urging every Ghanaian youth to believe in the kind of leadership I bring on board. I am not going to be discriminatory. I'm here to serve the Ghanaian youth and no other person," Opare Addo stated confidently.

Emphasizing his commitment to collaboration, he added, "I don't care about your political party. Bring me a proposal that creates jobs for the youth, and I'll work with you."

Expectations are high for the newly created Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment, which aims to tackle the pressing challenges facing Ghana's youth, including

unemployment and limited opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Recent data from the African Development Bank (AfDB) highlights the gravity of the situation. According to the AfDB's 2024 Africa Economic Outlook, Ghana's youth unemployment rate reached 7.16% in 2023, with the issue being particularly severe among

those aged 15 to 24. The report also underscores a significant gender disparity, with female youth unemployment at 36.7% compared to 29.3% for their male counterparts.

The Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, has expressed alarm over the escalating youth unemployment crisis. He called for urgent, collective action to address the situation, warning

of dire consequences for the nation if effective measures are not implemented.

"The joblessness, the homelessness, and the hopelessness of the youth cannot be taken lightly. We must act together and now to prevent a journey to calamity or a journey of no return," Bagbin cautioned.



George Opare Addo, Minister-designate for Youth Development and Empowerment

General News

11 cholera cases recorded in Agona West - GHS

By Amanda Cartey

The Ghana Health Service (GHS) has confirmed 11 cases of cholera in the Agona West District of the Central Region, with approximately 214 suspected cases currently being managed in the municipality.

Bertha Arthur, the Municipal Health Director for Agona West, disclosed this during a media engagement. She explained, "As we speak, we have 214 suspected cases. Suspected means that some individuals reported with dehydration, diarrhoea, and vomiting. Out of the samples sent to the lab, 11 have been confirmed as cholera."

Arthur further noted the severity of the situation, stating, "In an outbreak condition, if a district suspects or confirms cases above a certain threshold, it indicates we have reached an emergency situation."

To curb the spread of the disease, the Municipal Health Directorate has intensified public education efforts. "We have heightened education to sensitize the public about the outbreak," Arthur said. "We are working with all stakeholders to address the situation. We also encourage the public to report to health facilities as early as possible if they notice cholera symptoms."

The cholera outbreak, which began in October 2024, has so far claimed 40 lives and infected 398 people across five regions. Dr. Dennis Laryea, Head of Disease Surveillance at the GHS, revealed that 4,850 suspected cases have been reported in the Greater Accra, Eastern, Central, Ashanti, and Western Regions.

In November 2023, the GHS launched an oral cholera vaccine as part of a strategic initiative to control the spread of the disease. The vaccination campaign employs a phased rollout strategy, with teams visiting homes, workplaces, religious gatherings,

