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# General News

## Govt ready to offer automatic post-retirement contracts to aid training of medical doctors - Akufo-Addo

President Akufo-Addo has expressed the government's readiness to accept the leadership of the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons' provision of automatic post-retirement contracts to fellows who have reached the mandatory retirement age.

The aim of this initiative is to enable them to continue contributing to the training of medical specialists in the country.

In response to this, the President has instructed the leadership to collaborate with the Minister of Health, Kwaku Agyeman-Manu, and the Ghana Health Service (GHS).

They are directed to submit a comprehensive policy document outlining the details of post-retirement contracts for medical fellows who have reached the retirement age.

"During our meeting, you requested that fellows who attained the mandatory retirement age be given automatic post-retirement contracts so that they can continue to train specialists in your training centre. Government is willing to do this to facilitate postgraduate medical training," the President said when he graced the maiden awards night of the college held in

Accra on Tuesday.

The President emphasized that the policy document should not only outline the specifics of post-retirement contracts but also incorporate a mechanism to prevent any potential abuse of this initiative.

President Akufo-Addo said he was committed to his vision of making Ghana the "Centre of excellence for medical care in West Africa by 2030" by leveraging the country's favourable status as the most peaceful country in West Africa, a beacon of democracy

on the continent and a land of opportunities.

He said attaining this was beyond the building of just new healthcare facilities, stressing that "We will achieve this goal by first investing more in the development of our healthcare infrastructure, mapping our regional health facilities to specialisations as well as upgrading selective facilities in our regional and teaching hospitals to world-class standards."

President Akufo-Addo announced that the comprehensive Agenda 111 project is being implemented

at an estimated cost of US\$1.765 billion.

The average completion rate of the 89 ongoing projects is 52 per cent. With work at some of the sites being 70 to 80 per cent complete.

It is worthy to note that the constructions of these hospitals are being undertaken by indigenous Ghanaian contractors who provide direct and indirect jobs to Ghanaians.

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



*Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana*

## Barker-Vormawor slapped with GH¢3k fine after court throws out dismissal application against Kan Dapaah

Convenor for the #FixTheCountry, Oliver Barker-Vormawor, has been slapped with a GH¢3,000 fine following the dismissal of an application filed against the National Security Minister, Kan Dapaah.

The legal dispute stems from a GH¢10 million defamation suit filed by Minister Albert Kan-Dapaah against Barker-Vormawor, a member of the #FixtheCountry Movement. The court's decision not

only denied Barker-Vormawor's attempt to have the case dismissed but also levied a substantial fine against him.

On September 26, 2023, the National Security Minister filed a defamation suit against Mr Barker-Vormawor, after the latter made some bribery allegations against him.

Mr. Barker-Vormawor in an interaction with the media on the

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*Oliver Barker-Vormawor*

# General News

## **Barker-Vormawor slapped with GH¢3k fine after court throws out dismissal application against Kan Dapaah**

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sidelines of the Occupy Jubilee House protest said that, at a meeting between him and the National Security Minister, he was offered \$1 million by the Minister in an attempt to get him to stop his activism.

Subsequently, the National Security Ministry released a statement to debunk the allegation but this did not deter Mr Barker-Vormawor

from making more claims. In a television interview with JoyNews, he reiterated his claim and insisted that he is ready to release an audio recording of what ensued between the two parties at the said meeting where the offer was made.

It is against this background that the National Security Minister dragged Mr Barker-Vormawor to court, demanding a GH¢10 million

compensation for the claim.

Mr Barker-Vormawor, also filed an application on November 29, 2023, praying the court to dismiss the suit against him.

His basis for the application was that the Minister has no capacity to institute or conduct civil matters in respect of the functions he performs for and on behalf of the

State.

The legal battle between Oliver Barker-Vormawor and Minister for National Security, Albert Kan-Dapaah, took a turn as the court threw out Barker-Vormawor's dismissal application and imposed a fine of GH¢3,000 on him.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Jessie Ola-Morris**

## **MP warns of potential fish price increase amidst premix challenges**

The anticipated scarcity of premix fuel for fishing is expected to lead to an increase in fish prices during the upcoming festive season, as revealed by Eric Opoku, the Minority Spokesperson on Food and Agriculture.

He emphasized that the heightened demand for this essential commodity will be a key factor contributing to the price surge. This disclosure was made during his contribution to the debate on the approval of the budget for the Fisheries Ministry.

"The price of fish is likely to go up during the festivities because the demand will rise."

He clarified that the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture did not receive the anticipated volume of premix fuel required for distribution to fishermen. Consequently, fishermen were compelled to buy this vital commodity directly from the market, resulting in elevated prices.

"In 2023, the premix secretariat targeted the supply of 107 million litres of premix fuel. Unfortunately, as of the end of September, the secretariat is reporting that only 25 million litres have been discharged," Eric Opoku said.

"Out of 107 million, within the same period last year, the ministry was able to do 39 million. So, you see that this year, the fishers are not getting premix fuel. The only

explanation the ministry gave was that suppliers are unwilling to supply the premix because of the forex losses. The vulnerability in the exchange rate leading to forex losses as a result of which our farmers are not getting the premix fuel," he added.

