

A ROCHA DESCENDS ON LANDS MINISTER

Over Claims On Ghana's Forest Reserves



Samuel Abu Jinapor, Minister of Lands and Natural Resources

A ROCHA Ghana, a Forest Conservation Non-Governmental Organisation has accused the Minister for Lands

and Natural Resources, Samuel Abu Jinapor of making claims about Ghana's forest reserves that are inconsistent with information already

available to the public. According to the NGO the minister's claim that the ecological integrity of Ghana's Forest Reserves has largely

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**Social Justice Movement
Laments Over Ghana's
Economic Downturn
And Retrogression**

...Amid IMF Bailout, Investment

"Haircuts" And Pensioners' Protests

Social Justice Movement Ghana (SJMG), a pressure group has called on Ghanaians to reflect deeply about the country's current state of affairs especially the economic situation which it says is nothing to write home about. The group in a statement to mark Ghana's 66th Independence Day

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Slams Govt Over Abandoned
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Ga Mantse, Boni Nii Tackie Adama Latse II



OBITUARY



His Royal Majesty, King Tackie Tieko Tsuru II, Ga Mantse, Mr. Emmanuel Nii Lante Lawson, Head of Lawson Family, Mr. Frank Odartei Lawson, (Peace Home), Mr. Richard Lamiadu Lawson, Rev. Lartey Daniels, Prof. Aron N.L Lawson (Adotsoo We), Mr. Kotey Amon, Head of Amon Family, Flora Tay (UK), Mrs. Florence Nartey, Mr. Kuuku Paintsil (USA), Mrs Adjel Aseidu (Australia), Harriet Odarkor Lamptey, Aaron Lawson, Lloyd Nii Lante Lawson

Announce with deep sorrow the passing of

MR. PETER ODARKWEI LAWSON 86 YEARS

June 14, 1936 - Jan 13, 2023



FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE AS FOLLOWS

FRIDAY 24TH MARCH: Burial Service 9am – 12 noon
VENUE: Lashibi Funeral Home, Lashibi
ATTIRE: Black & White

SUNDAY 26TH MARCH: Thanksgiving Service 10am–12 noon
VENUE: St Andrews Anglican church, Kaneshie
ATTIRE: White

WIDOW: Mrs. Grace Lawson
CHILDREN: Colonel Emmanuel Lante Lawson(rtd); Sophia Naa Iamie Lawson, Leslie Lantel Lawson, Michael Dartey (USA), Samuel Lante Lawson, Shirley Naa Iamie Lawson aka Elsie (USA)
SIBLINGS: Mrs Janet Tay (Deceased), Mrs Felicia Kortei (Deceased), Mr David Lawson (Deceased), Mrs Victoria Paintsil (Deceased), Mr Joseph Clement Lawson (Deceased), Mrs Lydia Lamptey (Deceased), Mrs Stella Tackie (Deceased), Mr. Alex Odariel Lawson (Deceased), Majorie Ashami Lawson (Deceased), Mr. Emmanuel Q. Lawson (Deceased)
GRAND CHILDREN: Charles Odartey Lawson, Valerie Odartey Lawson, Tracy Odarkor Lawson, Jude Odartey Lawson, Elma Odartey Lawson, Leslie Odartel Lawson, Audrey Dartey (USA), Reuben Dartey (USA), Derrick Dartey (USA),

Michelle Naa Odartey Lawson (USA), Samuel Kelvin Afari (USA), Frederic Afari (USA), Franklin Afari (USA)
SON AND DAUGHTERS IN-LAW: Mrs Joan Agnes Lawson, Mrs Ernestina Akosua Lawson, Lilian Mabundo (USA), Mr. Prince Fred Afari (USA)
BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN-LAW: Kate Amon, Kotey Amon, Ernestine Sika Gozah (USA), Faustina Akorfa Gozah (USA)
NEPHEWS AND NIECES: Flora Tay & Sister (UK), Mrs Florence Nartey & Sisters, Mr Emmanuel Nii Lante Lawson Brothers & Sister, Mr. Charles Kuuku Paintsil (USA) Brothers & Sister, Mrs Adjel Asiedu Brothers (Australia) & Sisters, Harriet Odarkor Lamptey and Sisters, King Tackie Tieko Tsuru II, Ga Mantse brother and Sisters, Aaron Lawson Brothers & Sister, Lloyd Nii Lante Lawson Brothers & Sister, Abraham Quartey & Brothers.
COUSINS: John Lamptey Brother & Sisters, George Yeboah Brother & Sister, Nii Akwei Allotey Brothers & Sisters
CHIEF MOURNERS: His Royal Majesty, King Tackie Tieko Tsuru II, Ga Mantse, Mr. Emmanuel Nii Lante Lawson, Head of Lawson Family, Mr. Frank Odartei Lawson, (Peace Home), Mr. Richard Lamiadu Lawson, Rev. Lartey Daniels, Prof. Aron N.L Lawson (Adotsoo We), Mr. Kotey Amon, Head of Amon Family, Flora Tay, Mrs. Florence Nartey, Mr. Charles Kuuku Paintsil, Mrs Adjel Aseidu, Harriet Odarkor Lamptey, Aaron Lawson, Lloyd Nii Lante Lawson.

ALL FRIENDS AND SYMPATHISERS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED.

The INSIGHT

— EDITORIAL

THE HIV/AIDS MENACE

The report released recently which showed a rise in HIV among pregnant women should be of utmost concern to all.

Even worrying is the Ghana AIDS Commission's admission that HIV/AIDS is on the ascendancy in the country.

Certainly, all these come against the backdrop of increased awareness and public sensitisation over the years, to get the menace effectively under control.

