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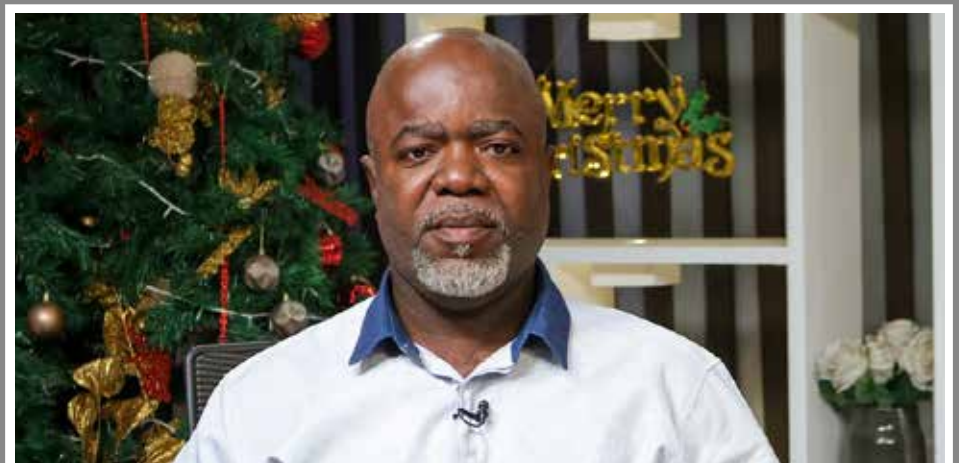


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# General News

## Govt spent GHS33m in procuring past questions in 2020 – Education minister tells parliament

Minister of Education, Yaw Osei Adutwum, in a parliamentary address on Monday, March 4, 2024, has disclosed that in 2020, the government allocated GHS33 million to procure past examination questions.

Providing details of the transaction, he clarified that the government obtained 446,954 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) questions from Messrs. Kingdom Books and Stationery, with each unit priced at GH¢78.00.

This procurement, funded through the Free Senior High School Account, aimed to assist students in preparing for the challenges posed by COVID-19 during the 2020 examination period.

The minister highlighted the improvement in the results of the 2020 WASSCE compared to previous years, stating, "The Ministry of Education contracted Messrs. Kingdom Books and Stationery to supply 568,755 WASSCE past questions at a contract price of GHS 33,641,043.75.

"In 2020, the government, through its efforts to help students amidst COVID-19 prepare for the 2020 West African Senior School

Certificate Examination (WASSCE), procured 568,755 past questions for students to try their hands on before sitting for the actual exams."

"The procurement of these questions was funded through the Free Senior High School Account and the results of the 2020 WASSCE were tremendous compared to previous years' WASSCE

performance," he stressed.

The minister also provided updates regarding ongoing initiatives to provide textbooks to basic schools.

"The procurement process for the supply of published textbooks to Basic Schools is currently ongoing.

"The Ministry placed an advertisement in the Ghanaian

Times on June 1, 2020, where various publishers approved by NaCCA submitted their books and relevant documents to be taken through a Pre-Qualification procurement process," he added.

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



**Yaw Osei Adutwum, Minister of Education**

## Only Day schools should benefit from Free SHS - Former Finance Minister

Former Finance Minister Seth Terkper has proposed a shift to exclusively offering day schooling in all Free Senior High Schools (SHS) to alleviate pressure on the government budget.

Terkper suggested that the existing Free SHS system should transform into a day school model, abandoning the boarding school approach. During an interview on March 4, he highlighted that no advanced country implements free secondary education with a boarding system.

"Tell me which advanced country has free secondary education which comes with boarding with all fees and everything paid...the public schools are all day. Have not seen the old style boardination when government takes all the responsibility it is in enormous," he added.

Mr. Terkper acknowledged the benefits of Free SHS but proposed transitioning to a day system to reduce the government's burden, suggesting that boarding students

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**Seth Terkper, Former Finance Minister**



# General News

## Only Day schools should benefit from Free SHS - Former Finance Minister

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could contribute financially to share responsibilities.

While recognizing Free SHS as a significant legacy, he argued that expecting the government to bear the entire cost might not be sustainable for Ghana's economy, especially considering its low-income status.