Recall that Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia highlighted the introduction of digital canoe identification cards as a solution to

eliminate the challenges associated with acquiring premix fuel, including stress and hoarding. The newly implemented digital system enables fisherfolk to conveniently access the required quantity of premix fuel at the pumps using their digital Canoe Identification Cards, linked to their vessels.

This system generates crucial data for re-ordering, with each order being closely monitored

and measured against timelines to enhance delivery efficiency. Officials from the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture emphasize that the automation system incorporates multiple modules, allowing stakeholders to track and observe real-time information on orders, transportation, delivery, and fueling transactions.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey**



File photo

# General News

## My next govt will provide you a rent assistance scheme - Mahama promises teachers, farmers

National Democratic Congress (NDC) flagbearer, John Dramani Mahama, has announced the introduction of a rent assistance scheme in his next government aimed at assisting teachers and farmers in securing affordable housing.

As to how the scheme would operate, the former president explained that a portion of the workers' salaries would be deducted monthly until they fully covered the cost of the house.

While addressing his supporters in Nsawura as part of his 'Building the Ghana We Want' tour in the Western Region, he emphasised that these homes will be priced in the local currency.

According to Mr Mahama, such a scheme has become imperative owing to the 2-year advance rent scheme being practiced by some landlords.

"Many workers are struggling with the 2-year advance rent scheme, and their salaries aren't always enough to cover the costs. My government will support associations like teachers and farmers by implementing a rent assistance scheme to help build houses for their workers. We will deduct a portion of their monthly salaries for this purpose, and by the time they retire, they'll have their own houses. We will take the housing scheme seriously.

When I say housing, what I mean is affordable housing, and we will endeavour to price it in our local currency," he said.

The 2-year advance rent scheme, where some landlords demand payment of rent for 2 years and more, has been frowned upon by many, especially tenants.

Public Relations Officer of the Rent Control Department, Emmanuel Kporsu, has clarified the 2-year rent advance scheme, stating that paying a landlord more than six months' rent is not considered a criminal offense.

According to Mr Kporsu, the legality hinges on whether the landlord specifically demanded payment for more than six months.

He clarified that the law explicitly prohibits landlords from requiring tenants to pay one to two years of rent. However, if a tenant voluntarily chooses to pay for an extended period, even up to two years, without any explicit demand from the landlord, it does not constitute an offense under the law.

Section 25 subsection 5 of the Rent Act, 1963, Act 220 states that "A

person who as a condition of the grant, renewal or continuance of a tenancy demands, in the case of a monthly or shorter tenancy, the payment in advance of more than a month's rent or in the case of a tenancy exceeding six months, the payment in advance of more than six months rent, commits an offence and is liable on conviction by the Rent Magistrate to a fine not exceeding two hundred and fifty penalty units."

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



*John Dramani Mahama, Former President of Ghana*

## Akufo-Addo announces inclusion of mental healthcare in NHIS from 2024

In a meeting with physicians and surgeons in Accra, President Akufo-Addo disclosed the government's commitment to integrate mental health care into the National Health Insurance Scheme.

Stressing the collective responsibility towards mental health, he emphasized the importance of ensuring universal

coverage by making specialised professionals available in hospitals across the nation.

"Next year, mental healthcare will be added to the benefits package on the National Health Insurance Scheme. We recognize, however, that the key to achieving the target of universal health coverage is the availability of specialists to serve in all hospitals in the country. It

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*Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana*

# General News

## Akufo-Addo announces inclusion of mental healthcare in NHIS from 2024

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is about time we begin to set our targets higher," he said.

To ensure that Ghana achieves its objectives for universal health coverage, the president called for strong cooperation amongst

the country's various health professional associations.

He said, "These targets, which are being achieved by the developed world where doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals

migrate to, can be achieved by Ghana."

"The Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Ghana Medical and Dental Council, the Ghana Health Service, and the Ministry

of Health must work together to ensure that we also achieve this target," he added.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey**

## GH¢700 for 180kg bag: Tono Irrigation Scheme rice farmers unhappy about low prices for produce

**F**armers cultivating rice in the Tono Irrigation Scheme, situated in the Kassena-Nankana Municipal of the Upper East region, are expressing dissatisfaction with the meagre prices offered for their rice, exacerbated by an oversupply in the market.

The farmers contend that the absence of readily available buyers has allowed middlemen to exploit the situation, leading to the purchase of a 220-kilogram bag of rice at GH¢700. This marks a significant decline from the GH¢900 received for a 180-kilogram bag in the previous year.

Robert Kwame Abokah, a farmer and Chairman of the Federation of Water Users Association, voiced his concerns, stating, "We have harvested about 30 percent, and by next week, we will be at the peak level. But if you look at the market, the price is going down due to the lack of buyers."

Mr. Abokah highlighted that farmers in the region faced production costs of GH¢8,500 to cultivate at least 10 bags of 180 kilograms of rice during the last farming season when the selling price per bag was GH¢900.

"As the buyers are giving us GH¢700 for the 180-kilogram bag, and the cost of production of 10 bags is 8,500 cedis for 1 acre, what it means is that the farmer will get only GH¢7,000. And that will be a loss of GH¢1,500," Mr. Abokah lamented.