The government through the Ministry of Health, the Ghana Health Service, The Ghana Aids Commission and several world bodies and stakeholders succeeded to a large extent in creating the awareness of condom use and abstinence. The sudden rise in cases of HIV infections simply means that something is not being done or gone wrong.

It is the view of this paper that stakeholders in the health sector will once again come together to find lasting solutions to the problems giving rise to new infections and nib it in the bud.

Towards this end, it is the opinion of The Insight that new intervention measures would help to address the problem.

It is also the expectation of Ghanaians that past measures which helped in addressing the problem such as condom use, abstinence, among others will be revisited and employed in the fight including the individuals who spearheaded such bold initiatives.

A ROCHA DESCENDS ON LANDS MINISTER Over Claims On Ghana's Forest Reserves

from front page

been maintained despite the devastation caused by galamsey and other forest and mining activities cannot be accurate.

The Minister for Lands and Natural Resources while answering a specific question in Parliament on 23 February 2023 about the state of Ghana's Forest Reserves made some claims which the NGO believes are inconsistent with information that are already in public domain.

Highlighting these inconsistencies to fill a few of the gaps to ensure Ghanaians have a clearer picture of the state of Ghana's Forest Reserves, A ROCHA Ghana, in a statement noted that the Minister's comment that the ecological integrity of Ghana's Forest Reserves has largely been maintained was a moot point.

According to the NGO with the extensive damage from galamsey, clear felling and farming in some forest reserves yet to be restored, the Minister's statement was farfetched. "Forest Reserves such as Krokosua, Sui River, Tano Suraw Extension, Afao Hills, Upper Wassaw, Anhwiaso West and East, Supuma Shelterbelt, Tano Offin, and Denyau Shelterbelt all appear to be lacking ecological integrity due to extensive damage," the statement said.

The NGO further noted that: "In mid-January, forest sites Denyau Site 1, 2 and 3, Supoma Site 1 and 2, Ntakem 1 and 2, and forest reserves of Numereso, Bepo Tintin, Kubi, Watreso, Adamso, Bunsu, Brechakrom, Amponuase, Apapraman, Hiayeya, Pomposo were all reported to be live galamsey sites."

It called on the President and Lands Minister to explain the meaning of "cordoned off all Forest Reserves and rid them of illegal mining," a statement they continue to repeat but the meaning is far from clear.

"From our checks on the ground, the Forestry Commission is still struggling on a day to day basis to keep out illegal activities from our Forest Reserves, without any new logistical or operational support added to the existing set-up. What is different now?

Transparency in the state of Ghana's Forest Reserves is critical, especially as this will promote targeted restoration and reforestation actions," A ROCHA said.

According to the NGO, the Minister "stated a total of six Forest Entry Permits have been issued for mining in Forest Reserves and listed them all. However, this list is incomplete. Asante Gold announced on 3 August 2021 that the Government of Ghana had just granted the company a Forest Entry Permit covering all forest areas within its Kubi mining lease. Besides being left off the list, it also appears the Permit was given after the President's strict ban on new Forest Entry Permits for mining. In clarifying the President's bans, the Minister stated in April 2021 that 'moving forward, the Forestry Commission should not issue Forest Entry Permit for purposes of mining in Forest Reserves.'"

It indicated that: "The process is such that the final permit one requires in order to be able to mine in a Forest Reserve is a Forest Entry Permit."

The NGO stressed that: "The Minister also reminded Parliament that government has declared river bodies as RED ZONES for mining, referring to the President's strict April 2021 ban on mining in or near water bodies as well as in Forest Reserves.

"Despite this ban, the Minerals Commission has given out several licences in 2022 and 2023 that

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THE INSIGHT

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Ukraine: A War To End All Wars In Europe

By M. K. Bhadrakumar

The dash for the White House in Washington on Friday by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz remains a riddle wrapped in a mystery. Scholz landed in DC, drove to the White House and was received by President Biden in Oval Office for a conversation that lasted over an hour. No aides were present. And he flew back to Berlin.

Associated Press reported cryptically, "If any agreements were reached or plans made, the White House wasn't saying." Scholz had insisted while leaving Berlin that he and Biden "want to talk directly with each other." Scholz mentioned "a global situation where things have become very difficult". He said, "It is important that such close friends can talk about all of these questions together, continually." The official readout of the meeting mentioned that the two leaders discussed the war in Ukraine and "exchanged perspectives on other global issues."

In remarks before the meeting, Biden effusively welcomed Scholz and paid tribute to the latter's "strong and steady leadership." Scholz briefly responded that "this is a very, very important year because of the very dangerous threat to peace that comes from Russia invading Ukraine." The optics of the White House readout is that the two leaders "reiterated their commitment to impose costs on Russia for its aggression for as long as necessary".

Scholz's dash to the Oval Office came at a defining moment in the Ukraine conflict. Russia has seized the initiative in the Donbass campaign and its spring offensive may start in the coming weeks. Ukraine's military took a heavy battering and the country depends almost entirely on western financial handouts and military aid for survival. Most important, Kiev's western backers are no longer sure of its ability to reclaim all the territory under Russian control — roughly, one-fifth of erstwhile Ukraine. An inchoate belief is also gaining ground in the western mind, behind all rhetoric, that the burden of the war effort is not going to be sustainable for long if

the conflict extends into an indeterminate future. Support for Ukraine is waning in the Western public opinion. A new poll from The *Associated Press*-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research shows that while 19% of Americans repose confidence in Biden's ability to handle the situation in Ukraine, 37% say they have only some confidence and 43% have hardly any. A vast majority of adults, including most Democrats, do not want Biden to run for president in 2024. Many also express little confidence in his abilities.