"Even the advanced countries do it through a day school system," he said.

For months, concerns about perceived shortcomings of the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy, particularly regarding the provision of three daily hot meals to SHS students free of charge, have been raised by parents, teachers, and stakeholders.

President Akufo-Addo highlighted the transformative impact of the Free SHS policy during the 2024 State of the Nation Address in Parliament on Tuesday, February

27. He urged an end to arguments against the policy and emphasized the need to focus on its success and improvement.

"Mr Speaker, Free SHS might be labelled by its detractors as a mere political slogan that must be demonised, but it is, in fact, a transformative programme that has broken myths and liberated minds.

"I am proud that the NPP

government, under my leadership, has been able to bring this transformative policy into our education system.

"Mr Speaker, I believe the success of the Free SHS has answered its critics and the arguments about it should cease, and we should simply concentrate on finding ways to improve it."

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

## 783 people in Tema contracted HIV in 2023 - Health Directorate

783 new cases of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) were recorded in 2023, indicating an increase from the 603 cases documented in 2022, according to the Tema Metropolitan Health Directorate (TMHD).

The Tuberculosis and HIV Coordinator of the Directorate, Ms. Joana Anorkor Lartey, Ms. Joana Anorkor Lartey, shared this information during an interview with the Ghana News Agency (GNA).

She highlighted that in 2023, there were 297 male and 486 female cases, compared to 263 male and 340 female cases in 2022.

Out of the 2023 HIV cases, 757 individuals were successfully linked to care within the same year. Ms. Lartey attributed the rise in HIV cases to the numerous free testing programs conducted by her team throughout the communities.

These initiatives proved instrumental in identifying cases that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

She urged the public to take advantage of such screenings to determine their HIV status, emphasizing that individuals could also request free self-test kits from various facilities for personal testing.

Ms. Lartey stressed that knowing one's HIV status was not a death

sentence but rather an avenue for early treatment, underscoring the importance of prompt intervention for those testing positive.

Regarding Tuberculosis (TB), Ms. Lartey revealed that the metropolis recorded 154 cases in 2023, including 47 paediatric TB cases.

Out of these, 129 were presumptive TB cases identified among Out-Patient Department (OPD)

attendees, with 47 confirmed positive.

Despite achieving many objectives for the year, such as community awareness campaigns and intensified case finding through screenings and home visits, the Tema Metropolitan Health Directorate faced challenges.

These included funding shortages for monitoring and supervision,

staff motivation issues, and delayed report submissions.

Ms. Lartey expressed gratitude to stakeholders such as the Ghana News Agency, Obonu FM, and the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority for their support in disseminating the TB/HIV message and conducting screenings.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey*



File photo

# General News

## Journalist drags Parliament to Supreme Court over Anti-LGBTQ+ bill

Journalist Richard Dela Sky has taken Parliament to the Supreme Court over the passage of the Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, also known as the anti-LGBTQ bill.

The reliefs sought by the journalist include an order restraining President Akufo-Addo from assenting to the bill and preventing the Speaker of Parliament and the Clerk to Parliament from presenting "The Human and Sexual Values Bill, 2024" to the President of the Republic for his assent.

The plaintiff argues that certain portions of the legislation are in conflict with the principles of the 1992 Constitution and should be declared null and void.

The lawsuit, filed on March 5, 2024, also contends that certain sections of the bill impose a financial burden on the Consolidated Fund or other public funds of Ghana.

The Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, was unanimously passed by

lawmakers on February 28, 2024, following years of deliberation.

There is increasing pressure on President Akufo-Addo from Members of Parliament to sign the bill into law. However, the President has indicated that he will withhold his assent until the court issues a ruling on the case.

Under the bill, individuals promoting or sponsoring LGBTQ activities could face three to five years in jail, while those caught engaging in such acts could be sentenced to a minimum of six months and a maximum of three years.

On the other hand, the bill's proponents, including Member of Parliament for Ningo-Prampram, Sam George, maintain that no part of the bill violates the provisions of the 1992 constitution. Speaking to the media on March 2, Sam George noted that critics of the bill who claim it contradicts the constitution have not specified the exact sections they believe are problematic.