With buyers now offering only GH¢700 for the 180-kilogram bag, farmers are grappling with a substantial loss.

The significant decrease in the price per kilogram is posing financial challenges for the farmers, subjecting them to economic pressure due to diminished returns on their labour.

Doris Adda, a female farmer, expressed frustration, noting that the government's efforts to encourage more women in agriculture are being hindered by the actions of middlemen.

She appealed to the government and stakeholders to intervene and create a market for their rice.

Harry Kubaje, another farmer,

urged the government, particularly through the Ghana Standards Authority (GSA), to provide support by introducing a standardised type of bag.

He explained that open market buyers have customised their sacks, taking more from the farmers and giving them less. The farmers implore the Ghana Standards Authority to step in and assist them.

"As the government is urging women and youth to go into farming, we have produced quality rice that will help the women pay their children's school fees. But

now, we are battling for a ready market to enable us to pay our children's school fees...So, we are begging the government and stakeholders to come in and save us to sell our rice."

"We used to have a standard sack that we continued till date. But the open market buyers have customised their sacks, further enlarging the sacks, taking more from us, and giving us less. And so, we urge the Ghana Standards Authority to come in and help us."

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



File photo

# General News

## Rescind directive to public hospitals to pay their electricity bills - Minority to govt

**M**inority in Parliament is fervently advocating for the prompt reversal of a recent government directive that mandates public hospitals to utilise their Internally Generated Fund (IGF) to settle electricity bills.

The contentious directive has sparked concerns among lawmakers, prompting a push for an immediate policy reversal to safeguard the financial sustainability of public healthcare institutions.

This development follows revelations by Tain MP, Adama Sulemana, disclosing that the Tain District Hospital faced disconnection from the national power grid by the Northern Electricity Distribution Company (NEDCO) due to an outstanding debt exceeding GH¢7 million.

Implemented on June 1, the directive has resulted in

substantial debts for numerous district hospitals, triggering the disconnection of five health facilities in the Bono East region. This action is part of NEDCO's debt recovery initiative.

In response to this development during a parliamentary session, North Tongu MP Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa characterised the new policy as egregious and insisted on its immediate reversal.

He said, "At least as for hospitals they must be exempted from these disconnections. They have to be exempted especially as this is a new policy. They have to be exempted."

"I mean imagine preterm babies who are in incubators and then they disconnect, we're just killing the children."

"It is crucial, it is about human life, it is about the right to life and the earlier this policy is reversed, this

new policy which started June 2023 which is alien to our country, since independence we have never had this policy. It's so alien it must be reversed."

Meanwhile, Adama Sulemana has urged parliament to compel the

government to bear the electricity cost for the effective running of the Tain District Hospital and other district hospitals to avoid further power cuts.

*Source: The Independent Ghana/ Jessie Ola-Morris*



*Minority Caucus in Parliament*

## It's not your mandate to provide Police logistics - MP blasts ECG over motorbike donation

**F**ormer Minister of Power, Dr. Kwabena Donkor, has strongly criticised the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) for donating 200 motorbikes to the Ghana Police Service. The donation, part of ECG's initiative to enhance police operations nationwide, drew disapproval from Pru East MP and Member of the Mines and Energy Committee of Parliament, Dr. Kwabena Donkor.

Dr. Kwabena Donkor condemned the gesture, deeming it highly irresponsible on the part of ECG, especially given the company's indebtedness to Independent Power Producers. According to him, ECG has no business taking on the government's responsibility of providing logistics to the power producers.

"I read with shock on Tuesday that the Electricity Company of Ghana had donated 200 motorbikes to the Ghana Police Service. Ordinarily,

any such donation would have attracted my approval. But with this particular one, ECG has no business taking over the responsibility of the state to provide logistics for the Ghana Police. ECG is in debt for billions of cedis," he remarked.

He further criticised ECG over its indebtedness to Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and urged the Ministers of Energy and State Enterprises to investigate the "irresponsible" act of ECG for appropriate action.

"Indeed, 2 weeks ago, the Minister of Finance had to intervene to stop Sonon Asorgli from shutting down because of ECG's indebtedness to IPPs. For an entity that cannot pay its indebtedness, they have no business buying motors for the Ghana Police. I call on the Ministers of Energy and State Enterprises to call the ECG management to book."

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*ECG gift Police 200 motorbikes*

# General News

## It's not your mandate to provide Police logistics - MP blasts ECG over motorbike donation

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ECG, the country's main power utility, buys electricity from various generation companies, including Independent Power Producers (IPPs), and distributes it to consumers. However, the ECG has been unable to pay for the full amount of power it purchases from the IPPs, resulting in a huge debt of about \$1.4 billion as of last month.

Meanwhile, in July this year, Independent Power Producers threatened a power cut to the national grid if the government did not pay at least 30% of the outstanding debt—a move that was expected to cause a major national crisis or even reintroduce the country to 'dumsor' but for the intervention of the finance minister.

