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# General News

## I am ultimately responsible for the success and failures of my gov't - Akufo-Addo says

President Akufo-Addo has taken full responsibility for the current state of the economy, acknowledging his role as the executive authority.

He emphasized that there should be no confusion regarding who bears the consequences of any decision implemented among the population

While delivering the State of the Nation Address (SONA) 2024 in Parliament on Tuesday, 27 February, he said, "under the Constitution, the executive power of the state is vested in the President of the Republic. He or she is the executive. There's no ambiguity about where the buck stops when it comes to responsibility for what happens in government. It stops with the President."

He added: "Of course, a member of the government might turn an idea generated by the President or an official into a huge success, and the honours will be claimed or shared when public perception is favourable,"

"But ultimately, the President is responsible and therefore takes the credit or the blame for whatever happens in his or her government."

This admission follows a recent remark by Vice-President Mahamudu Bawumia, also the New Patriotic Party (NPP) flagbearer, where he compared himself to a "driver's mate", distancing himself from the country's current economic crisis.

This comment faced criticism from the opposition, accusing him of trying to distance himself from the failures of

the Akufo-Addo government.

Vice-President Bawumia outlined his vision for Ghana on Wednesday, 7 January 2024, expressing his desire to be in the "driver's seat" with constitutionally mandated authority if he were to become President.

He emphasized the need for a vision that accommodates all Ghanaians, tapping into their resourcefulness and talents, irrespective of ethnic, political, or religious backgrounds.

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



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

## Aburi Girls first year student died from cerebrospinal meningitis - Autopsy

An autopsy report has disclosed that cerebrospinal meningitis led to the demise of Stacey Okyere, a first-year student at Aburi Girls Senior High School (SHS), who tragically passed away after complaining of stomach pains.

The sister of the deceased, Nora Danso, revealed this information during an interview with Accra-based radio station Starr FM.

To dispel any uncertainties, Nora stated that additional tests were carried out at the Ghana Standards Authority.

However, the family is yet to receive copies of the autopsy report, as mentioned by Nora.

The family is expected to obtain an original copy, and duplicates of the report will be provided to the school and the Ghana Police Service.

"Yes, the report has been endorsed. On Monday, we will get the report itself—the hard copy. The CID officer said that after endorsement,

they need to run several copies.

The school requires a copy from the Ghana Police Service, and then they will deliver the original copy to the family.

So they need to produce all these copies before handing them over to us," she stated.

Stacey's burial at Ablekuma is scheduled for Saturday, March 2, 2024, according to Nora.

Stacey Okyere began experiencing severe stomach pains on Monday, February 5, 2024, and tragically passed away on Wednesday, February 7, 2024.

Initially, there were conflicting reports regarding the cause of her death. Some sources suggested she was suffering from malaria and was attended to by her dormitory mates.

However, others alleged that she

was denied medical attention by the school nurse, who accused her of feigning illness.

The school authorities announced her death and extended condolences to her family and friends. Upon receiving the news, her family expressed devastation and accused the school of negligence and irresponsibility.

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



**Aburi Girls SHS**





# General News

## I will export nurses, other health workers to check unemployment - Mahama

Flagbearer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Mahama, has proposed a solution to address unemployment among healthcare workers, particularly nurses, by advocating for their deployment to other countries.

He believes that sending nurses abroad would be more beneficial than allowing them to remain unemployed in Ghana.

During a visit to the Savannah Region, Mahama emphasized the importance of providing employment opportunities for nurses after they complete their education.

To implement this plan, he suggested the establishment of a specialized unit within the Ministry of Employment responsible for

recruiting qualified nurses for overseas deployment.

Mahama promised that if elected, he would work to significantly reduce unemployment rates in the country.

"We want to increase the production of health workers and nurses, and we will employ them to work for us as many as we can, but at the same time, we will sign agreements with other countries where we can post our nurses to go and work on fixed contracts.

"So under the Ministry of Employment, we will have a unit that can recruit nurses and make sure they are of the standard that can work in international hospitals."

This proposition comes at a time

when Ghana is experiencing a mass exodus of health professionals.