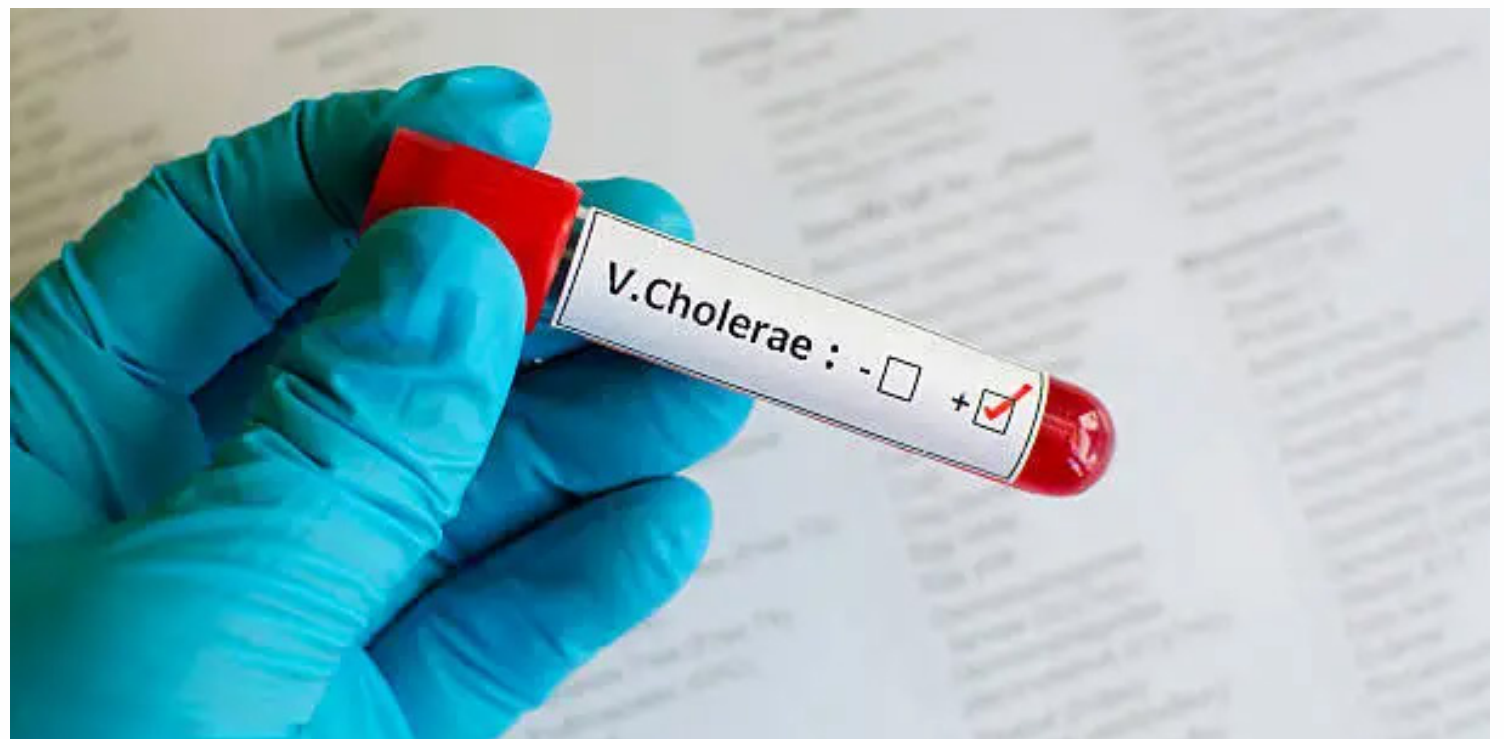
and other social events to ensure widespread coverage. Mobile teams are also stationed at health centres and hospitals to vaccinate as many people as possible.

To complement vaccination efforts, strict infection prevention and control practices are being enforced at health facilities. Community oral rehydration centres have been set up to manage mild cases, while public education campaigns on cholera prevention are being conducted through mobile vans, radio discussions, and other platforms. These campaigns emphasize the importance of safe

drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene practices.

Furthermore, the GHS is conducting water sampling and testing from affected districts to identify contaminated sources. Vaccination campaigns are also being prioritized in cholera hotspot areas to mitigate further spread.

The GHS continues to urge the public to maintain high hygiene standards and report symptoms of cholera, such as diarrhoea and vomiting, to health facilities promptly.



File photo

Fire outbreak at Saboba SHS claims student's life

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

The Saboba Senior High School (SHS) in the Northern Region is in mourning following a tragic fire incident on Wednesday that claimed the life of a student.

Binidan Theresah, who was reportedly unwell, was unable to escape from the girls' dormitory block during the fire and tragically lost her life. Her body has been deposited at the Saboba Hospital. The Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) faced significant challenges in containing the intense flames upon arriving at the scene. The Saboba District Fire Officers were forced to use buckets to fight the fire due to a malfunction in the fire

vehicle's water pump. Saboba District Fire Officer, ADO1 Yussif Issahaku, explained to the media, "We had no option but to start fetching water in buckets. With the assistance of the students and staff, we were able to quench the fire."