This debt has affected the operations and sustainability of the IPPs, who control 50% of the country's generation mix. They have also rejected any proposal to restructure the debt, stating that they need to repay their lenders and suppliers.

The government and the ECG have been trying to address the debt

issue and prevent power cuts by implementing various measures such as the Cash Waterfall Mechanism, the Energy Sector Recovery Programme, and the Energy Sector Levy Act.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**

## Universal health coverage by 2030 in the pipeline - Deputy Health Minister

The Ministry of Health is laying the groundwork for achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030 through the implementation of policies and strategic measures, according to Deputy Minister for Health, Madam Tina Naa Ayele Mensah.

One key initiative in this effort is the revised National Health Policy, designed to address all social determinants of health in alignment with the 'health in all and one health policy.'

During the 2023 International Universal Health Day held on Tuesday in Accra, Madam Tina Naa Ayele Mensah shared these insights, stating, "In our bid to ensure full operationalization of the revised National Health Policy, we developed the UHC roadmap, which is serving as our guide to achieving UHC for all Ghanaians by 2030."

She emphasised that the Ministry has updated the National Health Policy, outlining a framework to address all social determinants of health in accordance with the 'health in all and one health policy.'

"Through the UHC roadmap, we have set for ourselves a UHC vision of ensuring that all people living in Ghana have timely access to high-quality health services irrespective of ability to pay at the point of use," she added.

The Chief Director of the Ministry, Alhaji Hafiz Adam, reiterated the ministry's commitment to implementing necessary

interventions to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) for the people of Ghana. He emphasized that the chosen theme for the event aligns with the national health policy, underscoring the crucial need to invest in resilient health systems for the attainment of health for all.

Dr. Felicia Owusu Antwi, representing the WHO Country Representative, highlighted insights from the 2023 global monitoring report, indicating a stagnation in the expansion

of health service coverage and a deterioration in financial protection for those accessing health services.

She underscored that approximately half of the global population, totaling 4.5 billion people, lacked coverage for essential health services, emphasizing the significant effort and public investment required to attain the goal of UHC by 2030.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and the global community

observed the 2023 International Universal Health Day under the theme, 'Health for All: Time for Action.' The event aimed to raise awareness about the imperative of robust and resilient health systems and the pursuit of universal health coverage through collaborative efforts across stakeholders. Additionally, it served as a platform for policymakers and duty-bearers to monitor progress towards achieving UHC by the year 2030.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey**



2023 International Universal Health Day held on Tuesday in Accra

# General News

## Renovation of Kasoa-Winneba and Adenta-Dodowa roads underway

Work on the 30-kilometre Kasoa-Winneba and 22-kilometre Adenta-Dodowa roads is in progress as contractors gear up to bring significant improvements to both routes, aiming to alleviate congestion.

On Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the Minister of Roads and Highways, Kwasi Amoako-Attah, officially handed over the project sites to the respective contractors.

NagFairmont Ltd. will be managing the Kasoa-Budumburam road, while Oswal Investments Ltd. has been assigned the Adenta-Dodowa road.

The Adenta-Dodowa road is slated for major enhancements, including the installation of interchanges and flyovers at crucial intersections.

Similarly, the Kasoa-Winneba road, particularly the Budumburam, Akoti, Sabato, and Winneba Junction stretch, will witness the construction of interchanges and flyovers.

Minister Amoako-Attah conveyed that the contractors have received instructions to mobilise to their respective sites for initial clearance and preparations, with the aim of commencing full-scale work in January 2024.

During an appearance on the Asaase Breakfast Show on Thursday 14 December, 2023, the minister expressed confidence in the competence of local contractors, emphasising their capacity to deliver high-quality work.

“The contractors handling the relocation have commenced work.

Two contractors are involved; they are relocating water and electricity lines, and Maripoma [a local contractor] is comparable to any foreign company in our country, and they are well positioned,” stated Minister Amoako-Attah.

He underscored the capacity building efforts undertaken over the past seven years, noting that under President Akufo-Addo’s leadership, around 20 contractors have strengthened their capabilities in terms of equipment, personnel, and overall efficiency.

Minister Amoako-Attah stressed that, given the necessary funds, these local contractors can achieve results on par with their foreign counterparts.

“The contractors doing the relocation have started work,”

he said. “Two contractors are involved; they are relocating water and electricity lines and Maripoma [a local contractor] is comparable to any foreign company in our country, and they are well positioned.

“I want to put on record that over the past seven years, under the leadership of President Akufo-Addo, about 20 contractors have had their capacity built in terms of equipment, personnel and everything.

“They are so efficient, and given the necessary funds, they can deliver just like any other foreign contractor,” Amoako-Atta said.

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



Minister of Roads and Highways, Kwasi Amoako-Attah (In white) at the site



# General News

## Lithium deal: Govt's pride in 10% royalty a celebration of mediocrity - NDC

Communications Director for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Sammy Gyamfi, has lambasted the government over its 'celebration' of the "10% royalty" under the controversial lithium deal.

His remarks come after the government signed a deal with Barari DV Ghana Ltd., a subsidiary of Atlantic Lithium Ltd., for the exploitation of lithium in the Ewoyaa area of the Central Region for a period of 15 years, starting next year, 2024.

