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General News

Second Lady Samira Bawumia survives car crash; bodyguard killed

Second Lady of the Republic of Ghana, Mrs Samira Bawumia narrowly escaped a fatal accident over the weekend that claimed the life of one of her bodyguards, Mumuni Fuseini.

The tragic incident occurred on Saturday, January 13, 2024, as the convoy accompanying Mrs. Bawumia met with an unfortunate collision.

The convoy was en route to the Ashanti Region when a sprinter bus narrowly avoided colliding with it, resulting in a crash involving two cars trailing behind.

The collision occurred at Ohene-Nkwata near Nobewam in the Ejisu-Juaben Municipality of the Ashanti Region.

The multi-vehicle accident involved two Toyota Land Cruisers, a Mercedes-Benz car, and a Sprinter Benz bus.

Among the eight victims, four sustained severe injuries. Regrettably, Alhassan Fuseini, a dedicated member of Samira Bawumia's security detail since 2008, lost his life in the tragic

incident.

Despite the severity of the accident, Samira Bawumia emerged unharmed, sustaining no serious injuries. The Vice President, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, and his wife, Samira Bawumia, expressed their

grief during the funeral service held on Sunday morning, January 14, 2024.

Mourners gathered to pay their respects to Mumuni Fuseini whose life was tragically cut short. The burial, conducted in accordance

with Islamic customs, witnessed a solemn mood as the Vice President and Second Lady accompanied Alhassan's grieving family during the ceremony.

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



Accident scene

GJA urges journalists to be mindful of their conducts in this election year

Vice President, Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Mrs Linda Asante Agyei, has emphasised the need for journalists to be mindful of their conducts in this election year, reiterating that "The GJA does not, and will not, condone unprofessional conduct."

She added that "the GJA will not shield or provide cover for deviants of professionalism" hence the need for journalists to be extra circumspect in their reportage on the elections to promote peace.

She said, "let us ensure balanced reportage and also address issues critically for a peaceful poll and desist from doing things that may cause confusion and violence"

emphasising that "We should not give our platforms to political extremists to foment trouble."

Mrs Asante Agyei was speaking at a training workshop for journalists in Tamale on Friday on the theme: "Promoting Peaceful Journalistic Media Platforms Ahead of Elections 2024".

The day's training workshop was organised by the GJA as part of its Journalists for Peaceful Discourse project, which is supported by the United States Embassy, Ghana.

Participants were drawn from the five regions in the north, and representatives of some political parties including NPP, NDC, CPP,

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Mrs Linda Asante Agyei, Vice President, Ghana Journalists Association (GJA)



General News

GJA urges journalists to be mindful of their conducts in this election year

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PNC, PPP from the Northern Region.

The 10-month projects, seeks to train journalists across the country to promote violent free and credible elections in 2024 through well-informed, fact-based and non-partisan election reporting.

Mrs Asante Agyei said the only way the country could have a credible, free, and fair election was through the practice of professional journalism adding "As journalists, we must be circumspect in the questions we ask and the information we put out there, lest it fuels violence and destroy the beautiful democracy."

She was hopeful that the training would equip participants to

uphold the tenets of press freedom and freedom of expression while promoting professionalism and ensuring that the country's democracy was once again safeguarded and secure even beyond the 2024 general election.

Bishop Professor Albert Luguterah, Council Member, Northern Regional Peace Council, who spoke on "Protecting peace in Ghana, the stakes, and the role of the media", urged journalists to engage in deliberate selective reporting and use of editorial discretion to advance and maintain peace in the country.

He also urged the media to educate the population on tolerance, embracing diversity and encouraging peaceful resolution of differences in preventing conflicts.

Mr Albert Yelyang, National Network Coordinator, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP - Ghana), who spoke on "What is/and how must journalists respond to the security situations", advised journalists to be mindful of their choice of words so as not to be accused of inciting the public and or pitching populations and or groups against one another.

He urged editors to thoroughly cross check information before publication advising journalists to build their capacities on issues to be well informed and grounded in such issues to enhance their reportage.

Mr Nelson Adanuti, Editor at Diamond FM and Vice Chairman, GJA, Northern Region, who spoke on "Fact checking to counter

misinformation/disinformation and mal-information in elections coverage", urged media practitioners not to be conveyor belts but rather fact-check claims to better inform the public.

He emphasised that "Inasmuch as breaking the story is the ultimate goal, we should be mindful of getting it right."

Mr Yakubu Abdul-Majeed, Chairman, GJA, Northern Region, urged media practitioners to be fair and firm in covering the elections.

Representatives of the political parties gave assurance of their commitment to ensuring violent-free elections.

Source: GNA

Don't allow anyone in the Jubilee House threaten you; they are all leaving in 2025 - Ken Agyapong to NPP supporters

The Member of Parliament for Assin Central, Ken Agyapong, has boldly declared that the Jubilee House has no authority to threaten anyone. He has confidently predicted that all its occupants will leave in 2025.

In a session with Bantama delegates, Kennedy Agyapong, whose brother is vying against Asenso-Boakye in the imminent parliamentary primaries, called on party members to stand firm against corruption and other malpractices within the party.

Accusing Asenso-Boakye of corruption, Ken Agyapong, who recently participated in the NPP presidential primaries, dismissed threats and intimidation emanating from the presidency, where the Bantama MP holds substantial support.