After the flames were extinguished, it was revealed that personal belongings and other properties, including the girls' dormitory block, were destroyed, leaving the school in a state of devastation.

The GNFS has launched an investigation into the fire incident as the school mourns and assesses its losses.

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Saboba SHS building after Fire outbreak

General News

Fire outbreak at Saboba SHS claims student's life

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This tragic event comes amid a spate of fire outbreaks in Ghana less than a month into the year. The destruction of homes, businesses,

and markets has raised concerns among citizens, with many calling for investigations into what they suspect may be deliberate acts by

unknown individuals.

As part of its response, the GNFS has emphasized the need to increase fire safety awareness,

conduct regular inspections, and ensure strict adherence to safety regulations to prevent such incidents in the future.

Okyenhene orders task force to confiscate excavators along Birim River after Feb 28

By Amanda Cartey

Okyenhene Osagyefuo Amoatia Ofori Panin has directed all owners of mining equipment operating along the Birim River to remove their machinery by Friday, February 28, or face confiscation.

The directive follows growing concerns about the rising turbidity of the river's water, which serves as a primary source for the Kyebi water treatment plant.

In a statement issued by the Public Affairs Directorate of the Akyem Abuakwa State, the Council stated: "A task force has been constituted to rid the Birim River of illegal miners. All owners of excavator

machines are hereby ordered to remove them on or before the 28th day of February 2025."

The Council further warned that the task force has been instructed to confiscate excavators and other mining equipment without any further recourse to their owners.

This action was prompted by complaints from residents who reported chemically contaminated and dirty water flowing from their taps. Investigations revealed the return of illegal mining activities along the river, causing severe damage to the water source and surrounding environment.

The Okyenhene, in consultation with the Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Council, issued the

order as part of ongoing efforts to protect the community's water bodies. The Council underscored the critical role of local leadership in safeguarding the environment, especially in instances where state security agencies fail to intervene effectively.

The Ghana Water Company Limited recently reported that high turbidity levels in the water drawn from the Birim River have compromised the Kyebi water treatment plant's ability to process water. If the situation persists, the plant risks becoming inoperable, severely impacting water supply to the township and nearby communities.

The government has implemented various measures to curb illegal mining activities, including forming task forces to confiscate illegal mining equipment and enforcing stricter mining laws. Public awareness campaigns and community activism have also highlighted the detrimental effects of galamsey on water bodies, forest reserves, and the environment at large, while advocating for sustainable mining practices.

Despite these efforts, the challenge remains significant, necessitating continuous and coordinated actions to protect the environment, public health, and the economy.



Okyenhene Osagyefuo Amoatia Ofori Panin

General News

Parliament approves nominations of 6 more ministers-designate

By *Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

Parliament has approved six additional ministerial nominees appointed by President John Mahama, increasing the total number of approved ministers to twelve.

The recent appointees include Naa Momo Lartey as Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection; Ahmed Ibrahim as Minister for Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs; Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare as Minister for Trade, Agribusiness, and Industry; Abla Dzifa Gomashie as Minister for Tourism, Culture, and Creative Arts; Emelia Arthur as Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture; and George Opare-Addo as Minister for Youth Development and Empowerment.

The approval of these nominees was finalized on Thursday, January 23, following extensive deliberations in Parliament. During the proceedings,

the majority of legislators expressed confidence in the appointees' abilities and called for efficiency in the discharge of their duties.

Earlier in the week, during a sitting chaired by Second Deputy Speaker Andrew Asiamah Amoako, Parliament had also approved six other ministerial nominees. These appointees included Kwame Govers Agbodza as Minister for Roads and Highways; Eric Opoku as Minister for Food and Agriculture; Haruna Iddrisu as Minister for Education; Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson as Minister of Finance; John Abdulai Jinapor as Minister of Energy; and Dr. Dominic Akuritinga Ayine as Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

On Wednesday, President Mahama swore in the first batch of six ministers at the Jubilee House. During the ceremony, he emphasized the critical nature of their roles in advancing the administration's vision for Ghana's

progress, particularly in key areas such as the economy and energy.