"This is a social issue and so Parliament is within the same Article 17.4 exercising its right that the constitution has conferred on us to deal with the social issue. It says for the matters relating to adoption, which is in this bill, marriage is in this bill, divorce, burial, and the evolution of property. But clearly, parliament has not acted ultra vires the constitution," he said.

The Finance Ministry is expressing concerns about the potential implications if President Akufo-Addo decides to assent to the recently passed bill.

The Ministry outlined the negative implications of the document on its expenditure, key government plans, and projects. It urged President Akufo-Addo to hold off on signing the bill into law as it may cost the country greatly. These risks include a potential loss of \$850 million in budgetary support from the World Bank this year alone.

In the 5-page document, the

Ministry explained that "for 2024 Ghana will lose US\$600 million Budget support and US\$250 million for the Financial Stability Fund."

"This will negatively impact Ghana's foreign exchange reserves and exchange rate stability as these inflows are expected to shore the country's reserve position.

Over the next six years, the Ministry explained that "Ghana is likely to lose US\$3.8 billion in World Bank Financing."

Some Members of Parliament are furious over the Finance Ministry's advice to President Akufo-Addo. For instance, MP for Sagnarigu, Alhassan Bashir Alhassan Fuseini, has urged Ghanaians to take action in support of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill.

The MP stated that the proposed legislation is crucial to upholding the country's cultural values and independence from external influence.

**Source: *The Independent Ghana***



**Richard Dela Sky, Journalist**



# General News

## Election 2024: Presidential results will be declared within 72 hours - EC

The Electoral Commission (EC) has outlined its plan to declare the results of the presidential election within three days after December 7, 2024, as per the Commission's election calendar.

While there is no specific legal requirement mandating a declaration timeframe, the EC is committed to ensuring the prompt release of presidential results, aiming to accomplish this within a maximum of three days.

Nomination windows for both presidential and parliamentary candidates for the upcoming election are set to open from September 9 to September 19.

The statement underscored that, although there is no legal obligation for the EC to declare results within a specified period, the intention is to announce presidential results within a maximum of three days.

"There was no law requiring the EC to declare the results within a specified period; the EC intended to ensure that it would be able to declare the presidential results within a maximum of three days,"

the statement clarified.

The provisional voters' register is scheduled to be distributed to political parties between July 9 and July 18, 2024.

Providing clarity on the order of candidates, balloting for positions on the presidential ballot paper is scheduled for September 23, 2024.

Furthermore, December 2 has been designated for special voting

for selected professionals, with the main election scheduled for December 7, 2024.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku*



*Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission*

## Ignore the Executive, there will be no increase in transport fares - Concerned Drivers Association

Public Relations Officer (P.R.O.) for the Concerned Drivers Association, David Agboado, has contradicted claims of an increase in transportation fares, asserting that there will be no hike, contrary to an earlier announcement.

The announcement of a 30 percent increase in transport fares, scheduled to take effect on March 7, 2024, came from members of the Transport Operators Union and some regional executives of the Concerned Drivers Association of Ghana. They pointed to the government's perceived failure to address their concerns as the rationale behind the decision.