The Ghana Registered Nurses and Midwives Association has revealed a staggering exodus, with 732 nurses having left the country since the onset of January 2024 alone.

Per reports, poor working conditions and the lack of job opportunities have pushed health workers to seek greener pastures elsewhere.

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



*John Dramani Mahama, Flagbearer of the NDC*

## Govt secures alternative funding for construction of La General Hospital

President Akufo-Addo revealed that the government has successfully secured an alternative funding solution for the reconstruction of the La General Hospital project.

He announced this during his State of the Nation Address in Parliament on Tuesday, February 27, 2024.

This comes after the project was stalled over claims of a lack of funds. Former Majority Leader Kyei Mensah Bonsu mentioned that the sponsors of the project had become lackadaisical in the release of funds for the project since Ghana entered into an engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In August 2020, President Nana Akufo-Addo cut the sod for the commencement of construction of the Hospital Redevelopment Project after his government demolished the hospital following the management's complaints of severe structural problems in 2015.

However, in a new development,

the president said "an alternative source of funding has been secured for the reconstruction of the La Hospital Project as a fully functional modern hospital, with the necessary equipment for diagnosis and treatment.

The contractor has been paid an advance mobilisation of 15%, representing some US\$7.5 million, and work has begun."

He went on to assure the completion

of the project in twenty-eight months.

"The project commenced effectively in January of this year and will be completed in 28 months.

The President emphasised that the hospital project, which has been eagerly anticipated and has garnered widespread public interest, will undergo a remarkable transformation.

With the recent acquisition of funding, the hospital will undergo

reconstruction and be furnished as a fully operational modern healthcare facility, equipped with the latest diagnostic and treatment technologies.

This development underscores the government's steadfast dedication to enhancing healthcare infrastructure and services nationwide.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*



*La General Hospital building plan*





# General News

## We will give breakdown of \$48m when 13th African Games is over - LOC

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the 13th African Games has admitted that the government of Ghana has allocated an amount of \$48 million as the operational budget for the hosting and organisation of the Games.

The LOC made this information public following the release of some documents by Member of Parliament for North Tongu, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa ahead of the games.

In a social media post dated February 26, 2024, Mr Ablakwa stated that the three entities have agreed to spend a significant and unjustifiable US\$48 million on "operational expenses" for the 13th African Games, scheduled to be hosted in Ghana from March 5 to March 23, 2024.

Despite admitting to this, the LOC has noted that it cannot make public details of what comprises the \$48 million budgeted for presently.

"Secondly, the \$48m quoted in the letter leaked by Hon. Ablakwa as the operational budget for the hosting and organisation of the Games goes into recurrent expenditure, and the LOC will be in a better position to give a breakdown when

the Games are over," the LOC said in a statement.

The LOC noted that the operational budget of the LOC cannot be limited to the 18-day period of the Games as hosting pan-continental competitions such as the iconic African Games comes with significant investment but also, with enduring country-impacting benefits.

"The impression created by Hon. Ablakwa that the sum of USD\$48m will be spent within the period spanning 8th-23rd March is an erroneous and disingenuous ploy

to divert the attention of Ghanaians from the excellent work done by the Government of Ghana and the LOC to organise and host the 13th African Games. This is the first time Ghana is getting the opportunity to host the most significant sporting tournament in Africa since it was first established in 1965," it added.

The LOC continued: "It must be noted however, that hosting 54 African countries comes with huge cost implications in the areas of Medical and Anti-doping, Transport, Accommodation, Catering, Branding, Games Management System. Team

Ghana preparation, Broadcasting and Equipment for 29 sporting disciplines among others."

According to Mr Ablakwa, "this staggering US\$48 million is an entirely different amount from the mega US\$195 million (GHS2.4 billion) already spent on infrastructure for the games."

"At the prevailing exchange rate, US\$48 million is equivalent to a colossal GHS602 million," he added.

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



*New All Africa Games Sports Complex*

## Sacked HR manager arrested, named prime suspect in Jirapa Dubai CEO's murder

The former Human Resource (HR) Officer of the Royal Cosy Hills Hotel, Elyasah Mahama, is currently in police custody in connection with the murder of the hotel's Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Mahama was apprehended at a hideout in Takoradi and subsequently transported to Wa for further questioning.