"I've just sworn you in—the first six ministers who are responsible for perhaps the most critical sectors of our national life, especially the economy and energy sectors," President Mahama stated.

He outlined specific responsibilities for each minister, highlighting the high expectations of Ghanaians and urging the appointees to deliver on their mandates with dedication and efficiency.



Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare (L), Ahmed Ibrahim (M) and Naa Momo Lartey (R)

New Majority leadership sworn in; Ayariga vows consensus-building to reset Ghana

By *Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*

The Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, has sworn in the newly constituted Majority Leadership in Parliament, with Mahama Ayariga, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Bawku Central, as the new Majority Leader.

This leadership change follows Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson's appointment as the Minister of Finance. Before assuming his new role, Dr. Forson served as the Majority Leader.

On Thursday, Kweku George Ricketts-Hagan, MP for Cape Coast South, was appointed as the Deputy Majority Leader. Other notable changes include Rockson-Nelson Dafeamekpor, MP for South Dayi, taking over as the Majority Chief Whip, replacing Govers Agbodza. Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe-Ghansah, MP for Ada Constituency, now serves as the First Deputy Whip, while Richard Acheampong, MP for Bia East, assumes the position of Second Deputy Majority Whip.

These leadership adjustments aim to enhance coordination within the

Majority Caucus and strengthen the team's capacity to implement their legislative and governance priorities.

In his acceptance speech, Mahama Ayariga pledged to promote unity through consensus-building and assured that the Majority's significant representation in Parliament would be exercised responsibly. "As President John Dramani Mahama has said, these overwhelming numbers will not be abused," Ayariga affirmed. He further committed to advancing democracy, fostering national unity, and ensuring equitable development while upholding principles of probity and accountability.

Acknowledging the challenges ahead, Ayariga expressed confidence in Parliament's ability to overcome obstacles through constructive dialogue and mutual respect.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ato Forson expressed heartfelt gratitude to his colleagues and the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) for entrusting him with the responsibility of leading the Majority Caucus since the inception of the 9th Parliament on January 7.



Mahama Ayariga, Majority Leadership in Parliament

General News

5.1M beneficiaries of Free SHS misleading - Education Minister orders for audit

By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Education Minister Haruna Iddrisu has contested the statistics surrounding the number of beneficiaries of Ghana's Free Senior High School (Free SHS) program, expressing concerns about the figures cited by the previous administration.

Speaking during his first visit to the Ministry of Education on Wednesday, Mr. Iddrisu raised doubts about the claim that the initiative had benefited 5.1 million Ghanaian students over seven years. He stated, "I am not saying mine is right, but 5.1 million is misleading. I have reviewed the numbers from 2017 to 2023, and I am convinced that the number

of students who have actually benefited from the Free SHS policy stands at no more than 3.9 million." According to the Minister, the discrepancy in these figures calls for an audit to verify the exact number of beneficiaries. "One of the very first major issues the country must address is the statistical validity of how many Ghanaians have benefited from Free Senior High School. But I need a validation of that data to begin with," he explained.

The former President, Nana Akufo-Addo, before leaving office, lauded the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy introduced by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government in 2017. He described it as a game-changing initiative that

had benefited 5.7 million youth nationwide. This statement was made during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2024.

However, Minister Iddrisu emphasized that verifying the Free SHS statistics would ensure more reliable data, which could guide future educational programs and reforms. He clarified that this was not an effort to undermine previous findings but rather to build a strong foundation for future planning.

The current government is keen on assessing the status of Ghana's educational system and developing evidence-based reforms. This has led to the call for a National

Education Conference, where the validation of the Free SHS statistics will be a crucial starting point.

Meanwhile, during the 2024 Mid-Year Budget Review presented in Parliament, former Finance Minister Dr. Mohammed Amin Adams revealed that the government had invested a total of GH¢9.9 billion in the Free SHS initiative since its launch in 2017.