However, Agboado stated that

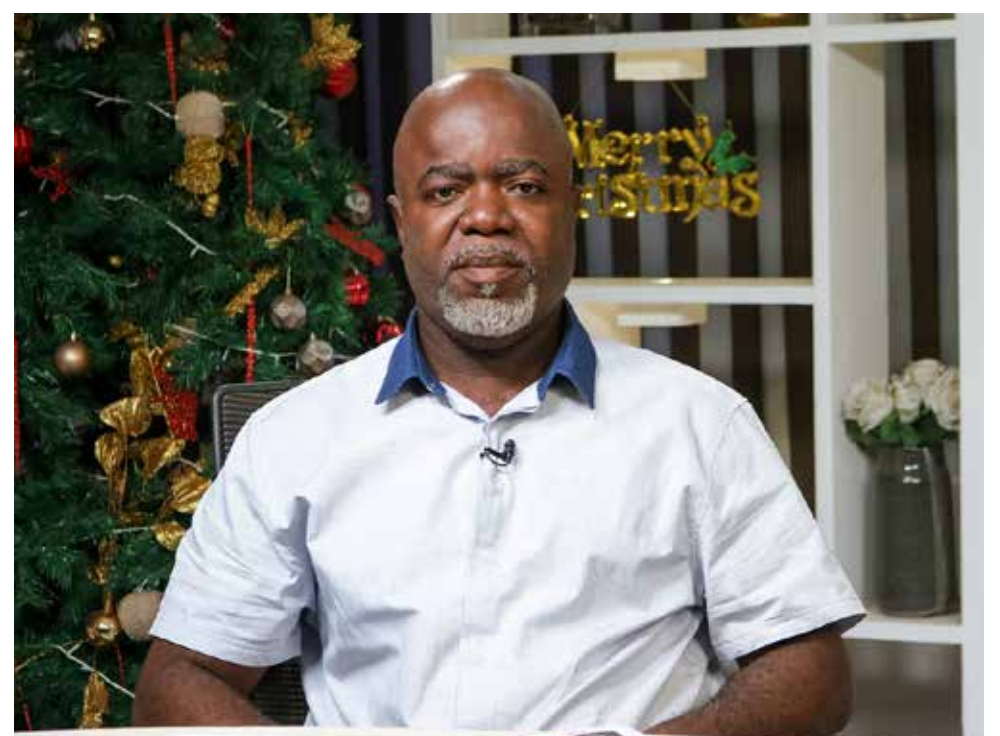
the regional executives lacked the authority to make such a decision, emphasizing that announcements and decisions regarding fare adjustments must come from the national executives.

Speaking on the JoyNews AM Show, Agboado revealed that the regional executives faced sanctions for their unauthorised actions.

"The three regional officers, as we know, are very powerful in terms of the transport sector; that is, the Greater Accra, Central, and Ashanti Regions. They are very powerful and are very needed in transport operations.

"But they should not take their

- continued on page 6



*David Agboado, Public Relations Officer (P.R.O.) for the Concerned Drivers Association*



# General News

## **Ignore the Executive, there will be no increase in transport fares - Concerned Drivers Association**

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numbers or the size of their circle to do whatever they want, like they did yesterday.

"As I speak to you, we have sanctioned them; we have suspended them for three months," he explained.

Mr. Agboado mentioned that the coalition of commercial transport operators is yet to agree on a date for a possible increase in transport fares.

Background

Transport Operators Union and the Concerned Drivers Association of Ghana jointly announced a 30 percent increase in transport fares, effective Thursday, March 7.

In a press release issued on Monday, March 4, the two organisations cited the government's inadequate response to their concerns as the reason for the fare hike.

They emphasised the continuous rise in fuel prices, affecting their livelihoods and posing challenges to their operations.

Describing the fare adjustment as crucial for business sustainability, they urged the government to engage with their leaders to ensure a smooth implementation of the fare adjustments.

"The fare adjustments are essential to ensure the financial viability of the transportation sector and to maintain the quality of service provided to the public.

"The failure of the government to address this critical issue has left us with no choice but to consider fare

increments as a means of coping with the escalating operational costs."

"We are calling on the government and relevant authorities to engage in constructive dialogue with our leaders to address the challenges faced by our sector and to implement fare adjustments that reflect the current economy."

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

## **Stop complaining, Free SHS has not been that bad – Deputy Coordinator**

**D**eputy Coordinator at the Free Senior High School (SHS) Secretariat, Nana Afrah Sika Mensah, has urged the nation to shift its attention towards the triumphs of the policy rather than its obstacles.

While acknowledging existing challenges such as food shortages in certain schools, she contends that the positive impact of the Free SHS policy far outweighs its drawbacks.

In a media interaction, Nana Sika Mensah stressed the policy's significant benefits for children from underprivileged backgrounds.

She emphasised the need to prioritise the positive aspects of the initiative over the negative aspects, asserting that the Free SHS policy has been a lifeline for those in less privileged communities.

Mensah emphasised, "Free SHS has really helped us as a country, and then maybe had it not been for Free SHS, people like my siblings out there wouldn't get access to quality education. So even though we have challenges, we should rather make the positives outweigh the challenges we are facing as a secretariat."