His termination from employment by CEO Mr. Eric Johnson just three days prior to the murder on Sunday, February 11, 2024, adds a layer of

intrigue to the ongoing investigation.

Having been traced from Jirapa to Takoradi, Mr. Mahama's arrest brings the total number of individuals detained in connection with the CEO's murder to eight.

**Background:**

The lifeless body of Mr. Johnson was discovered in his residence, with indications suggesting that the assailant or assailants accessed his room by scaling a ladder over the

*- continued on page 5*



*Late Mr. Eric Johnson, Jirapa Dubai CEO*



# General News

## **Sacked HR manager arrested, named prime suspect in Jirapa Dubai CEO's murder**

**- Continued from page 4**

wall and utilizing a master card for entry. His abandoned car was later recovered in town.

Seven individuals were initially arrested, and two more suspects

were apprehended subsequently. Of the total, five were remanded by the Wa Magistrate Court on Thursday, February 15, while the other two were granted bail.

The Regional Crime Scene Management Team has conducted a thorough examination of the incident site, and Mr. Mahama is scheduled to appear in court tomorrow alongside

the other suspects.

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

## **More MPs are against anti-LGBTQ bill but are scared of being linked to homosexuality - Majority Leader**

**T**he new Majority Leader in Parliament, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, has suggested that some of his fellow MPs are reluctant to criticize the controversial anti-gay bill out of fear of reprisals.

He mentioned that the introduction of the bill has created a climate of fear among legislators, leading them to steer clear of challenging it.

Mr Afenyo-Markin also voiced concern about the severe sentencing provisions in the legislation, which he believes are exacerbating the apprehension among his colleagues. He stated that he is willing to speak out, even

if it means losing his parliamentary seat.

During an interview with the media, Mr Afenyo-Markin said, "The way the whole thing was introduced, it created some fear among legislators, that people think that if I dare question it, they will say that I'm supporting a man to marry a man or supporting a woman to marry a woman, so nobody wants to touch it. It's a radioactive substance. But, if we pay attention to the details, we can come up with a law that will be acceptable to all."

The Effutu legislator further raised doubts about the efficacy of the proposed penalties for engaging

in LGBT activities. He questioned whether individuals imprisoned for such actions would undergo meaningful reform during their incarceration.

In February, Parliament approved a bill stipulating a three-to-five-year jail term for those promoting or sponsoring LGBTQ activities, with individuals caught in the act facing imprisonment ranging from six months to three years.

During the bill's clause-by-clause amendment, Mr. Afenyo-Markin argued against the punitive measures, stating that they would not facilitate the rehabilitation of the offenders.

He also voiced concerns about

the constitutionality of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill currently being reviewed by Parliament, suggesting that it contains significant legal flaws that may not stand up to legal scrutiny.

"I think the law in its present form has questionable constitutional issues. The law as I see it, from how I've seen it, cannot stand any serious test in any constitutional court. I think that the law would have serious challenges at the Supreme Court. If it faces a constitutionality test, it will fail. Not the entire law, but aspects of it, will fail. That's my view," he said.

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



**Alexander Afenyo-Markin, New Majority Leader in Parliament**





# General News

## Peace Council lauds NCA for shutting down media houses in Bawku over conflict

**C**hairman of the National Peace Council, Dr. Ernest Adu-Gyamfi, has expressed satisfaction with the recent closure of several radio stations in Bawku, including Bawku FM, Source FM, Zahra FM, and Gumah FM.

The National Communication Authority (NCA) stated that the closures were recommended by the Upper East Regional Security Council and the National Security Ministry.

In an interview with JoyNews on February 27, Dr. Adu-Gyamfi revealed that the Peace Council, in collaboration with the NCA, launched a document on hate speech and indecent language last year.

He stressed that the Commission has the authority to shut down radio stations that do not adhere to appropriate conduct.

“So once people flout these things there is nothing that the NMC can do because they were part of the preparation of the document, and I’m sure that’s part of the reason why they have taken the step they’ve taken.”

We expect that all radio and television stations will abide by these guidelines,” he explained ahead of President Akufo-Addo’s State of the Nation Address.