"We are not going to allow anybody. Jubilee House cannot threaten anybody. What is their time left? 2025 they are going," he affirmed.

Ken Agyapong alleged that the Bantama MP, also serving as the Housing Minister, in collaboration

with the former Chief Justice, has assumed control of a house that served as the official residence of the late Supreme Court Justice Marfo-Sau after his demise.

"The former Chief Justice and Asenso-Boakye should come and respond, what is happening to the house Justice Marfo-Sau was living in after his death?"

"It is a state house and some people who want to take it were not even born but today because of positions they want to take it and come and brag," he told some Bantama NPP delegates in a video making rounds on social media.

Kennedy Agyapong, who has challenged the implicated individuals to come forward and defend themselves, expresses his readiness to report the issue to the Special Prosecutor.

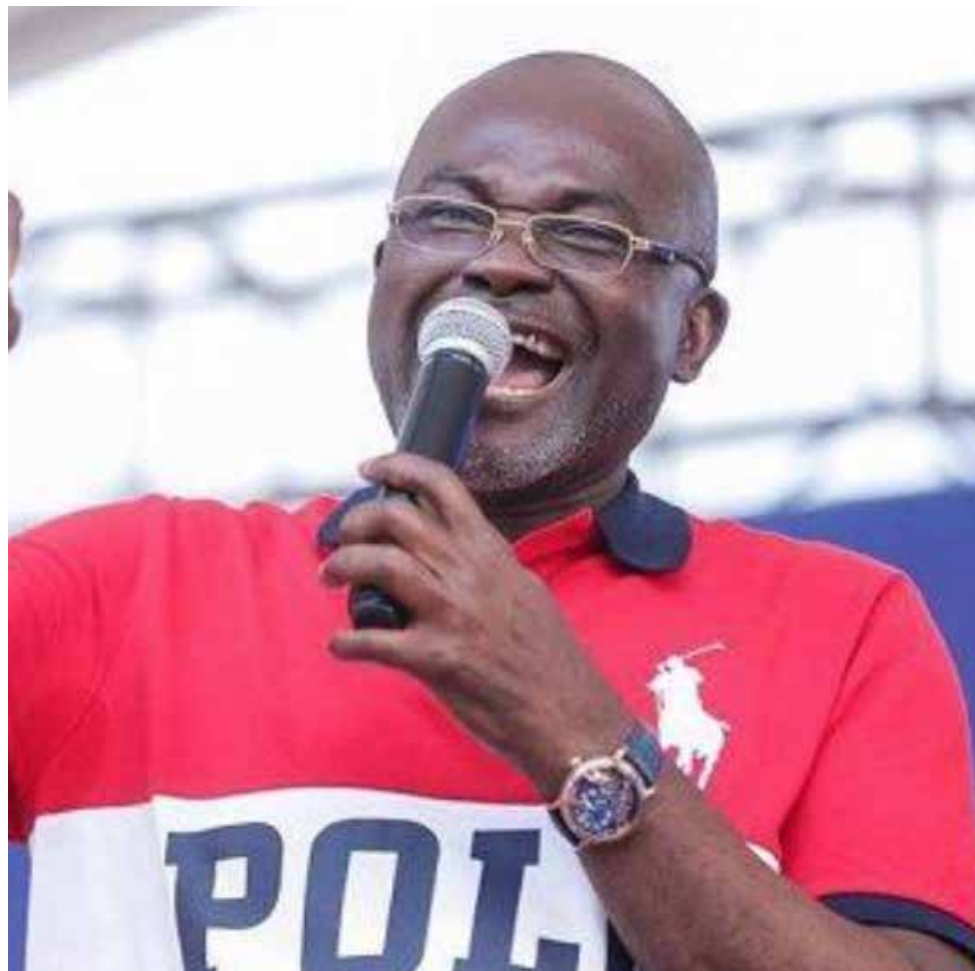
He additionally charged the flag bearers of the two main political parties, former President John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress and Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, to investigate the matter should

either of them emerge victorious in the 2024 presidential polls.

"I have a task for the vice president and Mahama. Whoever wins, whether the vice president or John Mahama, I will follow up on

that house and make sure it is investigated because those who want to take that building were not even born," he said.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Jessie Ola-Morris



Kennedy Ohene Agyapong, Assin Central Member of Parliament



General News

Elections security is both covert and overt - GFL advises EC

The Ghana Federation of Labour (GFL) has called for the adoption of both covert and overt surveillance security systems throughout the electoral process.

The GF therefore called on the Electoral Commission to ensure the sanctity of elections by maintaining international best standards.

Mr Abraham Koomson, GFL Secretary General, explained in an interview with the Ghana News Agency in Tema that covert electoral surveillance security systems are carried out without the subject's knowledge, that is, electorates, political parties, and other interested parties, while overt surveillance is performed using devices that are visible and obvious to all.

Mr. Koomson explained that both systems have their major advantages and expressed concern about the EC's proposed amendment to depend on covert security surveillance systems for Elections 2024.

The GFL Secretary General explained that overt security featured in elections, including the use of indelible ink on the fourth finger after casting the ballot, were evidence to the voter, the contesting candidate, and other stakeholders. This sense of assurance made it difficult for the voter to attempt to vote again, as the indelible ink served

as a form of physical authentication.