Scholz's one-on-one with Biden took place only a week after the latter's triumphant secret trip to Kiev to mark the first anniversary of the war. In reality, the display of Western unity with Ukraine that Biden claims is wearing thin against a backdrop of strains within the trans-Atlantic alliance and a growing sense of despondency that the war has no end in sight. The heart of the matter is that the Ukraine conflict has shattered the existing security architecture of Europe. Germany, Europe's powerhouse, is hit badly. The German electorate is increasingly skeptical about the West's approach to the war. There has been animated discussion in Germany over the findings of the renowned American journalist Seymour Hersh regarding the sabotage of the Nord Stream. After Scholz's return to Berlin, on Saturday, Sevim Dagdelen, leader of the Left Party — a four-term MP since 2005 — labelled the sabotage of the Nord Stream as a terrorist attack, adding that the German government is obligated to look into the case and find the culprit. If Scholz was privy to Biden's plan to destroy Nord Stream, it signifies an act of collusion. A major German national strategic asset owned in a joint venture with Russia was destroyed, seriously damaging the country's economy and impacting tens of millions of jobs, putting many lives at risk. Germany has had to pay 10 times the market price for gas to bolster its reserves. Europe has fallen into the trap of becoming highly dependent on US energy imports. The US is the main beneficiary of Europe's energy crisis and its ensuing "deindustrialization" and

"industrial hollowing-out." A deep recession appears inevitable in Germany. This climate forebodes dire consequences for the German government, as the election to the Bundestag in 2025 draws closer. Two days after Russia's special operation in Ukraine began, Scholz had vowed in his famous "Zeitenwende" speech in the Bundestag that Germany, long wary of militarization, would take steps to boost defense spending. But Wolfgang Schmidt, Scholz's chief of staff and longtime friend, acknowledged this week that a budget crunch was likely to prevent Berlin from fulfilling the promise of increased defense spending. "We must be honest about this," he told Wall Street Journal. "Ambition and reality are diverging." What complicates matters further is an emerging divide in Europe over how to end the war. While Old Europeans, including Scholz, are urging peace talks now, the Russophobic East European and Baltic leaderships are clamoring for Russia's defeat and a regime change in Moscow. According to Politico, Biden had to deliver a reminder to the Bucharest Nine with whom he had a meeting in Warsaw after his trip to Kiev that the goal of the war is not to remove the regime under Putin. Meanwhile, there is frustration building up in Europe that the continent finds itself in a cul-de-sac. So far, the lack of European cohesion provided policy space for the US to divide and rule. However, if Europe finds itself today in a subordinate position, it must also own part of the blame for it. Europe's inability to define its own core interests so far weakened its internal cohesion, while the lack of internal cohesion condemned it to a subaltern role. Thus, European strategic autonomy has become meaningless talk. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said last week that the most important realization of the war is that "Europe has retired from the debate."

"In the decisions adopted in



US President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Photo: POTUS/Twitter. What complicates matters is an emerging divide in Europe over how to end the war. While Old Europeans, including Scholz, are urging peace talks now, the Russophobic East European and Baltic leaderships are clamoring for Russia's defeat and a regime change in Moscow

Brussels, I recognize American interests more frequently than European ones," he added, also pointing out that today in a war that is taking place in Europe, "the Americans have the final word".

Belling the cat

Enter Rishi Sunak. In the prevailing complex situation, there is no one better than the UK Prime Minister Sunak to bell the cat, as it were. Britain has impeccable credentials as a trusted friend of Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky and Sunak inherits the legacy left behind by his discredited predecessors Boris Johnson and Lis Truss.

More importantly, Sunak is raring to go. Sunak was never an ardent believer in Brexit — nor is he a mindless Russophobe. He has set his compass navigating Britain toward calmer waters, which requires making up with the EU that helps the UK's economic recovery, and he hopes to lead the Conservatives in next year's general election with a solid record in office. An overreach in Ukraine he cannot risk. Period. Thus, it is that Sunak floated the tantalizing idea last month to put Ukraine 'on the NATO summits agenda in June in Madrid with an offer to Zelensky to discuss a package of incentives that would give Kiev much broader access to advanced military equipment and convince the Ukrainian leader to pursue peace talks with Moscow realistically, given the deepening private doubts among politicians in

London, Paris and Berlin about the trajectory of the war and the gut-wrenching belief that the West can only help sustain the war effort for so long.

The French President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor Scholz are on the same page as Sunak. The Biden Administration is in the loop but Zelensky is not a pushover and a NATO security pact may be needed, apart from bringing on board the fiery "New Europeans" of Eastern Europe and the Baltic. The good part is that the UK, France and Germany are in this together. Yet, the road ahead is long and winding. For Putin, the bottomline will be that no NATO membership for Ukraine and the ground realities must be heeded. But, fundamentally, peace talks would vindicate the *raison d'être* of Russia's special military operation, which aimed to force the West to negotiate regarding NATO expansion.

AP reported that when the one-on-one meeting in Oval Office ended, Biden and Scholz walked across the hall to the Roosevelt Room, where the American and German officials had been mingling. Biden apparently joked that the two leaders had solved all the world's problems by themselves. That gives a positive spin.