Meanwhile, President Akufo-Addo says money meant for development in Bawku in the Upper East region, is the same money the government has used to curb conflicts in the area.

This disclosure was made during the 2024 State of The Nation address in parliament today,

February 27, 2024.

“Mr Speaker, I must make special mention of the troubles in Bawku. The tragedy is not only that a thriving and dynamic town is being reduced to a wasteland of destruction and distrust, we are spending money and energy that would have been better spent on development needs of Bawku, providing security to keep brothers and sisters from killing each other” the president expressed.

He added that Bawku has become

appealing to extremists who are operating just across the border from the town.

“Mr Speaker, what should concern all of us and not just the people of Bawku is that, in its current state, Bawku is an alluring magnet to mischief-makers and extremists operating a few kilometers across from the border,” he indicated.

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



File photo

## An MP has to be corrupt to maintain their seat; the demands are too much - Zebilla MP

**M**ember of Parliament for Zebilla, Cletus Avoka, has lamented the undue burden placed on lawmakers, attributing perceived corruption within the Legislature to unreasonable demands from the public and constituents.

In an interview with the media, Mr Avoka shed light on the financial challenges MPs encounter due to incessant requests for monetary assistance.

He revealed that the relentless demands make it exceedingly difficult for MPs to abstain from engaging in corrupt practices. Avoka highlighted how many MPs are compelled to divert their

attention from legislative duties to address financial obligations.

Mr Avoka emphasized the necessity for understanding from the media, underscoring how the financial pressures MPs confront, including requests for healthcare expenses, contributions to weddings, and school fees, contribute to the perception of corruption.

“Everyday MoMo. Everyday MoMo. Somebody is sick and has to go to the hospital, you have to send money, somebody is going to do a wedding you have to send money, they are going to do outdoorings, they are asking for you. They are asking for school fees and whatnot.

- continued on page 7



Cletus Avoka, Member of Parliament for Zebilla



# General News

## **An MP has to be corrupt to maintain their seat; the demands are too much - Zebilla MP**

**- Continued from page 6**

“Many of us lose the election or Primaries not because we are not doing well, but because we’re not giving money out. How do you give money out if you come and stay in parliament for 8 hours debating? You’re debating for 5 or 8 hours, you go home in the evening to sleep, and the following day you have no money to send. You have

to go out and look for the money.”

When questioned whether this circumstance validates the claim that all MPs are corrupt, Avoka responded in the affirmative.

He underscored that to sustain their positions, MPs frequently find themselves needing supplementary resources, which

may entail pursuing external activities to generate income.

“If I’m not corrupt, how can I maintain my seat? You have to be corrupt in one way or another. You have to look for more resources. If you have to look for more resources, you have to go out and do some work for a contractor. As

a lawyer, maybe prepare a bill, or do this and that and whatnot? So I have half attention here, and half attention outside because I need more resources to be able to maintain my seat,” he said.

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

## **NDC leadership to meet on March 7 to decide on Mahama’s running mate**

**T**he National Democratic Congress (NDC) has received a formal communication from its presidential candidate, former President John Dramani Mahama, regarding the nomination of his running mate.

This is in accordance with Article 45 of the NDC Constitution. As such, a meeting of the Council of Elders will convene at 11am on Thursday, March 7, 2024, to deliberate on this significant matter.

According to the General Secretary

of the party, Fifi Kwetey, the National Executive Committee (NEC) will later gather at 2pm on the same day to further consider the nomination.

It is rumored that former President Mahama will once again choose former Education Minister, Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang, as his running mate for the 2024 general elections.

The venue and logistical details for these meetings, the party said, will be communicated directly to all

participants in due course.

“The NDC is confident that the running mate will bring a wealth of experience, expertise, and dedication to our campaign. The selection will undoubtedly complement the vision of our esteemed leader, H.E. John Dramani Mahama, as we collectively strive to “Build the Ghana We Want together,” Mr Kwetey noted in a statement issued on February 27, 2024.

According to the opposition party,

it remains committed to working tirelessly towards positive transformation and progress for the country.