He said these elements would be compromised with the EC's intent not to use the overt security features, which were the indelible ink on the fourth finger of the electorate after voting in Elections 2024.

Mr. Koomson stressed that with the African electoral system, which is loaded with suspicion and sometimes attempts by ruling parties and opposition parties to take advantage of the system, it was apparent for the EC to continue with the two-way security systems on election day: covert and overt electorate observation.

He also called on the stakeholders in Ghana's electoral system to steer the country out of the potential political turmoil before, during, and after the December 7 polls, "since the major political parties are well armed to win the elections through whatever means possible."

The GFL Secretary General noted that Ghana's Electoral Commission needs help; the National Peace Council and Tradition Leaders must roll out and intensify mediation efforts between the EC and other stakeholders, especially the major political parties, as the ground is becoming fertile for violence to erupt once again."

He also called on the EC to exhibit neutrality both in public and in private and advise senior electoral

officials as well as commissioners to reduce the incidence of conflict, antagonistic posture, and pronouncements, and stop media wars with political parties. "EC is not contesting the election in 2024 but is expected to play a neutral role in election management functions."

He also called on both the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) leadership to demonstrate political maturity, stressing that "it is exactly when partisan pressures are high that electoral stakeholders must create an enabling political environment for people to express their views devoid of personality attacks, arrests, and security

brutalities."

Mr. Koomson also called on the government to protect the rights of all citizens before, during, and after the December polls: "Ghanaians must be allowed to engage in peaceful, lawful electoral engagement and campaigning; citizens must not be hindered from exercising and defending their legitimate right to express their views, especially dissenting positions."

"We must strengthen state institutions to perform their duties without interference and political manipulation," he stated.

Source: GNA



Mr Abraham Koomson, GFL Secretary General

Assets declaration "is one of those useless exercises we have in our constitution" - Fmr High Commissioner to Canada

Public office holders in Ghana are mandated to declare their assets before they assume office, as required by the constitution.

They are mandated to submit a written declaration of their properties, assets, and liabilities to the Auditor-General.

This is to prevent corruption, abuse of power, and conflict of interest, and to promote accountability, transparency, and public trust.

However, a former High Commissioner to Canada, Professor Ivy Margaret Amoakohene, has labelled the asset declaration provision as "useless".

"And so, for me, it is one of those useless exercises we have in our constitution, and maybe we have to have a second look and see what we can do," she said in an interview on Joy News on January 12, 2024.

On her part, the institutions that oversee this corruption check

requirement aren't effective in the discharge of their duties.

She says the forms on which the said assets are supposed to be declared are left unchecked and unattended.

"What I know is that perhaps our institutions to check corruption are not rigorous enough, so you have been appointed a High Commissioner; you are supposed to complete your asset declaration forms and nobody gets to see what

it is," she mentioned.

Sighting her case as an example while assuming office as a member of the Council of State, she shed light on her personal experience with the asset declaration process during her tenure.

She asserted that the processes she went through to declare her assets were not only inefficient but also lacked transparency.

"In fact, I have forgotten what I
- continued on page 5



General News

Assets declaration “is one of those useless exercises we have in our constitution” - Fmr High Commissioner to Canada

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wrote in mine because you take it to the Auditor General; when you get there, the officer takes it, puts it somewhere and it is stacked away somewhere, so how do you know that what I have in there is actually my property?” she added.

Professor Amoakohene argued that if individuals claim to possess certain assets, they should be required to provide proof, especially given their roles in public office.

“If I say that I have 3 houses, I

should show proof that these are my houses, because your interest is what I have acquired in public office, and you want to see what I have at the end of the service, which is something I have acquired during the service or it is a something I had already.

“And you fill out a form and nobody gets to know what is in there, not even the Auditor General himself.

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



Professor Ivy Magaret Amoakohene, Commissioner to Canada

Thieves reportedly break into John Kumah's home; steal GH¢50k, other valuables

An amount of GH¢50,000 has reportedly been stolen from the residence of the Deputy Minister for Finance and Member of Parliament for the Ejisu Constituency, Dr. John Ampontuah Kumah, following a break-in.

The incident took place on the evening of Friday, December 29, 2023, at approximately 6:44 pm, while the family was away attending a church event in town.

According to reports, the burglars forcibly entered Dr. Kumah's

residence located in Chantan, Greater Accra, and absconded with the stolen money. The report filed at the Mile 7 Police Station also mentions the theft of household appliances and crucial documents, including passports and birth certificates belonging to the Deputy Minister's wife.

As of now, the Ghana Police Service has not disclosed any arrests related to the incident.

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



Dr. John Ampontuah Kumah, Deputy Minister for Finance and Member of Parliament for the Ejisu Constituency



General News

Central Region records 664 fire cases in 2023, no fatalities

The Central Region recorded 664 fire incidents in 2023 as against 570 in 2022, the regional office of the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) has said.

This means that the region experienced 94 more fire cases than it did in 2022, representing an increase of 16.5 per cent.

However, none of the incidents were fatal, unlike in 2022 where two people died in the 570 cases recorded.