MK Bhadrakumar is a former diplomat. He was India's ambassador to Uzbekistan and Turkey. The views are personal.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

Women's Rights At The Heart Of The Fight Over Pensions In France



Feminist actions in France on March 8, 2022. (Photo: Solidaires/SUD). This year's International Working Women's Day in France holds special significance because of a nation-wide call by trade unions and people's movements to bring the country to a standstill from March 7

For the first time in the history of France, trade unions called for a two-day general strike that extended to March 8, International Working Women's Day. The general mobilization began on Tuesday, March 7, and it was expected to cause widespread protests all over the country. This is the first time since May 1968 that trade unions have issued a joint call for a general strike that will last for more than 24 hours. While actions for March 8 have grown in strength over the past years, this year's mobilizations were expected to

be particularly powerful. For the first time, it is social movements as a whole, and not the feminist movement alone, that is calling for the strike on International Working Women's Day. This is an essential element in the reinforcement of the fight for equal social rights, and a spark of hope for the future. In recent weeks, there has been an unprecedented proliferation of initiatives and assemblies for the strike of March 7-8, as well as meetings to seek to connect them to other ongoing struggles.

Links between women workers' and health rights

This year, International Working Women's Day actions in France will be a tribute to all the workers who will be the first to experience the effects of Macron's pension reform, many of whom are women, whose jobs are invisible, careers cut short, and salaries inadequate. A joint press release by eight French trade union confederations and the five students' associations is calling for action on the inequalities that women are still experiencing in the workplace. "Even in 2023, women's salaries remain on average 25%

lower than men's," warn the associations in their release. The income gap between women and men persists after retirement as well, according to the trade unions and student's associations. "Twice as many women work until 67 years of age, the maximum retirement age, but they receive pensions which are 40% lower than men. Also, 40% of women are forced to retire early and thus receive only partial pension," they said. Trade unions and peoples' movements are calling for a recognition of the link between women's, workers', and health rights on March 8. In a joint press release by trade union confederations including *Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques* (SUD), the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), the National Coordination of Committees for the Defense of Hospitals and Maternity Hospitals, and collectives like *Printemps de la Psychiatrie*, the movements are calling for unity on March 7 and 8 against the pension reform.

"On March 7 and 8, let us stand united to block the unacceptable pension reform and the policies that are destroying our health and social security systems," said the associations in their press release.

The pension reform is intrinsically linked to the health system, as social

protection cannot be separated from work and employment. Raising the legal retirement age would also lead to an explosion of sick leave, as well as to an increase of payments for social benefits. On the occasion of March 8, the national collective Our Health in Danger and 25 other organizations, unions, feminist associations, and parties are issuing early calls for actions in the week of April 7, World Health Day.

"Let's mobilize together to counter harmful policies and carry out our demands for access to health care and social support for all, all over the country, and without financial, geographical, cultural, digital, social, gender, origin or administrative discrimination," said the collectives in the call.

Whole of society approach to women's rights

Women's demands cannot be reduced to the question of wages and retirement alone. A national collective of 31 feminist and social associations, including the People's Health Movement France, reminds all those who will be joining the protests that: "March 8

is neither Mother's Day nor Women's Day—it is the international day of struggle for women's rights." The collective's broad perception of women's rights is supported by a number of local associations and 11 left-wing parties, all of which recognize the essential role that women play in society. This is why this year's March 8 actions will be an occasion to demand the end of social and economic inequalities and the violence which results from them. More simply put, they will be an occasion to remind everyone that, without women, the world stops. At this point, it is impossible to predict for how long the strike wave in France will continue, and whether it will be victorious. As we approach March 8, however, one thing is certain: equality of men and women is a necessary precondition for any social victory, which cannot be achieved without the involvement of this half of the sky. *People's Health Dispatch* is a fortnightly bulletin published by the *'Peoples Health Movement and Peoples Dispatch*.

Israeli Airstrikes Target Aleppo Airport, Making Aid Delivery In Syria More Difficult

Early in the morning of Tuesday, March 7, an Israeli airstrike damaged parts of Aleppo international airport in Syria. This will affect aid delivery to one of Syria's provinces worst-affected by last month's earthquake.

The *Syrian Arab News Agency* (SANA) quoted an unnamed Syrian military source, according to whom, at around 2 am on Tuesday, "the Israeli enemy carried out an aerial act of aggression from the direction of the Mediterranean, west of Latakia, targeting Aleppo International Airport, which led to material damage at the airport as it went out of service."

Though there have been no reports of casualties yet, SANA

noted in a tweet that due to the damage, Syria's Transport Ministry had decided to shift all humanitarian aid planes and scheduled flights from Aleppo airport to Damascus airport. Aleppo is one of the four provinces in Syria most affected by last month's earthquake (the other three were Latakia, Idlib, and Hama), which killed over 50,000 people in total in both Turkey and Syria. In Syria alone, close to 6,000 people were killed.

Aleppo airport was being used to transport international aid to the earthquake-affected areas in Syria's northwest. Damascus is more than 224 miles away from Aleppo, which

may affect the speed of aid delivery.

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied its role in the airstrike so far.

Israel frequently violates Syrian and Lebanese airspace and carries out attacks within Syria. It has carried out hundreds of such attacks inside Syria since the beginning of the war in the country in 2011. Hundreds of Syrians have been killed in these attacks, which have also caused large-scale destruction and damage to infrastructure in the war-ravaged country.

At least five Syrians were killed in a similar Israeli attack in the civilian areas of capital Damascus

on February 19.

An Israeli airstrike in early January had partially damaged the Damascus international airport and killed two Syrian soldiers. The damage to the airport also affected aid and rescue operations in the country after the February 6 earthquake as it was not fully operational at the time. Israel usually does not acknowledge those attacks. On the rare occasions when it does, it tries to justify them by terming them 'defensive' operations allegedly targeting supposed Iranian military presence in Syria.

Both Iran and Syria have



Photo: Press TV) The airstrike is expected to affect aid delivery to areas affected by the devastating earthquake on February 6, in which 6,000 were killed in Syria and thousands more injured and displaced

contested such claims. The Syrian government, on previous occasions, has accused Israel of trying to prolong the war in the country by aiding rebel forces through these airstrikes. Syria has also filed several complaints in the UNSC asking that action be

Ashaiman Operation Was Sanctioned By Military High Command - Deputy Minister



72 people have so far been arrested after the operation

The Military High Command gave the greenlight for an operation that took place in Ashaiman, a suburb of Accra, on March 7, 2023.