"The impact of the program is evident," Dr. Adams noted. "To date, over GH¢9.9 billion has been spent, and a cumulative total of 5.7 million young people have benefited from this initiative, many of whom might not have had this opportunity otherwise."



Haruna Iddrisu, Education Minister

General News

We will head to ECOWAS Court after March if Ahmed Suale's murder case isn't resolved - GJA

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) has announced its intention to take the murder case of investigative journalist Ahmed Suale to the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice.

This decision stems from prolonged delays in the investigation, arrests, and prosecution of those responsible for the crime. In a speech delivered by the Association's President, Albert Kwabena Dwumfuor, on January 22, during a news conference at the Ghana International Press Centre, the GJA addressed critical media issues that require urgent redress in 2025.

Mr Dwumfuor revealed the Association's plans to seek redress in international courts "given the fast-eroding trust and confidence in the Police regarding the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of suspects involved in the murder of Ahmed Suale." Dwumfuor criticized the Ghana

Police Service for its "lackadaisical investigations" into the murder, which occurred almost six years ago. Ahmed Suale was killed near his family home in Madina, a suburb of Accra, on January 16, 2019.

The GJA has given the Police up to March 2025 to provide the public with concrete updates on the investigation. The Association also urged the President and Attorney General to take a keen interest in the case.

"You may recall the shocking disclosure made by the former Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Godfred Yeboah Dame, in February 2024, that his office had not received from the Police any docket fit for prosecution or action on the murder of Ahmed Suale. First, we are giving the Ghana Police Service up to the end of March 2025 to come out with something concrete on the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of suspects in the murder case. We urge the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), the Attorney-General and Minister

of Justice-designate, and the President to take a keen interest in this case," Dwumfuor stated.

Threatening to seek redress in the ECOWAS Court is one of several steps the GJA is taking to find justice for Ahmed Suale. Among its initiatives, the Association plans to hold press conferences at the end of February and March 2025 to update the public on the case.

The GJA also intends to brief international partners, including diplomatic missions, the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ), and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). According to Dwumfuor, these partners have expressed significant interest in the case and are prepared to escalate the matter internationally if necessary. Notably, the FAJ's recent meeting in Rwanda prominently discussed Ahmed Suale's murder.

Meanwhile, various institutions and individuals have expressed concerns about the delay in solving the case. The most recent voice is

that of the Member of Parliament for Gomoa Central, Kwame Asare-Obeng, popularly known as A-Plus.

He announced that he had provided information about the suspected killers to the Police Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and threatened to publicly reveal the suspect's name if the Police fail to update the public soon.

Ahmed Hussein-Suale was a key member of Tiger Eye PI, an undercover investigative journalism team led by Anas Aremeyaw Anas. He was tragically murdered on January 16, 2019, near his residence in Madina, Accra, by unknown gunmen.

His killing followed the release of the investigative piece titled "Number 12," which exposed corruption in Ghanaian football. This investigation had significant repercussions, including the resignation of the Ghana Football Association President, Kwesi Nyantakyi, and the suspension of several referees and officials.



Albert Kwabena Dwumfuor, GJA President



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Business

Ghana to transform Ho Airport into first-class pilot training school in West Africa - Mahama

By Amanda Cartey

President John Dramani Mahama has unveiled plans to transform the Ho Airport in the Volta Region into a premier pilot training school, aiming to serve aspiring aviators across West Africa.

Speaking during a courtesy call with clergy from the Volta Region at the Jubilee House on Tuesday, President Mahama outlined the proposal as part of ongoing efforts to optimize the use of the Ho Airport.

He stated, "There is a proposal to use the Ho Airport as a pilot training school—a first-class facility for West Africa—where aspiring pilots can come to Ho for their training. This initiative will help us make better use of the airport, and we are working on this plan to ensure its prompt implementation."

This proposal follows a period of uncertainty for the Ho Airport, which saw its commercial viability questioned after PassionAir, a local airline, suspended flights to the Volta Regional capital in March 2022.

