

Govt to introduce new Anti-Witchcraft Bill in Parliament

By Samuel Duodu

THE government will introduce a new Anti-Witchcraft Accusation Bill after the earlier one passed by the eighth Parliament had expired with the life of the previous Parliament without a Presidential assent.

Currently, the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection is collaborating with the Office of the Attorney-General to reintroduce the Bill in Parliament.

The Vice-President, Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, announced this yesterday at a lecture to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the late Akua Denteh, who was lynched at Kafaba in the East Gonja Municipality of the Savannah Region on July 23, 2020, on

witchcraft accusations.

The last Parliament passed the bill on July 28, 2023, three years after Akua Denteh was lynched.

The bill, which aimed to criminalise witchcraft accusations and protect vulnerable individuals, particularly elderly women, has been a topic of discussion for some time.

The last Parliament passed the Bill in July 2023, but it was not assented to by the then President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, due to the potential financial implications on the country's consolidated fund.

The Vice-President, represented at the lecture by the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Dr Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, who is also the National Democratic Congress (NDC) Member of Parliament (MP) for Krowor in the Greater Accra Region, said President John Dramani Mahama was ready to sign the new bill into law when it was passed by Parliament.

She added that the government was comfortable in sponsoring the bill to Parliament rather than having it as a Private Members Bill (PMB).

Assurance

"As the Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana, as a mother, and as a woman who understands the unique vulnerabilities of women, I stand here today to make an unequivocal

commitment.

"The Anti-Witchcraft Accusation Bill represents hope, but hope without action remains merely an aspiration. We must ensure this legislation is passed, signed into law, and fully and rigorously enforced," she said.

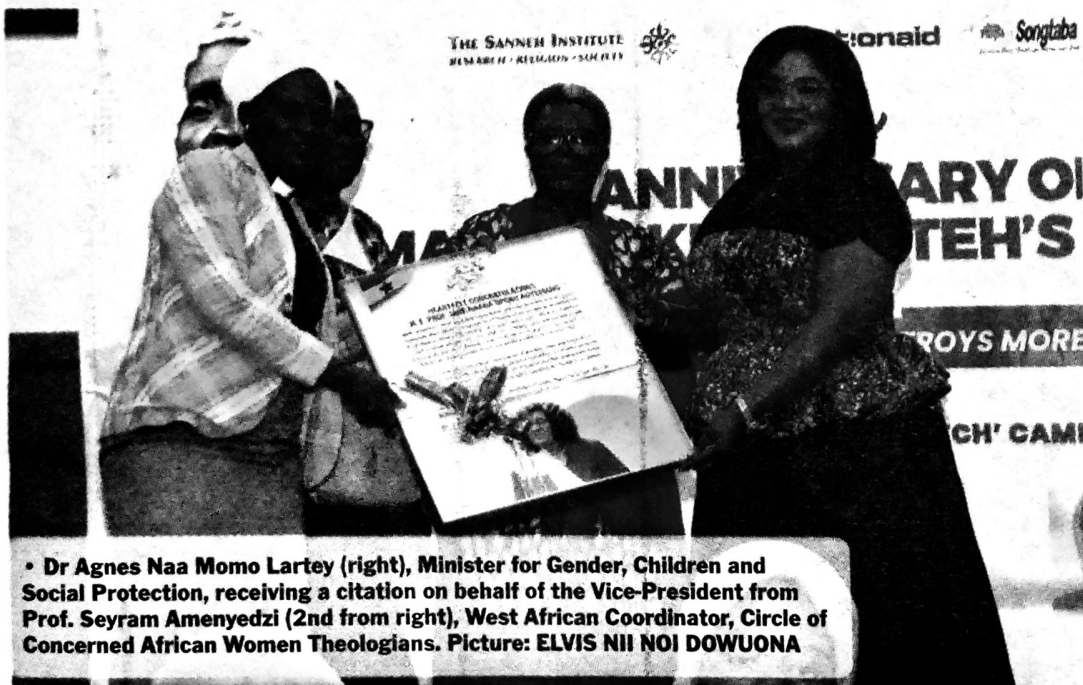
She said the time for symbolic justice and empty promises had passed and that the time for decisive action was now.

"Together, we can build a Ghana where no woman fears for her life simply because she is old, vulnerable, or different.

"Together, we can ensure that the name Denteh is remembered not only for the tragedy of her death, but for the transformation it inspired in our nation's commitment to protecting all our citizens. And this is in the spirit of leaving no one behind. Together, we believe strongly this can be achieved. And when it is passed, it will be our collective victory over the dark world of witchcraft and accusation," the Vice-President said.

Sponsors

The NDC MP for Madina, Francis Xavier Sosu, and other MPs who sponsored the previous bill said they were working with the government to



• Dr Agnes Naa Momo Lartey (right), Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, receiving a citation on behalf of the Vice-President from Prof. Seyram Amenyedzi (2nd from right), West African Coordinator, Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Picture: ELVIS NII NOI DOWUONA