The Deputy Minister for Defence, Kwaku Amankwa Manu, speaking late Tuesday told Joy News that he had been informed by the military that their men who entered a section of the

Ashaiman township in the wee hours of the day, were there to apprehend murderers of a young soldier. The deputy minister confirmed that the first time he heard of the operation, he called the Member of Parliament for the area, who confirmed that such an operation was underway. "He (the MP) was actually in the constituency, so I told him I was going to get in touch with the CDS (Chief of Defense staff) which I did. The first thing is about a young soldier who was brutally murdered on Saturday while he was going to visit the family.

"And so, at dawn this morning the soldiers mounted an operation to find the perpetrators of this heinous crime and so the operations

undertaken this morning was a sanctioned operation by the Military High Command," he confirmed to Joy News late Tuesday. He continued: "It is a well-coordinated operation, that basically is what is happening. Officially deployed to find out the perpetrators of this heinous crime and bring them to book." Dozens of military officers stormed Ashaiman in the operation that saw some soldiers entering the township in trucks, with an armoured car plus a helicopter hovering over the town. The exercise is said to be in response to the gruesome murder of a young soldier by some unidentified persons on Saturday, March 4, 2023. Videos of the invasion shared across social media show various forms of assault being meted on

residents by the officers who subjected some of the residents to severe beatings. Kofi Amankwa Manu in his interview with Joynews, admitted that even though some soldiers may have acted outside their jurisdiction by entering into a community without the collaboration of the police, "when we are not in normal times, we cannot do normal things." The MP for the area, Ernest Henry Norgbey has confirmed that 72 men were arrested at the end of the operation and are military custody. He has also called for a Parliamentary probe into the operation and its propriety while condemning the killing of the young soldier and calling for the arrest of the perpetrators.

Ga Mantse Boni Adama Latse II Slams Govt Over Abandoned La General Hospital

Boni Nii Tackie Adama Latse II, the Ga Mantse has called on the government not to start any new project until the completion of the abandoned ones it initiated. Boni Nii Adama Latse II who made reference to the demolished La General Hospital could not come to terms with why a hospital facility that was operating in optimal capacity would be pulled down for the construction of a new one when funds and other logistics were not readily available. The Ga Mantse also lamented bitterly about the demolished Trade Fair Centre Facility Complex which used to host national events and served as offices for hundreds of private institutions and government organizations. He called on the government to commence work on these facilities including other abandoned projects started by his



Ga Mantse, Boni Nii Tackie Adama Latse II

predecessor such as the Salaga market complex at Bukom and which is near the Accra Post Office. Boni Nii Tackie Adama Latse II made the call at a press conference in Accra on Wednesday to express reservations about the construction of a hostel facilities for Kayayei or head porters in Accra. Whilst expressing discontent about the construction of the hostel facilities, Boni Adama

Latse II urged the government to rather convert the hostel facilities into skills training institutes in the northern regions to stop the migration of the female youth to the southern parts of the country for head porting activities and other menial jobs. He believes the skills training institute will equip the youth and would be head porters with the relevant training and employable skills to enable them realise their dream.

Notorious Dzata Cement Fraudster, Accomplices Arrested

A notorious fraudster, Richard Agbadzi under the pretence of being a Dzata Cement representative has duped innocent individuals via phone calls from the number 055371026, and has been arrested with seven other suspects in a series of related offenses. He is also the ringleader of the band of scammers that have given the company troubles for months. He has confessed to all the charges leveled against him by the Police Special Cyber Team. As part of his operations, Richard created a fake website under the name of Dzata Cement and published falsified information such as advertisements and promotions as well as a false address on Google Maps. Richard also hacked into WhatsApp platforms and had his associates create false Dzata Cement social media accounts to impersonate company employees. He took some of the pictures from our social media accounts with the aim of making them authentic. We would like to thank the Inspector General of Police, COP DR. George Akuffo Dampare, and his team for institutionalizing the clamp down on



Richard Agbadzi

these cyber-related crimes and also including Dzata Cement Limited's fraud related crimes in the project. Anyone who has fallen victim to this individual's fraudulent activities should kindly contact 0249850601 for further police assistance, and they should also provide helpful information if they ever interact with the users of the following numbers, suspected of committing similar crimes: 0550750527 0599107014 0591146255 0543038241 0202550447 0257908725 0548486885

Attached is a picture of Richard and the fake number with the fake google address.

Social Justice Movement Laments Over Ghana's Economic Downturn And Retrogression

...Amid IMF Bailout, Investment "Haircuts" And Pensioners' Protests

from front page

celebration implored all Ghanaians to work to complete the independence struggle started by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah considering the current state of economic despair amid the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout, investment haircuts and pensioner bondholders' protests.

The Social Justice Movement Ghana believes both the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (DC) both have nothing good to offer Ghanaians better their lives.

This is their full statement;

LET US COMPLETE THE BATTLE FOR OUR INDEPENDENCE

6th March 2023

Sixty-six (66) years ago today, Ghana became independent from United Kingdom. In this era of a return to the IMF for a bailout and of "haircuts" and with pensioners taking to the streets to protest, it is worth asking: "DID WE GO OR DID WE COME? What has happened to our glorious independence that was celebrated throughout Africa and the world and was a beacon of hope to other nations to fight for their political independence? What has happened to this once illustrious BLACK STAR of Africa that illuminated across Africa and gave hope to all oppressed people across the world?