During his address, President Mahama took the opportunity to provide context for the suspension of flights, noting that the initial vision for the airport had been for it to become a major commercial hub for domestic airlines.

"We built the Ho Airport with high expectations that it would become a major commercial route for our domestic airlines. Indeed, one of the airlines, PassionAir, began operations. Unfortunately, the traffic did not develop as quickly as expected, so they had to pause and reassess their strategy for the Volta Region," he explained.

He further revealed that PassionAir had deployed two aircraft, one with a 70-passenger capacity and the other with 50, but suggested that a shift to smaller aircraft might better align with the demand. The former president expressed optimism that with a refined strategy, the airline could resume flights to Ho in the future.

The proposal to establish a pilot

training school at the Ho Airport is expected to revitalize the facility and position it as a key regional hub for aviation talent development. This initiative not only seeks to enhance the airport's value but also underscores the government's commitment to contributing to regional growth through investment in aviation training and infrastructure.



Ho Airport

Invest in cannabis cultivation to generate \$1bn annually - Chamber of Cannabis Industry to govt

By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

The Chamber of Cannabis Industry has urged the government to invest in the cannabis sector, highlighting its lucrative potential to generate substantial revenue. This call for investment aligns with the government's reset agenda and aims to diversify Ghana's cash crops, ultimately supporting the nation's economy.

Speaking at the launch of the Chamber of Cannabis Training Centre and Sky Bridge Pharmaceuticals in Accra on January 21, Dr. Mark Darko, Chief Executive Officer of the Chamber, emphasized that Ghana boasts one of the best climates globally for cultivating cannabis. He revealed that the global cannabis market, valued at \$50 billion, offers Ghana an opportunity to generate up to \$1 billion annually.

"One can make no less than \$10,000 from just one hectare of cannabis. This is a \$50 billion industry. If Ghana is able to generate at least \$1 billion annually from cannabis, you can imagine what that could do for our country. Cannabis has the potential to reset Ghana's economy," he said. Dr. Darko also encouraged the

government to explore cannabis for medicinal and industrial purposes, following the approval of the Narcotics Control Commission Bill, 2023, which permits industrial cannabis cultivation. He pointed out that medicinal cannabis is vital for the sector's growth, citing its benefits in managing chronic pain, treating epilepsy, and addressing other health conditions.

"The United States recorded over \$11 billion in medicinal cannabis revenue in 2021, and that figure is set to more than double by 2025. Europe, projected to become the largest medicinal cannabis market in the world, is expected to reach \$45 billion within the next five years," he said.

In addition to this, Dr. Darko highlighted the role of the Chamber's Training Centre, supported by Sky Bridge Pharmaceuticals, in equipping farmers and processors with sustainable cultivation and processing techniques for cannabis and hemp. The Centre will also encourage research and innovation to create products for global markets while promoting ethical practices. Dr. Samuel Twumasi, Group CEO of Sky Bridge Group, elaborated on their investment in the cannabis sector, aiming to produce high-quality,

cannabis-based medicines that meet international standards. He urged the government to expedite the approval of fees and charges for cannabis cultivation licenses to foster further investment in the sector.

Cannabis, also known as marijuana, is a herbal medicine derived from Cannabis plants. It is used to treat a

variety of symptoms and conditions, including cancer, chronic pain, and mental disorders.

According to Allied Market Research, the global cannabis market was valued at \$25.7 billion in 2021 and is expected to grow to \$148.9 billion by 2031.



Cannabis

International

South Sudan steps up vaccination, response measures to curb cholera

Nyaboth Gai, a 28-year-old resident of Rubkona, county in the north of South Sudan, is grateful to be alive after her family was severely affected by cholera, an infectious disease that can quickly lead to death if it is not detected and treated early. "All four members of my family got infected and I thank God for giving me another chance to live," she says. "I am grateful for the treatment we have been receiving in the health facility."