Amid the fierce resistance the government has faced over the transparency of the deal, among others, the government and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources have defended the deal, saying that it is one of the best in the world as it stands to offer an unprecedented 10% royalty and 19% state participation in the mining company.

However, Sammy Gyamfi, in a statement explaining the deal and at the same time expressing his disapproval of it, labelled the government's pride in the 'meagre' benefit as a "celebration of mediocrity."

"Beyond that, strict provisions on tax compliance and enforcement

are required to ensure that the state is not cheated through transfer pricing and creative accounting.

"It is important to make the point that the government's boastful claim about securing a 10% royalty under the deal is a celebration of mediocrity," the statement said.

The NDC argues that, despite the government's assertion that Barari DV will be subject to a 35% corporate tax rate, there is a crucial need for clarity regarding the company's status and a comprehensive disclosure of concessions granted.

According to the NDC, the Mining Lease stipulates that Barari DV should pay taxes in adherence to Ghana's mining laws, creating room for ambiguity and speculation.

The NDC's concerns centre around the need for transparency and accountability in the lithium deal, urging the government to provide clear and unambiguous information to address uncertainties and ensure public trust in the agreement.

"It is therefore imperative for the government to clarify the status and tax obligations of Barari DV and its parent company. Ghanaians deserve to know whether or not the

company is a free zone company and why a mining company should be accorded free zone status.

"Ghanaians deserve to know all the concessions the government is giving the company (Barari DV/ Atlantic Lithium) for a holistic assessment of the benefits of the deal. "What the Mining Lease expressly provides is that Barari DV shall pay taxes in accordance with the mining laws of Ghana, without more.

"We are, however, told that the company is registered under the Ghana Free Zones Authority and is entitled to a 10-year tax holiday, when such tax concessions are ordinarily not granted to mining companies in the country. This, if true, will deprive the country of corporate taxes during the first ten years of the Ewoyaa Lithium Project," the statement further read.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*



Sammy Gyamfi, National Communications Officer for the NDC

## Harmattan will last the entire December; put on nose masks to protect your respiratory systems - GMet to public

The Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet) has alerted Ghanaians to brace themselves for an intense Harmattan season.

The season, characterised by dry and dusty winds, has been attributed to the arrival of a dry continental wind in the country.

A Senior Meteorologist at the Agency, Frederick Cudjoe, while engaging the media noted that the dry season will last the entire month, hence the need for the general public to take up some

safety precautions such as wearing nose masks in order to safeguard their respiratory systems from harmful particles.

"And then also since we will be having those particles in the atmosphere, we advise that maybe we can be putting on our nose masks during this period to avoid taking in a lot of that particle into our respiratory systems because we are realising that we have the dry continental wind invading our country, and we expect this

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File photo



# General News

**Harmattan will last the entire December; put on nose masks to protect your respiratory systems - GMet to public**  
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condition to last, especially for the entire period of December right from now to the end of December which will mean that we are going to be getting a lot of this dryness coming from the Sahara and the Sahel regions into our country.”

“And then also the dust conditions

will be accompanied by winds which are coming from the northern part of the continent into our country,” he said.

He also emphasised the importance of taking necessary precautions to prevent accidents, particularly road carnages, during this period.

“We advise that when visibility becomes very poor especially early in the morning and then at dawn, motorists should take necessary precautions, especially by using their fog lights and also driving within the speed limit. Also, people who go to farms, we advise that they take the necessary precautions to

prevent any fire outbreak.”

The harmattan season was predominantly observed by many on Monday, December 11, as they came on social media to share their various experiences and challenges.

**Source: The Independent Ghana**

## 3 farmers sustain gunshot wounds during clash with COCOBOD taskforce at Ahamanso

Three individuals have been shot in Ahamanso Junction in the Oti Region following a clash between the COCOBOD task force and some farmers over the sale of cocoa beans.

The victims sustained gunshot wounds during the altercation, and the circumstances surrounding the shooting remain unclear. The injured individuals were promptly transported to the St Mary Theresa

Hospital in Papase.

The Principal Medical Officer at the hospital, Dr. David Amankwa Kodua, reported that two out of the three injured individuals were in serious condition upon arrival and required immediate stabilisation.

“As of now, they are stable, one of them, who is around 36 years old, received a gunshot wound to the right lower limb, and after

investigating further - the bullet there confirmed that indeed it was a gunshot wound,” he said.

He noted that arrangements were being made to transfer him to the Ho Teaching Hospital, where orthopaedic surgeons would provide the necessary medical attention.

However, one of the injured farmers has been discharged as he

showed stable vital signs.

“The other two, one of them was even discharged. He was very, very stable. And the one who is also on the award, which we can manage here, has some lacerations which we are sutured. For him, the X-ray did not show the bullet inside,” Dr Kodua added.

**Source: The Independent Ghana**



**Victim sustained gunshot wounds**

# General News

## NDC rejoins IPAC after 3-year absence

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) has agreed to re-join the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) following an intervention by the National Peace Council (NPC).

The Party accepted the NPC's request at a stock-taking conference at Peduase in the Eastern Region on Thursday.