She continued, "We've given people access to education. People from less endowed communities or those who are less privileged in the communities, had it not been

for Free SHS, they would not get the opportunities to foot bills for their wards."

The Free Senior High School (Free SHS) education policy in Ghana was a government initiative introduced in the 2017 September Presidential administration of Nana Akufo-Addo.

The policy's origination began as part of the President's presidential campaign during Ghana's 2016

election period, and has become an essential part of Ghana's educational system.

The policy's core themes of access, equity, and equality fulfil the United Nations modified Sustainable Development Goals, where member countries unite those themes in their educational systems to certify adequate learning experiences for students.

Respective politicians and social

workers have been allocated the duty to ensure the policy's efficiency, productivity and further development.

These leaders span from varying governmental departments, including Ghana's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and Ghana Education Service and Ghana's Ministry of Education.

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



**Nana Afrah Sika Mensah, Deputy Coordinator at the Free Senior High School (SHS)**

# General News

## Sissala maize sellers stranded, forced to sell stock at cheaper prices over lack of buyers

**M**aize sellers in Sissala in the Upper West Region are facing challenges finding buyers for their produce weeks after harvest.

Despite the abundance of maize, known buyers are nowhere to be found, forcing sellers to offer their commodity at lower prices than expected.

According to reports from the Ghana News Agency (GNA), maize sellers interviewed expressed their frustration at the situation.

Some have been unable to sell their stock, while others, in desperate need, are compelled to sell at prices below the standard rates.

A prominent maize dealer, Alhaji Maize Adinan Bajin, revealed the decline in maize prices over time.

In December 2023, a bag of maize was sold for GH¢370.00, which subsequently dropped to

GH¢365.00, then GH¢320.00, and currently stands at GH¢300.00.

Traditionally, after Christmas, many buyers would flock to the Sissala area to purchase maize.

However, the current scenario is markedly different, with a notable absence of buyers.

Only one company remains willing to purchase maize, but at a reduced price, exacerbating the challenges faced by sellers.

“We can’t get buyers and as farmers, we need to sell and clear our new fields, buy fertilizer and prepare our new fields, but we are at a standstill and stranded,” Alhaji Bajin said.

“More challenged are the smallholder farmers and women who are having difficulty selling their maize due to the fewer buyers.”

“Looking at the amount of inputs that were used in producing the maize, it’s now difficult to break even, and this could make us indebted to our suppliers.”

He said he currently has 5,000 mini bags of maize that he has not been able to sell and called on the government to intervene by regulating the price, as they feared reducing their farm sizes next season if there was no support.

A woman maize farmer said, “I had to carry my two maize bags to the WARC shop, a maize aggregation company, to sell, but I was told I would receive my money the following day since the company’s mode of payment was mobile money and that had to be done the next day.”

“A few years ago, buyers would trace to my house and even buy the maize and pay me cash; this situation is affecting us.”

Mr. Nabong Ayie, a farmer, said, “I have tried selling 2000 bags for the past two weeks and nobody is calling to buy. I need money badly to do other things, and now I have to wait until a buyer calls.”

Mr. John Dimah, a former National Best Maize Farmer, bemoaned the absence of buyers, saying, “This year we are stranded; I still have some 15,000 mini bags of maize unsold, hoping to get a buyer.”

He attributed the situation to disruptions in the Sahelian region, favourable growing conditions in Ghana’s Middle Belt, and the potential influx of foreign maize into the market. He urged farmers to consider diversifying into crops such as sorghum, sesame, and soybeans.

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



File photo

# General News

## NSS assigns 13,516 trained teachers to basic, secondary schools

The National Service Scheme (NSS) has revealed the assignment of 13,516 trained teachers from Colleges of Education for their mandatory one-year national service in primary and secondary schools nationwide.

This disclosure was made on Monday, March 4, 2024, urging all service personnel in this category to verify their placements on the NSS website, [www.nss.gov.gh](http://www.nss.gov.gh).

In a press release signed by the Acting Director of Corporate Affairs, Ambrose Entsiwah, it was clarified that trainees should then proceed to the respective NSS Regional Secretariats to complete the registration process.

Registration is scheduled to commence on Friday, March 8, 2024, at all designated centres.

The NSS management encourages all deployed trained teachers to accept their placements and adhere

to the reporting instructions.