The cholera outbreak in South Sudan, which the government declared in October 2024, continues to worsen. Around 21 000 suspected and confirmed cases and around 367 deaths have been reported so far as of 15 January 2025, with more than a quarter of these reported in the last week of December. The case fatality ratio is currently 1.8%, which exceeds World Health Organization (WHO)'s target threshold of less than 1%.

While cholera cases have been reported in 31 out of 80 counties across seven states and one administrative area, Rubkona county accounts for 47% of total cases, followed by Juba county at around 10%. The ongoing influx of refugees and returnees fleeing the conflict in Sudan increases the risk of infectious disease outbreaks like cholera and continues to exert pressure on an already fragile health system. Renk county, the primary entry point for most of the returnees and refugees from Sudan, has reported around

550 confirmed and suspected cholera cases and three deaths. This accounts for almost 4% of the total cholera cases reported nationwide.

To address the rising cases of cholera, the Ministry of Health, with support from WHO and partners, in January 2025 rolled out several oral cholera vaccination campaigns in four high-risk counties – Malakal, Juba, Renk and, Rubkona. With support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, around 4 million doses of the vaccine have been approved and around 910 000 doses have so far been administered in the four counties, above 90% coverage.

"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our healthcare workers on the frontlines, who are dedicated to caring for cholera patients and curbing the transmission," says Minister of Health, Hon Yolanda Awel Deng. "The vaccine is lifesaving, and I encourage the community to get vaccinated and adhere to all precautionary measures to minimize the risk of contracting cholera."

WHO continues to distribute essential medical supplies for cholera response to local and national health authorities and partners. These include investigation and treatment kits, cholera beds, standalone rapid diagnostic tests and personal protective equipment to enhance cholera preparedness and response efforts. The supplies can treat 4700 cholera cases.

"While oral cholera vaccination is important, it is one of several tools to curb the ongoing outbreak," says Dr Humphrey Karamagi, WHO Representative in South Sudan, "WHO is supporting health authorities in all aspects of the outbreak response to ensure that we address comprehensive health needs and bring this outbreak to an end."

WHO has facilitated the establishment of a 50-bed cholera treatment centre at Juba Teaching Hospital and is supporting the deployment of nine rapid response teams from national level to 11 priority counties

to support implementing partners on the ground provide critical case management.

Gai and her family have since fully recovered and have been vaccinated. "I sincerely thank all the health workers and authorities for their care," she says. "The support has been invaluable during this difficult time for my family, and we are grateful. Now we have been vaccinated and no longer worried."

Source: WHO



File photo

Thousands flee as fighting in the eastern DRC escalates

The United Nations has warned that conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has reached alarming new levels. A video shared by the Congolese government on Thursday showed its troops operating in areas around the regional capital, Goma, and the town of Saké.

Fighting between the army and Rwanda-backed M23 rebels has intensified since the start of the year. The militant group captured the town of Minova on Tuesday, a key supply route to Goma which is close to the border with Rwanda.

The UN says over 250,000 people have been displaced in the past two weeks as the M23 advances, many of them fleeing on packed boats from Minova to Goma across Lake Kivu. Its peacekeeping mission in the DRC, MONUSCO, has reported heavy clashes between the M23, the army, and other armed groups near Saké, which is along the lake about halfway between the two.

On Thursday, there were unconfirmed reports that the M23 militants had captured the town.

Saké is home to the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC military base. The M23 has also captured other towns in the region in recent days, although it is unclear whether they will try to take Goma, which they seized in 2012 and controlled for over a week.

The M23, or the March 23 Movement, is a militant group composed of ethnic Tutsis who broke away from the Congolese army just over a decade ago. Rwanda denies accusations by the DRC, Western powers, and the United Nations that it supports the group with troops and weapons.

M23 is one of about 100 armed groups that have been vying for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern Congo since 1998 when the conflict began.

More than seven million people have been displaced since then.

Numerous diplomatic initiatives by neighbouring countries and others to resolve the conflicts have failed.