The conference was to evaluate institutional progress towards building the required resilience for credible, transparent, and peaceful general elections in 2024.

The NDC had boycotted IPAC meetings since March 2020 after the party expressed displeasure about the posture of the Electoral Commission.

The Party had accused the Commission of failing to take into consideration decisions at IPAC meetings as part of its electoral reforms.

At the opening of Thursday's meeting in Peduase, Dr Reverend Dr Ernest Adu-Gyamfi, Chairman of the National Peace Council, appealed to the NDC to re-join IPAC to help build consensus.

He said the Council had engaged the EC and the NDC on the issue extensively and was hopeful that the NDC would make a declaration by the end of the meeting.

Mrs Jean Mensa, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission, in her address at the meeting, also appealed to the NDC to re-join IPAC and indicated that the Commission was committed to receiving the Party in the interest of consolidating Ghana's democracy.

"We miss the fire of the NDC at IPAC meetings and we invite them," Mrs Mensa said.

Reacting to the call, Mr Johnson Asiedu Nketia, National Chairman, NDC, said the NDC was committed

to supporting efforts to shape the country's democratic and electoral processes and accepted to re-join the IPAC.

He said before the Party would participate in the next IPAC meeting; the EC must ensure that IPAC returned to its "consensus building" approach to implementing electoral reforms.

"On behalf of the Party, we accept the appeal from the National Peace Council that we should consider returning to IPAC, but we want to return to IPAC and not any other forum.

"The other side is for us to work to make sure that IPAC returns to its consensus-building days... the issues that blocked our return should be dealt with before our next IPAC meeting," Mr Nketia said.

He also expressed concern with the EC's efforts towards making the Ghana Card the sole identification

document for the Commission's proposed continuous voter registration exercise.

The NDC argued that the move had the potential to disenfranchise about 1 million voters, a position the EC had debunked.

"We will support it if everyone had the Ghana Card," Mr Nketia said.

Ms Kathleen Addy, Chairperson of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), said the 2024 Election was peculiar in the wake of political instability in the West Africa Sub-region.

"We are more vulnerable than before. We must work with each other and assure each other so that we can arrive at the elections and beyond the elections in peace and intact," she said.

**Source: GNA**



EC meets NDC leadership

# Business

## Ghana has more than \$10 trillion worth mineral reserve - IEA

Director of Research at the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), Dr. John Kwakye, has indicated that Ghana's unexploited mineral resources are valued at over US\$10 trillion, as per research conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States.

He emphasized that this substantial untapped wealth underscores the importance for Ghana to assert direct control over the nation's mineral resources.

In an interaction with the media, he said, "We believe that Ghana is not poor, we are rich. CIA has a database on some of minerals, the tonnage of our natural resources underground and if you take them, you add them and multiply by the world prices, we came up with a figure that is more than \$10 trillion."

The IEA is therefore advocating for

adequate resourcing of the Ghana Geological Survey Authority (GGSA) to facilitate comprehensive mapping of the country's mineral resources, ensuring effective utilization.

The GGSA is tasked with conducting geological surveys, mapping, and providing geoscientific information to the public and private sectors.

"Our geological survey, why can't we resource them on an annual basis? I expect that the budget will have a line item that says that the Geological Survey takes so much. Let's resource them so that they can do the mapping of the mineral data for us so that we don't have to rely on a foreign company coming in and saying because I brought in my own capital, you have to accept these terms."

"So we can find the money. In fact, we can even use part of our oil

money, the funds that we have created the stabilisation fund, the heritage fund. We can dip into it and use it," he stated.

This comes at a time when Ghana has signed a lithium deal with Barari DV Ghana Limited, one that has been condemned by the IEA.

The think-tank argues that the terms and conditions do not inure to the benefit of Ghanaians, hence must not be ratified by Parliament when the agreement is presented by the Lands Minister, Samuel Abu Jinapor.

The mining lease, granted for 15 years to Barari, a subsidiary of Atlantic Lithium Limited, an Australian company listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) and the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) of the London Stock Exchange, covers an area of 42.63 km<sup>2</sup> in and around Ewoyaa in the Mfantseman

Municipality of the Central Region.

The \$250-million project, located in Ewoyaa, Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region, is set to commence production by 2025.

The deal includes a 10% royalty and 13% free carried interest by the state, surpassing the existing 5% and 10%, respectively, for other mining agreements.

Barari DV Ghana Limited is also required to contribute 1% of its revenue to a community development fund for the upliftment of the mining area.

The Lands Minister notes that the lease demands the construction of a mining refinery in Ghana for the processing of lithium by the Australian company.

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



Dr. John Kwakye, Director of Research at the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)

# Business

## Ghana sees about 10% decline in inflation

Ghana has observed a sustained decline in its inflation rate for the fourth consecutive month, registering at 26.4% in November.

This marks a significant 8.8-percentage-point decrease from the 35.2% recorded in October 2023.

The month-on-month reduction of 8.8% stands as the most substantial drop in the past 13 months in the country, primarily attributed to a decrease in food inflation.

Notably, items such as fish, other seafood, water, and soft drinks experienced deflation during this

period.