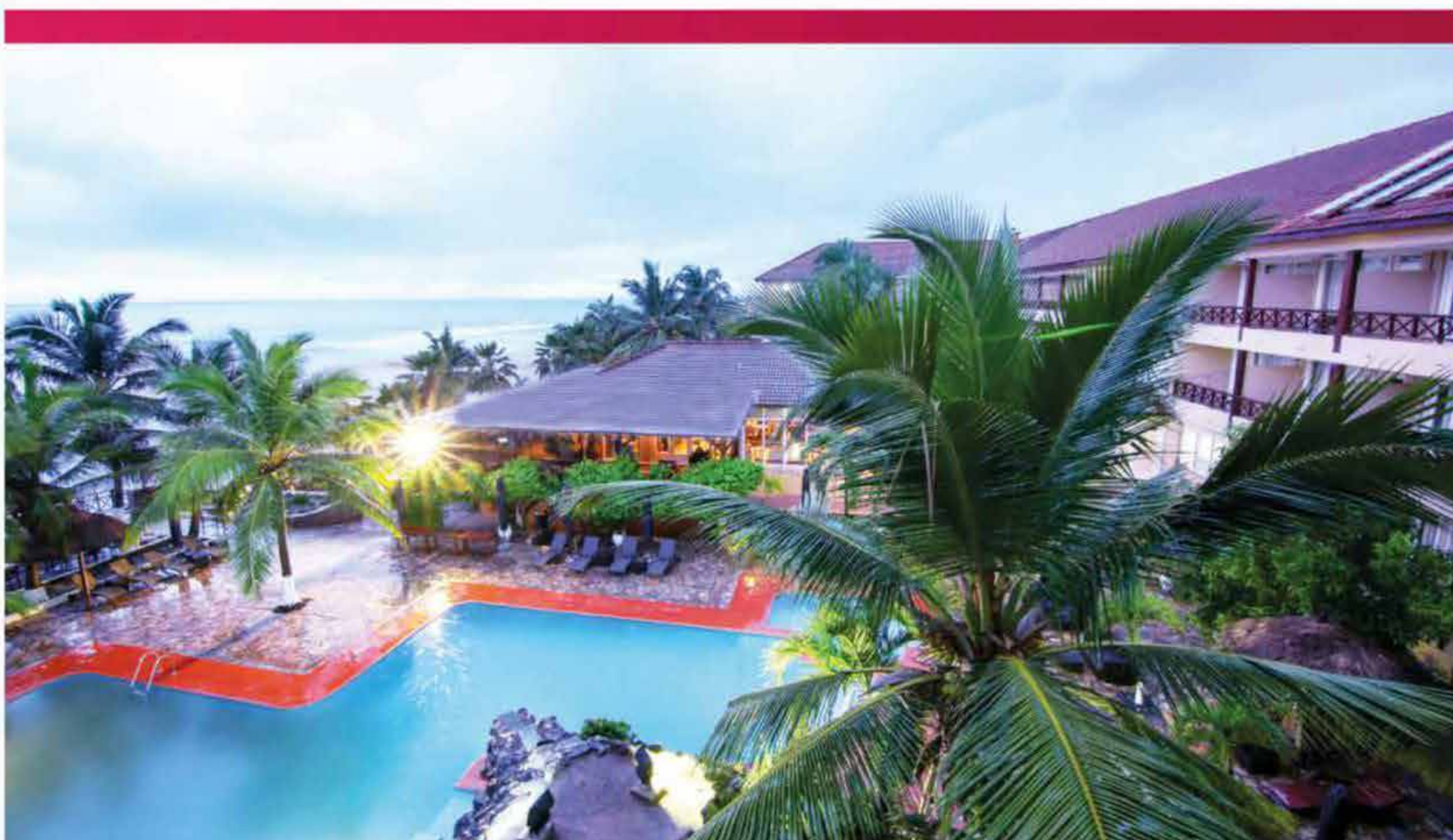
“We express our sincere gratitude to our supporters for their steadfast loyalty and unwavering commitment. Together, let us join hands and embark on this journey towards a brighter future for Ghana. Long live the NDC, long live Ghana!” the statement concluded.