However, there is a possibility that the NSS will not be mandatory in the future. Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, also the flagbearer for the New Patriotic Party (NPP), has pledged to make National Service optional if elected president.

This means that individuals graduating from tertiary institutions may no longer be mandated to offer their service to the country, as is currently being done.

During his address at the University of Professional Studies (UPSA) in Accra on February 7, 2024, Dr. Bawumia stated, "National Service will no longer be mandatory. And students will have the option to decide whether to do national service or not."

According to the Vice President, this change will help the youth secure jobs, as companies will be

encouraged to go to campuses for annual recruitment. He emphasized, "My government will propose that those who, after completion of their education, can secure jobs would be exempted from National Service."

The National Service programme

is a compulsory one-year service required of all citizens of Ghana aged 18 and above at the time of deployment. The Scheme, initiated in 1973, now operates under Act 426 (of 1980).

*Source: The Independent Ghana*



*Trained teachers from Colleges of Education*

## Ghana is 67 years today

Ghana will today, March 6, 2024, mark 67 years since it gained Independence from her former colonial masters, the British.

Ghana gained her independence after 83 years of British colonial rule – becoming the first sub-Saharan African country to achieve independence from Britain.

The country's first President, Dr Kwame Nkrumah declared Ghana as "free forever" from colonial rule, marking a historic turning point in the governance of the country.

Since that day, every March 6 is celebrated across the country and among Ghanaians abroad with various activities, some of which are observed throughout the month of March.

The national anniversary of this year's celebration will be held

at the Youth Resource Centre at the Eastern Regional capital of Koforidua.

This follows President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's decision in 2017 to have the national independence celebration held on a rotational basis to open the regions to the world to boost the local economy.

The Eastern Region, therefore, becomes the third region to host the national anniversary after the Central Region in 2022 and the Volta Region in 2023.

The theme for this year's event is: "Our Democracy, Our Pride".

This year's occasion would be graced by President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire as the Special Guest of Honour.

Some 120 ambassadors and high commissioners from various

countries, as well as Ghana's Speaker of Parliament and the 275 Members of Parliament, will grace the occasion to be marked

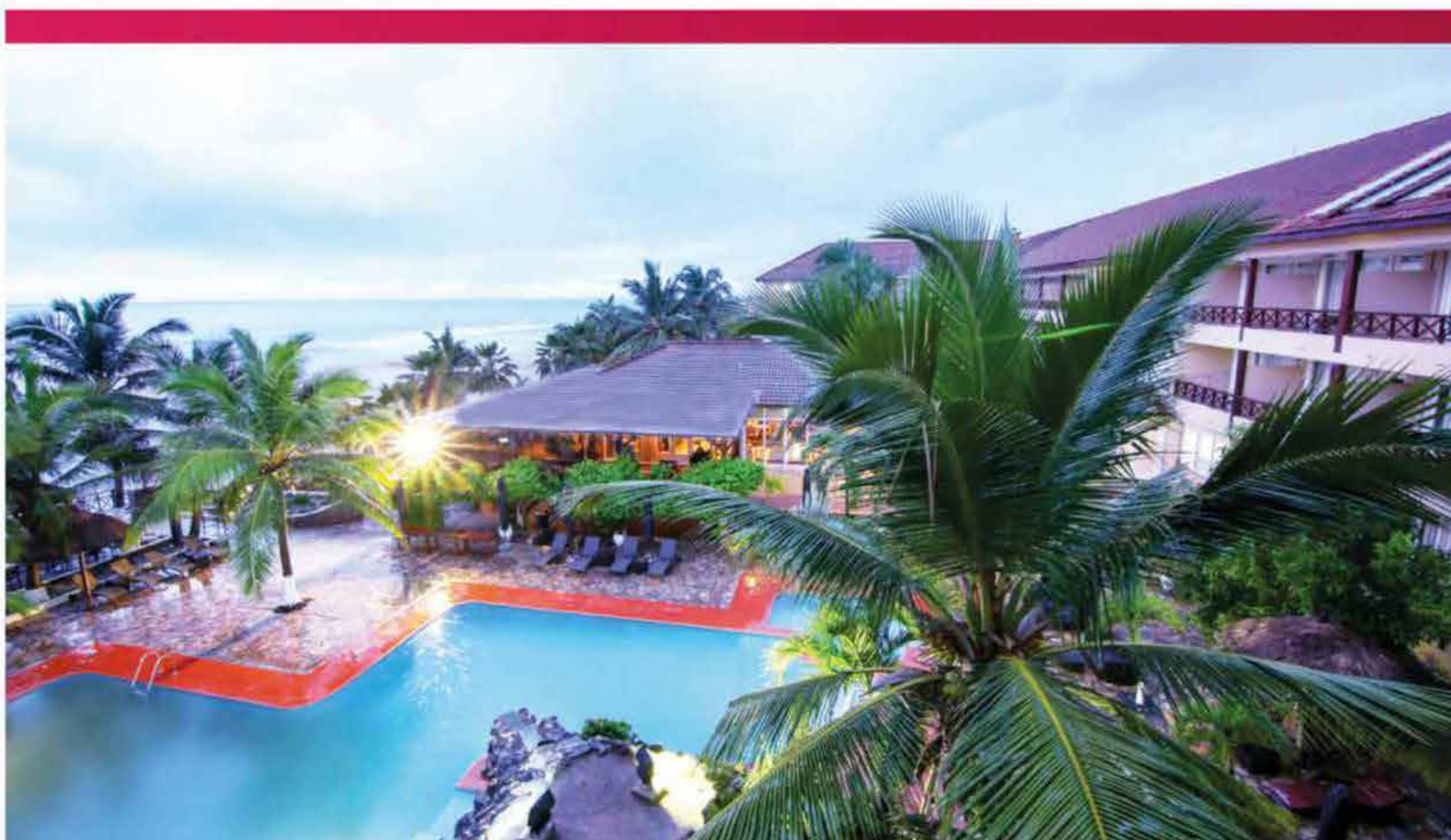
by a parade of security services, students, pupils, and some groups and institutions.