According to the recently released Consumer Price Index (CPI) data on December 14, year-on-year food inflation was reported at 32.2%, while non-food inflation stood at 21.7%.

Professor Samuel Kobina Annim, the Government Statistician, emphasised the regional disparities in inflation rates, pointing out that the national inflation rate's 19-month low was influenced by base-effect comparisons. Breaking down the regional data, the Western region recorded the highest inflation rate at 39.8%, while the Greater Accra region registered the lowest

inflation rate at 19.8%.

The overall trend suggests positive economic development with a significant decline in inflation rates, particularly in the food sector, contributing to the nation's economic stability.

Since 2022, Ghana has grappled with persistently high inflation, primarily attributed to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the devaluation of the cedi, rising fuel costs, and supply shocks in the agricultural sector.

Ghana experienced a peak in its inflation rate, reaching an alarming 53.6% in January 2023, positioning it as the second-highest in Africa,

following Zimbabwe.

Throughout the majority of 2023, Ghana's inflation rate consistently hovered above 40%, reflecting the economic challenges it faced.

However, there was a noteworthy shift in August 2023, when the inflation rate began to decline. This change marked a significant turning point, indicating potential improvements in the economic landscape and efforts to address the factors contributing to high inflation.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo**



Market

# International

## Japan: Four cabinet ministers quit over fundraising scandal

**F**our cabinet ministers in Japan quit on Thursday over a fundraising scandal involving the ruling party's most powerful faction.

More than 500m yen (£2.8m; \$3.4m) is alleged to have ended up in slush funds over a five-year period through 2022.

Tokyo prosecutors have also launched a corruption probe, Nikkei reported.

It is the latest blow to Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's increasingly unpopular government, whose approval ratings have plunged.

Public support for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has been in power almost continuously since 1955, fell below 30% for the first time since 2012, an NHK survey on Tuesday showed.

Voters have been angered by inflation, as well as Mr Kishida's

handling of earlier scandals. Chief Cabinet Secretary and top government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno, often seen as Mr Kishida's right-hand man and the face of his government, was the most prominent of the four ministers. Economy and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, Internal Affairs Minister Junji Suzuki and Agriculture Minister Ichiro Miyashita also stepped down on Thursday.

Their replacements are expected to be announced by the end of the day.

In addition, five senior vice ministers and a parliamentary vice minister from the same faction, formerly led by the late PM Shinzo Abe, also quit.

The mass resignations now leave the LDP in the unusual situation of having no representatives from its largest and most powerful faction within the cabinet.

Mr Kishida, who took office in

October 2021, said on Wednesday that he would deal with the allegations "head-on".

The faction allegedly failed to report hundreds of millions of yen in fundraising income.

Also known as the Seiwa policy group, the faction had set quotas for its members on the sale of tickets for party fundraising events.

When their sales exceeded the quotas, members received the additional funds. In and of itself, this does not violate Japanese law.

However, the allegations in the present case - which were triggered by a criminal complaint - suggest that the additional revenue was kept off the books and instead went into slush funds.

Mr Matsuno is himself accused of failing to report more than 10m yen in income.

Other major factions within the

LDP, including one previously led by Mr Kishida, are also facing allegations of under-reporting fundraising income.

On Wednesday, the Lower House of Japan's Diet rejected a no-confidence motion filed by the opposition against Mr Kishida's cabinet.

The LDP is due to hold leadership elections next September. A general election is due in 2025.

Some observers have said that even if Mr Kishida can continue to hold on to his post, his credibility will be greatly dented by the ongoing scandal.

"Kishida will remain in power for now as there are no obvious other candidates for the next president. But if a strong contender emerges, there may be a move to drop Kishida," Yu Uchiyama, a professor of political science at the University of Tokyo, told Reuters this week.

**Source: BBC**



**Hirokazu Matsuno, Ex-Chief Cabinet Secretary**

# International

## Netflix releases most transparent data to date about viewership

In a major step in transparency, Netflix for the first time released on Tuesday a report of what people watched on the streaming service during a six-month period.

The report, titled “What We Watched: A Netflix Engagement Report,” is set to be published twice a year, going forward, the company said in a memo.

The report measures the hours viewed for every title, the premiere date and whether the title was available globally. The report only included titles that had more than 50,000 hours viewed.

It’s among the most in-depth metrics Netflix has released about its subscriber engagement. As part of the Writers Guild of America contract ratified in October, streaming services such as Netflix and Disney+ pledged to increase transparency about how many hours certain programs are streamed.

This report covers 18,000 titles,

measuring views from January to June 2023. Here’s what viewers spent the most hours watching:

- The Night Agent, season 1 (812,100,000 hours)
- Ginny & Georgia, season 2 (665,100,000 hours)
- The Glory, season 1 (662,800,000 hours)
- Wednesday, season 1 (507,700,000)
- Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story (503,000,000)

Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos said during a conference call about the report that the most effective way to measure engagement is through viewing hours.

“It’s easy to understand. It mirrors third parties like Nielsen in the US. It makes Netflix very easy to compare to other streaming services,” he said.

Back when Netflix was in the early stages of its business, it wasn’t in its best interest to focus on transparency, Sarandos said,

because “it didn’t want to provide roadmaps to future competitors.”