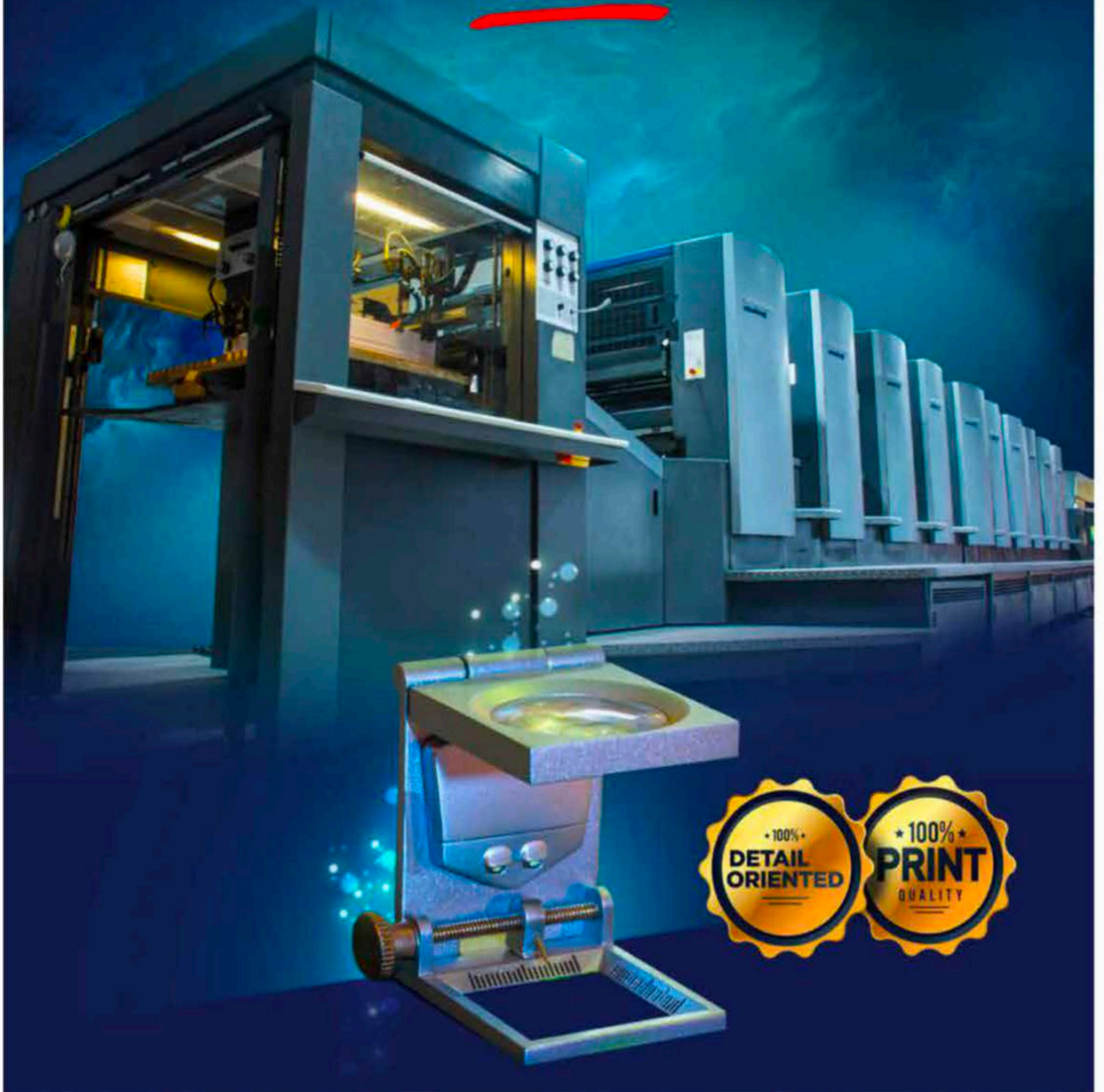
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