DOIII Abdul Wasiiu Hudu, the Regional Public Relations Officer (PRO), told the Ghana News Agency that although it was normal to see a rise in fire incidents as settlements expanded, the rate of increase was worrying.

Bushfires, he said, jumped significantly from 114 in 2022 to 159 in 2023 with the majority of the cases caused by farmers and hunters.

He said domestic fires also rose to 234 in 2023 from 195 in 2022, most of which were caused by electrical faults as a result of poor wiring, and LPG accidents.

"Burning of rubbish also caused

some commercial fires," he added.

On the brighter side, DOIII Hudu said institutional fires such as schools and markets decreased by about 20 per cent from 35 to 25 while vehicular cases also reduced to 60 from 62.

He, however, noted that the majority of the vehicular fires could have been prevented or controlled if the drivers had extinguishers.

"Every vehicle should have a fire extinguisher because it is more important than any part of the vehicle," DOIII Hudu said.

"By all means, you should have one in your car, unless you are irresponsible."

Detailing other cases attended to, the PRO said the Service made 125 road traffic extrications and handled one flood incident and six incidents of bee attacks in which 10 people were injured.

"There were four well rescues where two died and two survived, one rescue from a septic tank and one case of electrocution," he explained.

The Service, however, received 34 prank calls in 2023.

DOIII Hudu, expressing disquiet over the incident, said fire safety was a shared responsibility and entreated the public to avoid such prank calls and religiously follow all protocols to ensure the safety of all.

With bushfires being a major concern, he said the Service would continue sensitising stakeholders on the laws against bush burning and its consequences to mitigate such incidents.

"It's illegal to burn bushes, and you will be held accountable if

your actions lead to bushfires," he warned.

The Fire Officer said the major challenge of the Service was the long distances they covered to attend to distress calls.

That, he noted, increased the response time, for which reason some incidents went out of control.

He, therefore, appealed for more fire stations to save lives and property.

Source: GNA



File photo

Asantehene's \$10 million heal KATH renovation project sees blocks roof repairs reach 60% completion

The renovation project initiated by Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II to address the leaking concrete roofs in the old "Gee" blocks at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) has achieved a 60% completion rate, according to recent reports from a site meeting attended by project stakeholders.

The successful repair of these roofs marks a substantial milestone in the phased renovation plan for all hospital wards.

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, in recognition of his 25th anniversary on the golden stool in 2024, launched a fundraising drive to mobilise \$10 million for the renovation of

the hospital's in-patient wards after personally witnessing the deteriorating state of the hospital.

During the recent site meeting, attended by hospital management, lead sponsor Justmoh Constructions Limited, and Heal Komfo Anokye Project (HeKAP) leadership, the progress of the concrete roof repairs was thoroughly evaluated.

Plans for the expedited phased renovation of the blocks, which have not undergone comprehensive renovation since the hospital's establishment in 1955, were also deliberated.

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Repaired leaking concrete roofs in the old "Gee" blocks at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH)



General News

Asantehene's \$10 million heal KATH renovation project sees blocks roof repairs reach 60% completion

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Key participants in the meeting included KATH CEO Prof. Otchere Addai-Mensah, Justmoh Constructions Limited CEO Mr. Justice Amoh, and HeKAP Chairman Mr. Samuel Au-Boakye. The meeting expressed satisfaction with the work conducted by Premier Steels Limited in repairing the concrete roofs to eliminate water seepage.

Mr. Amoh, who pledged to cover the entire cost of renovating one

of the blocks, emphasized his commitment to completing the project during the Asantehene's 25th-anniversary celebration. He insisted on using high-quality hospital-grade materials meeting international standards to ensure the longevity of the renovation.

Prof. Addai-Mensah praised Mr. Amoh's dedication and assured that funds for the project are available. Despite the active use of all wards in the blocks for

inpatient care, the hospital's board, management, and HeKAP team are determined to ensure the project is completed on time.

To facilitate the renovation process, the management is collaborating with clinical directorates and units to relocate some wards in phases. For instance, the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Directorate in "A Block" has agreed to move services to other parts of the hospital, allowing the renovation works to

commence.

The Asantehene's KATH Renovation Project aims to comprehensively repair and modernise the old "Gee" blocks, covering plumbing, electrical, tiling, medical facilities, and other civil works at the hospital.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

NDC gives EC 7 day ultimatum to reverse decision not to use indelible ink

Member of Parliament for South Dayi, Rockson Nelson Dafeamekpor, has issued a stern ultimatum, giving the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission (EC), Jean Mensa, seven days to retract the administrative directive abolishing the use of indelible ink in elections.

In a letter dated January 9, Mr. Dafeamekpor described the directive as unlawful.

"By this letter, therefore, I demand that, within 7 days, upon receipt of the same, you withdraw the said administrative directive unlawfully revoking the statutory use of the indelible ink as part of our electoral authentication process as it undoubtedly amounts to a unilateral REPEAL of Regulation 33, sub-regulation 2, Paragraph (c) of Constitutional Instrument 127, 2020 without any recourse to Parliament, the only Constitutionally mandated organ of state with power so to do," Mr. Dafeamekpor wrote.

Mr. Dafeamekpor, who is also the Minority Chief Whip, explained that, "If your said directive is allowed, it will be tantamount to a sinful usurpation of the legislative powers of the Parliament of Ghana."