For us in the Social Justice Movement of Ghana (SJMG), this year's independence should be a day for a very sober reflection about the

state of the nation called Ghana.

The SJMG set out Republic Day (1st July) as its day of commemoration and to reflect on how far we have come in our journey as a Republic free from the dictates of her Majesty's government. This year it has become imperative for us reflect on what has gone so fundamentally wrong with our independence that we have become a beggar nation waiting to be "colonised". We were once a nation that promised much and delivered at independence with clear programmes for transforming Ghana in a way capable of improving the living conditions of our people and lifting them out of poverty. Today, we are in a situation where even to obtain employment in the government and security sectors, poor unemployment job seekers have to find thousands of Ghana cedis to pay people in positions of power? Without cash or influence on the "protocol" list, it is impossible to secure a job.

What has happened to a country that once had free medical care and education services across the country but can only now offer mediocre services? Is it not an irony that in this 21st Century, Radio and TV channels are routinely being used to appeal for funds from the public to support people who are sick but have no money to pay for their treatments? Our road infrastructure is to a large extent shattered and restricted to the main highways with the rural roads where our food is grown being left to fend for themselves? And yet we continue to "vote" these two tarnished parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) into power. And the NPP now has the impudence to want

to break the two-term election cycle and by so doing prolong our misery. And the NDC is waiting in the wings promising to take us out of our predicament but Ghanaians should know by now that the value is the same – there will be no end to our misery. Today we want to continue to call on our people and want to make them aware that that there is a way out. We should not put our hands on our heads and cry out in desperation. We should not continually keep on alternating between these two anachronistic parties, thinking that one of them will bring about our salvation.

No, the salvation lies in our own hands. There is an alternative. And the alternative is to work towards a new political formation that will compete for political power to right the wrongs once we win political power. That is why we in the SJMG are working with the Progressive Alliance for Ghana (PAG). The PAG is a new political party that is oriented towards making itself available to working people across Ghana. The PAG want ordinary people to use this political formation as an alternative to the NPP/NDC. It aims to be a party of the people and for the people. It has no other interest than being a vehicle for ordinary people to use and fight to liberate themselves from centuries of domination, colonisation and neo-colonisation.

The PAG is an alliance of progressive organisations and individuals who believe in our great Osagyefo Rd. Kwame Nkrumah wanted to achieve for Ghana.

The PAG does not want power for a group of elites to join the



President Nana Akufo-Addo

race to loot the nation's resources for themselves and impoverish our people. We sincerely and graciously want ordinary people to take over power and implement policies and programmes that will lead to their benefit.

The PAG wants to establish a new society. A society that will complete our struggle for independence. We want a government that will ensure that we have an appreciable share of our mineral wealth. It is our view that over 50% of our mineral wealth should go towards the people of our country. With our vast natural resources, which we must aim to control, we do not have to go to the IMF and World Bank begging for money. We want a government that will ensure the industrial take off of our economy and then provide jobs and goods for our people. We want an accountable and transparent government. We want a government of integrity and transparency.

It is only a government with integrity and care for our people that can embark on programmes that will lead to the development of the country and lift us out of poverty and deprivation.

In this light we call on all progressives, revolutionaries, pan-Africanists, nationalists and like-minded people to come together and use the PAG as an alternative to the existing one-party system that is masquerading as a two-party system. Now is the time to end the decades of getting progressives forces searching for a path to combat the neo-colonial state. Some of us have created a base and it is high time to join us and ensure that we use it for our liberation.

We salute all those who for years and despite the odds have remained faithful to the cause of our people. Through our tenacity we will achieve our goal of liberating this country. Happy Independence Day today. The Struggle Continues.

Forward Ever, Backwards Never
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A ROCHA DESCENDS ON LANDS MINISTER Over Claims On Ghana's Forest Reserves

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straddle critical water bodies, including at the exact locations already decimated by galamsey.”

A ROCHA continued that: “It is incomprehensible why the Minerals Commission is issuing licences alongside and across rivers when the devastation of gold mining is now so clear. That these licences are for precise locations already decimated by galamsey is even more disturbing.

“The communities are suffering greatly from pollution of their water sources and farmlands, which is already affecting their health including kidney problems. Mining leases across and adjacent to rivers do not meet the President's RED ZONE directive.”

Reacting to the Minister's announcement of a partnership between the Lands Ministry and the Department for Parks and Garden, and Urban Roads to plant trees besides urban roads, the NGO indicated that “while this is a good initiative, the effort would be reduced if road planners were imaginative and innovative.”

“There are decades-old trees still being cut down in our urban areas just to make way for more tarmac and concrete. These trees serve so many purposes including climate change mitigation, wildlife corridors, and shade for people. The carbon benefits alone old trees take decades to replace. Many examples across the world exist where urban planners have imaginatively diverted roads to avoid cutting trees down. The area retains its beauty, and the city can boast of its innovative and imaginative work. But there is nothing like that in Accra. Just more dead trees and barer skylines,” the NGO added. It, therefore, encouraged “urban planners to use imagination and

innovation that work with nature, and this even reduces government's costs and effort.” It also entreated the Ministry to “ensure effective alignment of the Green Ghana Agenda with Roads and Urban planning as well as infrastructure construction projects and interventions.”

A ROCHA GHANA said it is keenly observing how Urban Roads and the Ministry of Lands will work together to reimagine the ongoing road construction works to save the beautiful alley of mahogany trees straddling the road side beginning from Transitions to Kwabenya roundabout on the Atomic – Kwabenya road.

This is the full statement by Rocha Ghana:

RE-ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF GHANA 'S FOREST RESERVES INTACT

Answering a specific question in Parliament on 23 February about the State of Ghana's Forest Reserves, the Honourable Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Samuel Jinapor gave a statement that appears inconsistent with publicly available information.