**Source: The Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay**



**John Dramani Mahama, Flagbearer of the NDC**





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# Business

## Government to introduce Fintech Innovation to bolster start-ups to drive digital revolution

The Government intends to establish a FinTech Innovation Fund to bolster Start-ups and propel Ghana's digital transformation.

Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia revealed this during the official press launch of the inaugural 3i Africa Summit in Accra on Monday.

Scheduled for May 13-15, 2024, under the theme "Unleashing Africa's FinTech and Digital Economic Potential," the three-day summit is organized by the Bank of Ghana (BoG) and the Development Bank Ghana (DBG), in collaboration with Elevandi, a subsidiary of the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

The event aims to convene governments, businesses, policymakers, academia, investors, and thought leaders to explore and collaborate on unlocking Africa's fintech and digital economy potential.

Vice President Bawumia, a staunch advocate of Ghana's national digitalization agenda, emphasized

the critical role of fintech in driving the country's digital revolution, highlighting the necessity of financial support for their growth and success.

He urged all stakeholders in the fintech and digital sector to collaborate in enhancing legislative and regulatory frameworks to bolster Ghana's payments ecosystem and foster sustained financial inclusion.

Dr. Bawumia emphasized the transformative potential of technology in boosting productivity and connectivity, empowering individuals, fintech startups, and small to medium-sized enterprises to drive innovation and efficiency.

Over the past seven years, the Government has prioritized a digital transformation agenda to advance economic strategy at both individual and institutional levels, he highlighted.

"The objective is to ensure digital empowerment for a prosperous future in this accelerated digital era, where the use of modern

and emerging technologies have become commonplace and a catalyst for growth, progress, and prosperity," Dr Bawumia stated.

In this regard, the Vice President highlighted the Government's plan to establish a Fintech and Innovation Fund aimed at providing crucial investment support to startups and local fintech enterprises, driving Ghana's digital advancement.

The Minister of Finance, Dr. Amin Adam, echoed the significance of backing startups and local businesses as integral contributors to Ghana's economy. He affirmed the Government's dedication to implementing programs fostering internal growth, particularly focusing on small business development.

To address SME financing challenges, the Bank of Ghana, in collaboration with the Development Bank Ghana (DBG) and the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS), launched the MSME Innovative Finance Project. This research study aims to identify current and emerging

obstacles in SME financing in Ghana.

DBG has played a pivotal role by fostering collaboration among key stakeholders such as the Bank of Ghana, University of Ghana, and various government agencies and commercial banks. Their efforts align with their mandate of supporting SMEs to drive economic transformation.

The 3i Africa Summit is a fintech festival designed to promote Innovation, Investment, and Impact for Africa's Fintech and Financial Services sectors. Jointly developed by the Bank of Ghana, the Monetary Authority of Singapore, Development Bank Ghana, and supported by Elevandi, the summit aims to facilitate transformative discussions, address growth and investment opportunities, and explore digital transformation in the financial ecosystem to drive Africa's Fintech growth.

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



**Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice President of Ghana**





# Business

## Ghana's cashew market yet to explore US\$7bn opportunities - Report

**A** civil society organization, Cashew Watch Ghana (CWG), has contended that Ghana, with an annual cashew export earning averaging US\$350 million, has not fully tapped into the US\$7 billion global cashew market potential.

CWG views the current earnings as suboptimal and emphasized that the country could generate over US\$660 million by capitalizing on the economic tree's global prospects through increased production, value addition, and exports.

According to CWG, the 2020 cashew export earnings of US\$340 million should serve as a starting point to unlock the sector's full potential.

With an estimated annual production of 110,000 to 130,000 tonnes of raw cashew nuts, CWG advocates for intensified efforts to enhance production, storage, and value addition, asserting that the sector could significantly contribute to job creation and poverty reduction.

Globally, the market size of cashew nuts currently stands at around US\$7 billion, projected to reach

US\$10.5 billion by 2031, according to CWG.

Despite being one of the country's top non-traditional export commodities in the past five years, the cashew sector faces challenges, including low production volumes, poor value chain coordination, and inadequate support.

There are 14 cashew processing factories nationwide, but many operate under capacity or have shut down due to a lack of raw cashew nuts.