Conversations regarding the discontinuation of indelible ink usage in district-level elections and all subsequent polls emerged recently after Electoral Commissioner Jean Mensa

announced that the Commission is deliberating on removing the use of indelible ink in subsequent elections.

She explained that the decision aims at improving the electoral process and implementing a more robust identification system.

Speaking at a media briefing on Monday, December 18, she noted that the biometric identification system flags anyone who attempts multiple registrations; hence, anyone verified after voting cannot vote again.

"The issue of indelible ink, the question is when we were not doing biometrics, we were basically using your face and your card. We look at your face, and we say this picture looks like you. Biometric technology makes it difficult for a person who has been verified and cast their vote to come a second time.

"So, there is no need for indelible ink. Once you have been verified, it goes into the system, and you cannot come back a second time," she said.

However, Mr. Dafeamekpor, who seems displeased with the decision, has thus warned the EC that: "Be assured that if you fail to heed this request, I shall employ every other lawful remediable step available to me without any further recourse to you, including, but not limited to, the invocation of the penal sanctions contained in Regulation 45 of CI 127 against you and your staff(s)."

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Jessie Ola-Morris



File photo



General News

2023/2024 scholarship portal for prospective students opened - GETFund

The Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) has initiated the application process for its local scholarship program, welcoming prospective students for undergraduate and graduate studies in the academic year 2023/2024.

Administrator of GETFund, Dr. Richard Boadu, stated, "The GETFund invites eligible candidates to apply for undergraduate (Diploma, HND & Degree) programmes, as well as graduate scholarships for the 2023/2024 academic year."

These scholarships aim to provide financial assistance to students pursuing Diploma, Higher National Diploma (HND), and Degree programs, supporting deserving students in unlocking their academic potential.

Dr. Boadu, in a media engagement, encouraged potential applicants

to seize this opportunity to secure their future across various academic disciplines.

"Whether you aspire to further your education in the arts, sciences, business or any other field, the GETFund Scholarship can assist you in achieving your goals," he added.

Application Procedure:

Prospective applicants are directed to visit the GETFund website: <https://getfund.scholarshipsplatform.com> to complete the Online Application by filling out the online application form on the portal.

"Applicants must provide the required information and upload scanned copies of necessary documentation for vetting and shortlisting," Dr. Boadu emphasized.

After submission, the applications

will undergo vetting processes, and shortlisted candidates will be contacted for further instructions. Dr. Boadu advised applicants to adhere to the guidelines provided on the portal for a smooth application process.

The application period, initiated on December 20, 2023, will conclude on January 31, 2024. Dr. Boadu emphasized the importance of timely submissions, as late applications will not be considered.

He cautioned against fraudulent activities during the application process, stating that any misrepresentation could lead to criminal proceedings. Applicants are restricted from applying for the same degree (Undergraduate or Postgraduate) twice if they have already received a scholarship. Providing incorrect information will result in automatic disqualification. Continuing

students should indicate the entire duration of their program, not just the remaining academic year.

Dr. Boadu outlined factors that could lead to automatic disqualification, including failure to complete the application, submitting multiple applications, discrepancies between uploaded documents and information in the form, conflicting identities in documents, selecting incorrect schools or programs, and submitting blurred or incorrectly formatted documents.

He emphasized that the entire application process is free, with no intermediaries involved. Any payments made to individuals or organizations related to the application process are at the applicant's own risk.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Dr Richard Boadu, Administrator of GETFund



General News

Hypertension tops 2023 OPD diseases in Ashaiman

The Ashaiman Municipal Health Directorate has disclosed that hypertension topped the list of patients visits to the OutPatients Departments (OPD) of the various health institutions in the municipality in 2023.

Mrs Patience Ami Mamattah, the Ashaiman Municipal Health Director, told the Ghana News Agency in an interview in Ashaiman that a total of 22002 cases of hypertension were recorded at the OPDs last year.

Mrs Mamattah said the figure for hypertension was high because of the intensification of awareness creation about the disease among residents.

She added that there was a deliberate screening for hypertension through the

wellness clinics at hospitals and Community Health Planning and Services (CHPS) zones.

She said the activities were given attention to help prevent strokes and other related illnesses among residents, adding that people with risks were identified earlier and referred to the hospitals for management.

She advised people with hypertension to stick to their medications, and doctors' advice, be in good health, as failure to do so could lead to health complications.

Touching on the other top 10 diseases, she disclosed that following hypertension on the league was acute urinary tract infection, which saw 21664 attendees.

Malaria was positioned third

among the diseases seen at OPDs in Ashaiman in 2023 with 1,9247 reports, followed by typhoid fever's 1,8775 reports.

The other top 10 diseases include 9,890 ulcer cases, 9,738 cases of anaemia, 8,361 cases of upper respiratory tract infections, and

7,609 cases of diabetes mellitus.

Mrs Mamattah said that the ninth and tenth top diseases recorded at OPDs were pregnancy-related complications and skin diseases, respectively, recording 5,430 and 4,863 visits.

Source: GNA



Mrs Patience Ami Mamattah, Ashaiman Municipal Health Director

Cocoa farmers commend Akufo-Addo for cocoa producer price increase, other inventions

Cocoa farmers in the country have praised President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for the significant increase in the cocoa producer price for the 2023/2024 season and other government interventions.