*Source: GNA*



*2023 Independence Day Celebration*





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# Business

## Foreign exchange trading licences of GT Bank, FBN Bank suspended

The Bank of Ghana (BoG) has temporarily suspended the foreign exchange trading licences of Guaranty Trust Bank Ghana Limited (GTB) and First Bank of Nigeria (FBN) Bank Ghana Limited starting from March 18, 2024, for a duration of one month.

According to a statement issued by the Central Bank, the decision was made due to multiple violations of foreign exchange market regulations, including instances of fraudulent documentation in their foreign exchange operations, which have been brought to the attention of the Bank of Ghana.

"The licence will be restored at the end of the one-month suspension period once the Bank of Ghana is satisfied that they have put in place effective controls to ensure strict

adherence to the foreign exchange market regulations", the statement said.

"By this statement, we caution foreign exchange market players to adhere strictly to the applicable forex market regulations and guidelines", it concluded.

For customers of these banks, this suspension may impact their ability to carry out certain foreign exchange transactions through these institutions during the suspension period. Customers who rely on these banks for foreign exchange services may need to seek alternative providers or make arrangements to manage their foreign currency needs during this time.

*Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey*



File photo

## Domestic VAT collections increased to GHC1.9 billion in 2023 - BoG

The January 2024 Monetary Policy Report from the Bank of Ghana indicates that the real sector of the economy showed a mixed performance in the eleven months of 2023.

Consumer spending, indicated by domestic VAT collections and retail sales, saw a strong performance in November 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

Domestic VAT collections increased significantly by 128.9% year-on-year to GH¢1.978 billion, while total domestic VAT for the first eleven months of 2023 rose by 66.6% to GH¢12.831 billion.

Retail sales also increased by 2.4% year-on-year to GH¢193.12 million in November 2023, up from GH¢188.60 million in November 2022. Cumulatively, retail sales for the first eleven months of 2023 rose by 30.4%.

In the manufacturing sub-sector, indicated by trends in the collection of direct taxes and private sector workers' contributions to the Social Security and National Insurance

Trust (SSNIT) Pension Scheme (Tier-1), there was an improvement in November 2023. Total direct taxes collected increased by 135.3% year-on-year to GH¢5.880 billion in November 2023, while total direct taxes collected for the first eleven months of 2023 rose by 60.6% to GH¢44.432 billion.