Despite the benefits from

cashew value chain exports, such as earnings from raw nuts, there are substantial untapped opportunities in the cashew processing sub-sector, which offers various products such as snacks, food ingredients, cashew milk, and biofuel, among others.

However, challenges like labor costs, quality control, energy costs, logistics, and price fluctuations hinder the full potential of the profitable cashew processing sub-sector.

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



Cashew





# International

## NATO denies plans to send troops to Ukraine

**N**ATO's secretary-general has said there are no plans to send troops to Ukraine, as Russia claimed it was ready to enter a direct conflict with the Western military alliance should it put boots on the ground.

Responding to remarks made by French President Emmanuel Macron the previous day, Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday denied that NATO countries were considering the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine amid the Russian invasion.

There are "no plans for NATO combat troops on the ground in Ukraine", the NATO chief said.

Macron told a meeting of European leaders on Monday that while "there's no consensus today to send in an official, endorsed manner troops on the ground ... nothing can be ruled out".

Russia was quick to leap upon the French leader's comments. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov called Macron's suggestion that Western states could send ground troops to Ukraine "a very important new element".

It is "absolutely not in the interests" of European members of NATO, he told

reporters. "In that case, we would need to talk not about the probability, but about the inevitability [of direct conflict]."

While ruling out NATO military action, Stoltenberg again insisted that the alliance would continue to support Kyiv strongly.

"This is a war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine, blatantly violating international law," he said. "According to international law, Ukraine of course has the right to self-defence, and we have the right to support them in upholding that right."

Macron was hosting European leaders in Paris when he made his comments, seemingly seeking to position himself as a European champion of Ukraine's cause at a time when US support is waning.

NATO provides Ukraine only non-lethal aid and support, but most alliance members have been sending weapons and ammunition bilaterally or in groups.

Yet, any decision to send troops would require unanimous support from all member countries.

The French leader declined to

give details on which nations were considering sending troops, speaking of "strategic ambiguity".

"There's no consensus today to send in an official, endorsed manner troops on the ground. But in terms of dynamics, nothing can be ruled out," he said.

On Tuesday, French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal echoed the comments, saying, "You can't rule anything out in a war." "It's not on the cards at all for the moment," Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told Swedish public

broadcaster SVT, the day after his country cleared the final obstacle to joining the transatlantic military alliance.

Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico also said his government is not planning to propose to send Slovak soldiers. However, the populist, who regularly employs pro-Russian rhetoric, confirmed that some countries are weighing whether to strike bilateral deals to help Ukraine fend off the Russian invasion.

*Source: Al Jazeera and News Agencies*



*French President Emmanuel Macron speaks at the end of a conference in support of Ukraine*

## Nigeria restarts cash transfers to cushion hardship caused by reforms

**N**igeria has approved the immediate resumption of cash transfers to 12 million vulnerable households, Minister of Finance Wale Edun said on Monday, amid a cost-of-living crisis and calls by labour unions to cushion hardship caused by reforms.

President Bola Tinubu scrapped a popular but costly fuel subsidy last May and twice devalued the currency in less than a year, leading to soaring prices. Africa's biggest economy now grapples with a cost-of-living crisis fueled by the highest inflation rate in nearly three decades.

Edun told reporters after a cabinet meeting that restarting the direct cash transfer was crucial to tackling rising prices, especially elevated food prices, and to the government's ability to provide purchasing power to at least 60 million people who are

less well-off.

To address concerns about past irregularities, Edun emphasized the introduction of strict measures to identify beneficiaries. Payments will be made directly into bank accounts or mobile money wallets linked to a national identity number and bank verification number, ensuring transparency and traceability.

"Each person receives 25,000 naira for a total of three months," Edun said, highlighting the program's immediate impact.

"It will be clear who it went to and when it went to them."

The government has also pledged additional support, including plans for a social security program for unemployed youth and graduates, alongside a consumer credit scheme to boost affordability and economic recovery, Edu said.

The latest measures to cushion the impact of ongoing reforms follow a

two-week ultimatum by Nigeria's main labour unions to the government to meet demands ranging from wage hikes to improved access to public utilities.