They feel the support and recognition are unprecedented and have saved their farms from collapsing, positioning the country to potentially become the largest cocoa producer globally.

The President of the Best Cocoa Farmers Association, Charles Gyemfi, expressed this appreciation during a visit to President Akufo-Addo at the Jubilee House in Accra on January 13, 2024.

Mr Gyemfi, who was the 2018 National Best Cocoa Farmer and 2019 National Best Farmer, said they were initially skeptical when they heard of the 2023/2024 prices because no such increases had occurred before.

Hence "if it goes on like that, we will not give you show down, but

show up," he said.

What were the government's interventions?

Before 2017, the cocoa industry was facing a serious problem called swollen shoot virus disease (CSSVD). Mr. Gyemfi explained that President Akufo-Addo stepped in to help by cutting down the affected trees, compensating farmers, and planting new ones at no cost to the farmers. This action not only got rid of the disease but also resulted in more food crops being grown alongside cocoa. This, in turn, increased income for the farmers and made sure they had enough food, providing food security.

"We recognised the efforts of the government in uplifting the industry with initiatives such as the provision of mechanisation and irrigation, pruning, hand pollination, strategic early mass spraying and value addition," he added.

Additionally, Mr. Gyemfi urged the President to make sure that

enough money was available to pay farmers as soon as they sold their cocoa at the start of the season in order to prevent smuggling.

Meanwhile, around 50 farmers, including the best cocoa farmers, young farmers, and the best female cocoa farmer, were part of the group.

Clad in while the farmers happily danced with President Akufo-

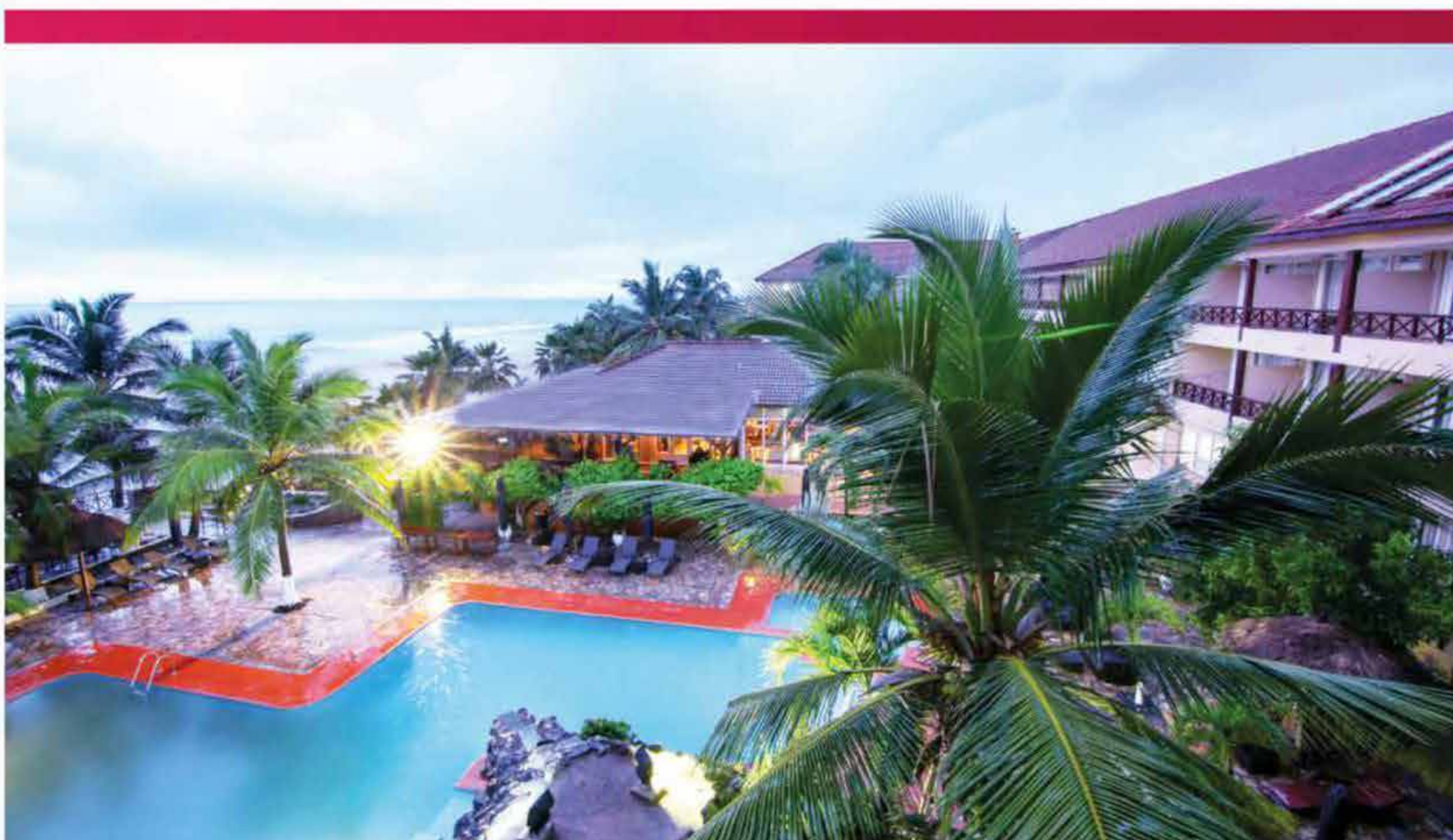
Addo to say thank you.