A Rocha Ghana wishes to highlight these inconsistencies and fill a few of the gaps to ensure Ghanaians have a clearer picture of the state of Ghana's Forest Reserves. This action has also become necessary considering all attempts to get an audience to discuss these matters have proved futile.

Our concerns and observations are presented in line with the main sub-sections as identified in the Minister's statement to the Honourable House.

Ecological Integrity of Ghana Forest Reserves

The Minister stated that the ecological integrity of Ghana's Forest Reserves has largely been maintained. This is a moot point. With the extensive

damage from galamsey, clear felling and farming in some forest reserves yet to be restored, this statement is farfetched. Forest Reserves such as Krokosua, Sui River, Tano Suraw Extension, Afao Hills, Upper Wassaw, Anhwiaso West and East, Supuma Shelterbelt, Tano Offin, and Denyau Shelterbelt all appear to be lacking ecological integrity due to extensive damage. Further, in mid-January, forest sites Denyau Site 1,2 and 3, Supoma Site 1 and 2, Ntakem 1 and 2, and forest reserves of Numereso, Bepo Tintin, Kubi, Watreso, Adamso, Bunsu, Brechakrom, Amponuase, Apapraman, Hiayeya, Pomposo were all reported to be live galamsey sites.

We urge the President and Lands Minister to explain the meaning of “cordoned off all Forest Reserves” and rid them of illegal mining, a statement they continue to repeat but the meaning is far from clear. From our checks on the ground, the Forestry Commission is still struggling on a day to day basis to keep out illegal activities from our Forest Reserves, without any new logistical or operational support added to the existing set-up. What is different now? Transparency in the state of Ghana's Forest Reserves is critical, especially as this will promote targeted restoration and reforestation actions.

Forest Entry Permits for Mining in Forest Reserves The Honourable Minister stated a total of six Forest Entry Permits have been issued for mining in Forest Reserves and listed them all. However, this list is incomplete. Asante Gold announced on 3 August 2021 that the Government of Ghana had just granted the



Samuel Abu Jinapor, Minister of Lands and Natural Resources

company a Forest Entry Permit covering all forest areas within its Kubi mining lease. Besides being left off the list, it also appears the Permit was given after the President's strict ban on new Forest Entry Permits for mining. In clarifying the President's bans, the Minister stated in April 2021 that “moving forward, the Forestry Commission should not issue Forest Entry Permit for purposes of mining in Forest Reserves. The process is such that the final permit one requires in order to be able to mine in a Forest Reserve is a Forest Entry Permit. The President got us issued this instruction which says that no more issuance of Forest Entry Permits and so as from I think about two weeks ago there cannot be fresh mining in Forest Reserves...if you get a mining lease and you go to the Forestry Commission, the door is shut”. The Asante Gold permit came 4 months after this ban.

Koantwi Mining Company's 2023 Mining Lease over a large portion of the Anhwiaso East Forest Reserve is also a matter of concern.

A statement by the Minerals Commission in 2022 suggests that Koantwi's 2020 Forest Entry Permit listed by the Minister was for the 2020 Mining Lease ML2/176 across a southern portion of the Anhwiaso East Forest Reserve. According to the

MinCom repository, however, Koantwi Mining was recently granted a 30-year Mining Lease (ML-LAYER/222)7 covering a much larger part of the Anhwiaso East Forest Reserve, commencing 7 February 2023. Available information shows the application was made on 12 December 2022. How did Koantwi get its Forest Entry Permit for this mining lease?

The Minister also did not mention the Mining Lease to Unipower Mining Company that would require a Forest Entry Permit as it includes a southwest portion of the Boin Tano Forest Reserve (ML2/47), commencing 19 May 2022. It is possible there are others as well. River Bodies declared Red Zones for mining

The Minister also reminded Parliament that government has declared river bodies as RED ZONES for mining, referring to the President's strict April 2021 ban on mining in or near water bodies as well as in Forest Reserves. Despite this ban, the Minerals Commission has given out several licences in 2022 and 2023 that straddle critical water bodies, including at the exact locations already decimated by galamsey.

The rivers include the Ankobra, Pra, Tano and Ofin, with licences such as: ML-2/221 across River Ankobra (Cape North Ltd; 17 Jan 2023 to 16 Jan 2053, application date 22 Sep 2022)

ML2/47 alongside and across River Tano, and entering into the Boin

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Mining Company Ltd, 19 May 2022 to 18 May 2032, application date 26 Aug 2019)

ML2/46 alongside River Pra (Unipower Mining Company Ltd, 19 May 2022 – 18 May 2032, application date 19 Feb 2022). SSMP/5/1760 across River Ofin (Open Job Mining, 6 Jul 2022 to 5 Jul 2027, application date 1 Jul 2020) SSMP/6/2291 across River Ofin (Berksgold, 18 Jul 2022 to 17 Jul 2027, application date 3 Apr 2020)

MC/SSMP/AR/939 across River Ofin (K Kukom Ventures, 8 Jul 2022 to 7 Jul 2027, application date 28 Dec 2021).

It is incomprehensible why the Minerals Commission is issuing licences alongside and across rivers when the devastation of gold mining is now so clear. That these licences are for precise locations already decimated by galamsey is even more disturbing. The communities are suffering greatly from the pollution of their water sources and farmlands, which is already affecting their health including kidney problems. Mining leases across and adjacent to rivers do not meet the President's RED ZONE directive. Concerns have also been raised that the Community Mining Scheme (CMS) is affecting the President's RED ZONES and communities' lands. We urge MinCom to clearly identify on its mining repository the licences and locations that are CMS (e.g., a different code) so that communities and civil society can confirm licences in situations where galamsey operators claim to be part of a CMS.