The unions accused the government

of failing to uphold pledges to soften the impact of reforms. They plan a two-day protest from Tuesday to raise their voices over the hardship.

*Source: Reuters*

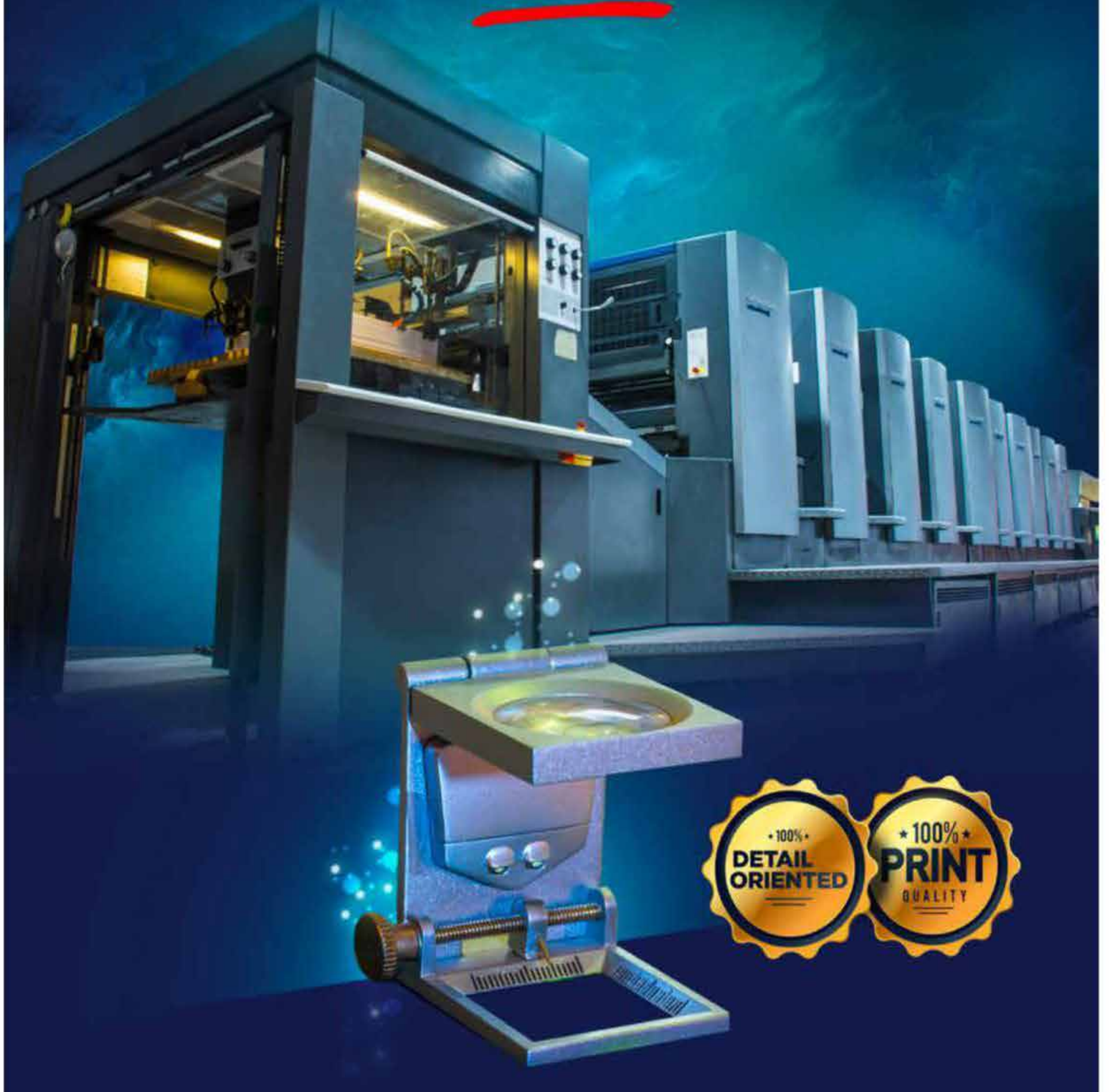


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