Leading the group were Joseph Boahen Aidoo, the Chief Executive of COCOBOD, and Mr. Peter Mac Manu, the Chairman of COCOBOD's Board. Dr. Bryan Acheampong, the Minister of Food and Agriculture, was also there at the event.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



File photo



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Business

SSNIT withholds pension funds of 19,100 over failure to do biometric authentication

The Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) has retained GH¢480 million, representing funds for 19,100 pensioners who have not undergone biometric authentication.

Dr. John Ofori-Tenkorang, the Director-General of SSNIT, revealed this information during a press conference in Accra, stating that SSNIT is prepared to reimburse the funds when those individuals comply with the biometric authentication process.

He emphasised that SSNIT's pension scheme obligates the organisation to continue pension payments until the pensioner's demise.

"If you live beyond those years, then we don't have to pay anything to your survivors, and every month, our operation is that we pay monies directly into your bank account. So what we need to do is make sure that we find a way to ascertain that we are actually paying legitimate pensioners. So we asked our cherished pensioners every year to let us know that they are alive," he said.

The SSNIT boss highlighted that the biometric authentication process is essential to ensure the legitimacy of pensioners, and efforts have been made to accommodate those with mobility challenges.

"For people who have not come to authenticate themselves, whose money we have withheld, we have about GH¢480 million so far. This is because those people to whom it belongs have not come back to tell us that they are alive. So that is what we call ghost pensions," he emphasised, and "as and when they resurrect, we stand ready to pay them," he said.

In 2014, participants in the SSNIT pension scheme underwent a biometric registration exercise, aiming to collect biometric data from contributors and generate unique social security numbers. The initiative, in collaboration with employers, also sought to gather additional information on policyholders of the National

Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and individuals registered with the National Identification Authority (NIA).

The collected biometric data is intended to streamline identity verification for SSNIT contributors in the future. SSNIT, established in 1972, is the largest non-bank financial institution in Ghana, administering the Basic National Social Security Scheme and overseeing the First Tier of the Three-Tier Pension Scheme. The primary responsibility of SSNIT is to replace lost income for Ghanaian workers due to Old Age, Invalidity, or Death.

Source: *The Independent Ghana* / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Dr. John Ofori-Tenkorang, Director-General of SSNIT



Business

Energy Sector is broke - Edward Bawa states cause of recent incessant power outages

Member of Parliament for Bongo and a member of the Mines and Energy Committee of Parliament, Edward Bawa, has attributed Ghana's recent power outages to the financial insolvency plaguing the energy sector.

In spite of assurances granted by the Deputy Energy Minister Andrew Egyapa Mercer to the effect that power supply challenges have been addressed in the country, intermittent blackouts persist.

This scenario, according to citizens, mirrors the "Dumsor" crisis of 2015. Commenting on the development, Mr Bawa expressed

the view that the situation is due to financial bankruptcy in the sector. He made the remarks in an interview on Citi TV on Saturday, January 13, 2024.

"As to whether what the situation is, as we have it now, simple and short the sector is broke. That's all. That's the situation.

"As we speak now as of yesterday if you look at our peak demand it was 3680 but the available capacity, which means the amount of power that we could supply even if we decided that we were going to have a reserved margin or redundancy was going to be 3363 which means that on the word go even without

putting the redundancy there, that was obviously around almost 300 megawatts."

Meanwhile, the government insists it has worked and is still working to make 'dumsor' a thing of the past.

In a recent interview, the Deputy Energy Minister, Andrew Egyapa Mercer indicated that challenges leading to power outages in Ghana, commonly known as 'Dumsor', have been fully resolved.

In the said interview, he assured the public that there would be no more intermittent power outages

starting Thursday, January 11, 2024.

He further disclosed that the Ministry of Finance disbursed \$10 million to the West African Gas Pipeline Company Limited (WAGPCo) on January 10, 2024, for gas supply.

This financial injection, he said, is expected to eliminate the issues causing the power outages, ensuring a consistent and uninterrupted power supply.

Source: The Independent Ghana/ Jessie Ola-Morris



Edward Bawa, Member of Parliament for Bongo and a member of the Mines and Energy Committee of Parliament



International

Russia to continue humanitarian supplies of grain, fertilizers to Africa - Deputy PM

Russia will continue to provide humanitarian supplies of grain and fertiliser to Africa, Deputy Prime Minister Viktoriya Abramchenko was quoted by local media as saying on Friday.

mineral fertilisers, logistics, and payments have worsened the problem of world hunger, said the Russian deputy prime minister, adding that this trend would only increase in the world.

“Russia remains a global breadbasket and a reliable supplier.

At the Russia-Africa Summit in July last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Russia would send grain as humanitarian aid to six African countries on the World Food Program’s list.

The first batches of humanitarian aid in terms of grain and fertilisers have already been sent to African countries, and they will continue in the future,” Abramchenko said in an interview with Russia’s state news agency, RIA Novosti.