Related Matters: Mining and transparency

The other points we want to raise here relate to MinCom's mining repository. Regulation 1 of the Minerals and Mining (Licensing) Regulations 2012 (LI 2176)⁸ identifies the map required for use in the mining cadastre (or

mining repository). It states "the cadastral map shall be on a scale of 1:50,000 based on the topographic map of the Republic of Ghana produced by the Survey and Mapping Division of the Lands Commission, as well as on the Gauss projection and the British War Office spheroid". A topographic map is a detailed record of a land area with geographic positions and elevations for both natural and manmade features.

The current map in the mining repository is not a topographic map. It shows water bodies, out-of-date region names, main urban areas and some roads but little else, making it very difficult for communities, traditional authorities and civil society to know where mining licenses are. This does not fulfil one of the main purposes of the Mining Cadastre Administration System (MCAS), which is to contribute to accountability and transparency and give "civil society a better overview of the mining situation in the country"⁹. The original map used was the OpenStreetMaps that fulfilled the 'topographic' requirement but was removed in 2022 taking away a critical layer of transparency. For transparency to affected communities as well as civil society that supports them, we urge MinCom to use the topographic map as required by the government's LI 2176.

Lack of transparency also extends to exploration licences. During the 2022 Africa Down Under Conference in Perth, Australia, the Honourable Lands Minister stated that Ghana has about 500 mining exploration projects ongoing around the country and that he expects an increase in the coming years. At that time, only 201 prospecting licences and 6 reconnaissance licences were on the MinCom repository, many of which had expired, so where are

the other explorations and why are they not identified? For MinCom's stated purpose of transparency, this is critical. The government's determination to encourage mining companies into Ghana and to make the country the mining hub of Africa is very disturbing. Currently, the MinCom repository has 5,227 active applications, which raises serious due diligence issues around land use conflicts, and community rights. Ghanaians do not benefit broadly from mining, especially host communities who suffer pollution and poor health. The costs and burdens of environmental damage outweigh the limited benefits to Ghana, especially when government gives so many incentives. It is way past time for government to look at green alternatives instead of always focusing on outdated extractives. Urban trees

We also want to pick up on a statement by the Lands Minister during his press meeting on 28 February when he mentioned the partnership between his Ministry and the Department for Parks and Garden, and Urban Roads to plant trees besides urban roads. While this is a good initiative, the effort would be reduced if road planners were imaginative and innovative. There are decades-old trees still being cut down in our urban areas just to make way for more tarmac and concrete. These trees serve so many purposes including climate change mitigation, wildlife corridors, and shade for people. The carbon benefits alone of old trees take decades to replace. Many examples across the world exist where urban planners have imaginatively diverted roads to avoid cutting trees down.

The area retains its beauty, and the city can boast of its innovative and imaginative work. But there is nothing like that in Accra. Just more dead trees and more bare skylines. We encourage urban planners to use imagination and innovation

that work with nature, and this even reduces government's costs and effort. We are therefore entreating the Ministry to ensure effective alignment of the Green Ghana Agenda with Roads and Urban planning as well as infrastructure construction projects and interventions. We are therefore keenly observing how Urban Roads and

the Ministry of Lands will work together to reimagine the ongoing road construction works to save the beautiful alley of mahogany trees straddling the road side beginning from Transitions to Kwabenya roundabout on the Atomic – Kwabenya road.

Food Safety: Only 1,079 Food Vendors, Restaurants Have Hygiene Permits Nationwide - FDA

Data from the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) show that only 1,079 food services establishments across the nation have been issued with the FDA's Food Hygiene Permits.

The establishments are restaurants, food joints, street-vended food, chop bars and catering facilities.

According to the data, only 1,079 food vendors met the FDA's minimum food safety requirement out of about 5,000 street vendors trained in good hygiene practices from 2021 to ensure that food sold everywhere was safe.

A Food Hygiene Permit is an approval given to a catering facility after meeting basic hygiene requirements in the FDA's Code for Hygienic Practices for food Service Establishment.

Mrs Delese Mimi Darko, the Chief Executive Officer of the FDA, said in an interview with the Ghana News Agency in Accra.

She said it was illegal for restaurants for instance, not to display a Food Hygiene Permit at the point of sale, saying the act could attract a fine.

"It is required that all food service establishments display Food Hygiene Permits at the point of sale, the idea of the permit is to boost the confidence of the public when buying the food," she stated.

Mrs Darko said the safety of food sold by vendors had become a major concern and called on all stakeholders responsible for ensuring food safety like the local Assemblies to help enforce bylaws for the safety of all. She urged food vendors to ensure that they prepared and sold food in clean and hygienic condition, stating that hot foods must always be kept hot while



salad sold to the public be kept on ice.

"Before you serve any food, wash your hands with soap under running water, make sure you have clean napkins and clean utensils," she added.

Mrs Darko said the form to apply for food safety training was available at any of the FDA offices nationwide. She said the FDA would this year focus more on street vended foods and hoped to train and issue 1,000 Food Hygiene Permits in Accra alone. Checks by the Ghana News Agency (GNA) at the Tema Lorry Station in Accra showed that not even one food service establishment at the lorry terminal and its environs had a Food Hygiene Permit.

Some food vendors only had stickers from the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) and Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) displayed at the point of sale. The FDA in 2022 launched a National Food Safety Policy to ensure safe and suitable food for consumers. The policy is expected to strengthen food safety governance; collaboration for food safety, promote and ensure harmonisation and the enforcement of laws and regulations of food safety in Ghana in the next five years.

Source -- GNA