“We were building a new business and we also needed room to learn,” he said.

But that lack of transparency created an “environment of mistrust around the data.”

“This is probably more information than you need. But I think it creates a better environment for the Guild, for us, for the producers, for creators,” Sarandos said.

The company said more than 60% of Netflix titles released between January and June showed up on its weekly Top 10 lists, which Netflix began publishing in November 2021.

“This is a big step forward for Netflix and our industry,” the company said in a release. “We believe the viewing information in this report — combined with our weekly Top 10 and Most Popular lists — will give creators and our

industry deeper insights into our audiences, and what resonates with them.”

Netflix said the data revealed the staying power of sequels, such as the second season of Ginny & Georgia, You season 4 (440,600,000 hours) and Outer Banks season 3 (402,500,000). Yet it also said new series launched such as The Night Agent, The Diplomat, Beef, The Glory, Alpha Males, FUBAR and Fake Profile each garnered an impressive audience.

The report also showed how a variety of genres stuck with viewers. On the call, Lauren Smith, vice president of global strategy and finance, said that on average, members watched six different genres a month, and the company’s most watched titles are from more than 12 different genres.

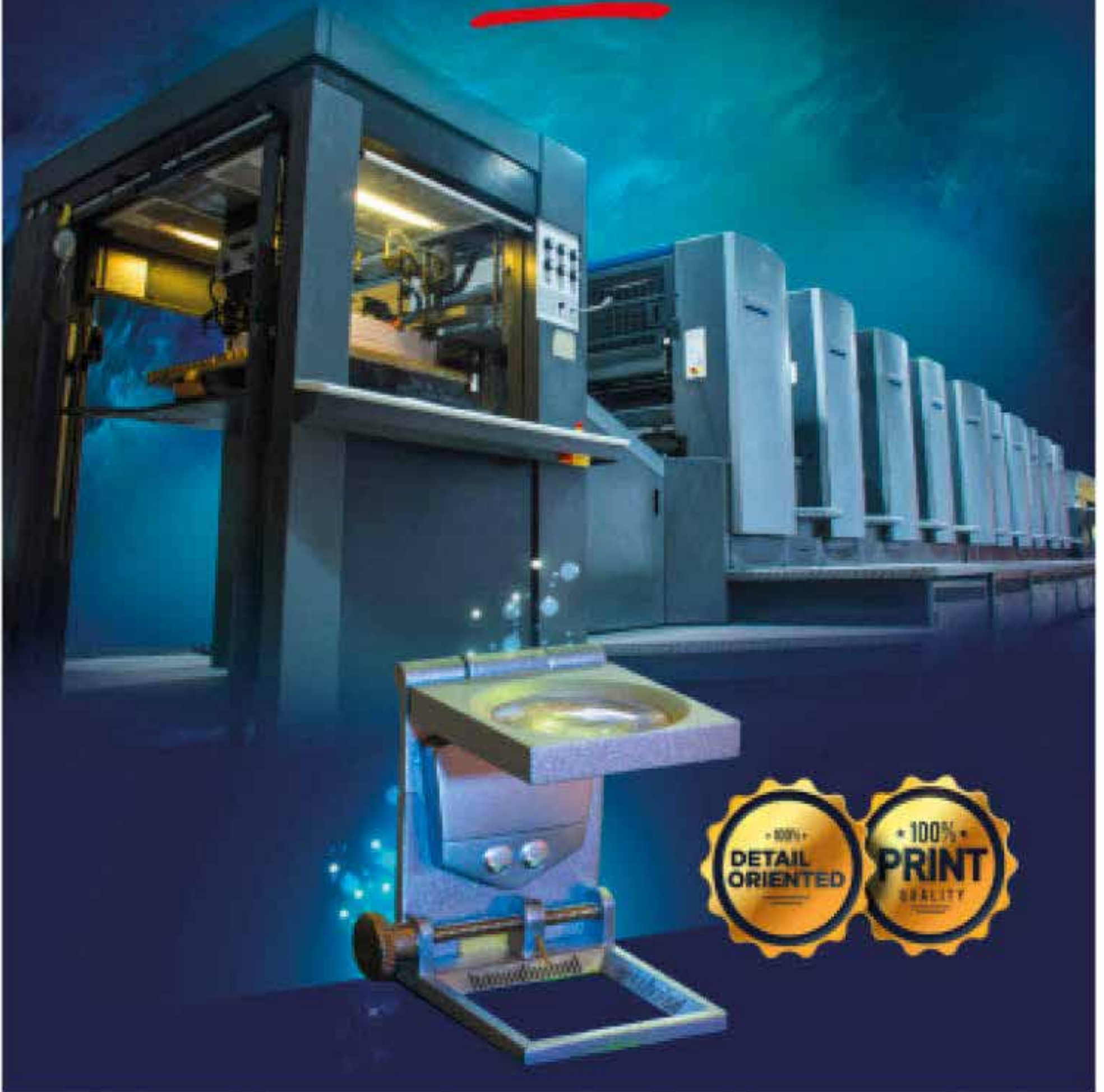
**Source: CNN**



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