According to the country’s agricultural authorities, the first two ships, each carrying 25,000 tonnes of wheat for Somalia and Burkina Faso, departed from Russia in mid-November.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation recently admitted that sanctions imposed by Western countries on food,

Source: GNA



File photo

African Catholic leaders reject Pope’s same-sex blessings

African Catholic leaders reject Pope’s same-sex blessings

regular church rituals or related to civil unions or weddings.

There are 64 countries globally that criminalise homosexuality and about half of these are in Africa

Catholic bishops in Africa have rejected Pope Francis’ declaration to bless homosexual couples, asserting that it is “contrary to the will of God”.

This has sparked mixed reactions from both the Catholic Church and the LGBT community.

It added that it continues to view marriage as between a man and a woman.

Source: BBC

The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (Secam) - the umbrella body for Catholic bishops across Africa - said in a statement the Vatican’s approval of same-sex blessings is “not appropriate”.

However, the Vatican said blessings should not be part of

“The constant teaching of the Church describes homosexual acts as ‘intrinsically disordered’ and contrary to the natural law,” it read. The president of Secam, Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, said the message had been approved by Pope Francis and they will continue their communion with the head of the Catholic Church.

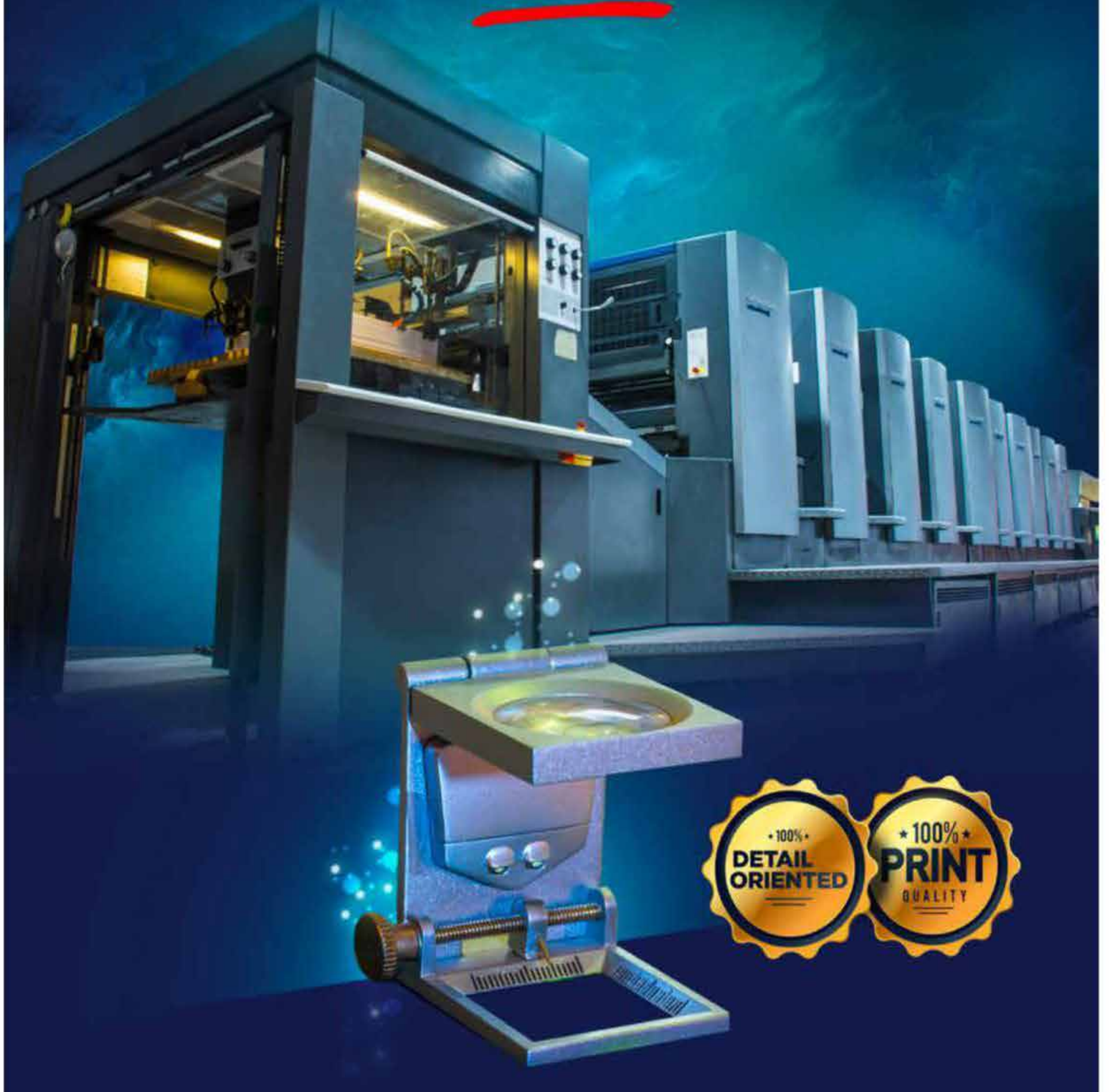


Cardinal Ambongo says same-sex blessings are in direct contradiction to the cultural ethos of Africa

Last month, Pope Francis declared that priests should be permitted to

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