However, activity in the construction sub-sector, indicated by the volume of cement sales, declined by 13.2% year-on-year in November 2023 to 231,571.37 tonnes, down from 266,695.03 tonnes a year ago. Cement sales for the first eleven months of 2023 also decreased by 25.1% to 2,358,386.77 tonnes.

Transport sector activities, indicated by new vehicle registrations by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA), declined by 14.8% to 7,268 in November 2023, from 8,533 vehicles registered in November 2022. Cumulatively, vehicles registered by the DVLA within the first eleven months of 2023 decreased by 35.7% to 135,544.

Passenger arrivals, however,

improved by 25.5% year-on-year to 104,157 in November 2023, compared to 82,977 arrivals a year ago. Cumulatively, for the first eleven months of 2023, there were 1,019,841 arrivals recorded at the international airport and land borders, representing a growth of 25.8% compared to the same period in 2022.

International trade at the two main

harbours (Tema and Takoradi) showed improvement, with total container traffic increasing by 28.8% year-on-year to 57,738 in November 2023. However, in cumulative terms, total container traffic for the first eleven months of 2023 dipped by 3.3% to 570,711, compared to the same period in 2022.

*Source: The Independent Ghana*



File photo



# International

## ICC issues arrest warrants for top Russian commanders

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for top Russian commanders over alleged war crimes in Ukraine.

Sergei Kobylash and Viktor Sokolov, an army lieutenant general and a navy admiral, are the two men named by the ICC.

This is the second round of warrants for Russian officials related to the war in Ukraine.

The first were for President Vladimir Putin and his children's rights envoy.

Russia does not recognise the ICC, making it highly unlikely they will ever be deported to face the charges.

The ICC said the latest warrants were due to there being reasonable grounds to believe that the two suspects were responsible for "missile strikes carried out by the forces under their command against the Ukrainian electric infrastructure".

The alleged crimes took place between October 2022 and March 2023, the ICC said.

The court said that the attacks caused civilian harm and damage that would have been clearly excessive.

The two men "are each allegedly responsible for the war crime of directing attacks at civilian objects" and are also accused of the "crime against humanity of inhumane acts", the court said.

Mr Kobylash, 58, was the commander of long-range aviation for the Russian air force at the time of the alleged crimes.

Mr Sokolov, 61, was an admiral in the Russian navy who commanded the Black Sea Fleet during the period to which the charges relate, according to the ICC.

Moscow has in the past denied targeting civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed the new warrants.

"Every Russian commander who orders strikes against Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure must know that justice will be served," he posted on social media.

"Every perpetrator of such crimes must know that they will be held accountable."

Created by a UN treaty in 2002, the

ICC investigates and brings to justice those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, intervening when national authorities cannot or will not prosecute.

The treaty has been ratified by 123 countries, but Russia - along with China, India and the US - has refused to join.

In March last year, the ICC issued arrest warrants for President

Putin and Russia's commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova.

The court focused those claims on the unlawful deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia.

Moscow denied the allegations and labelled the warrants as "outrageous".

Source: BBC



Viktor Sokolov is one of the men named by the ICC

## Facebook and Instagram restored after over 2-hour outage

Meta says it has resolved a "technical issue" which caused Facebook, Messenger and Instagram to go down.

Hundreds of thousands of users worldwide were unable to access them for around two hours on Tuesday.

People trying to log onto the websites and apps were finding error messages and were unable to refresh their feeds as normal.

Meta also apologised to those who had been affected, saying it resolved the problem as quickly as it could.

Tracking website Downtdetector indicated the outages had affected multiple countries.

Meta's platforms are some of the most popular in the world. Facebook has three billion active monthly users, while Instagram is expected to hit 1.4 billion worldwide later this year.

Threads, its rival to Twitter, that was launched in 2023, also reported outages. WhatsApp - which Meta also owns - was unaffected.

The biggest outage Meta experienced was in 2021, when founder Mark Zuckerberg apologised for the disruption caused.

On that occasion Facebook, Messenger, Whatsapp and Instagram services went down for almost six hours.

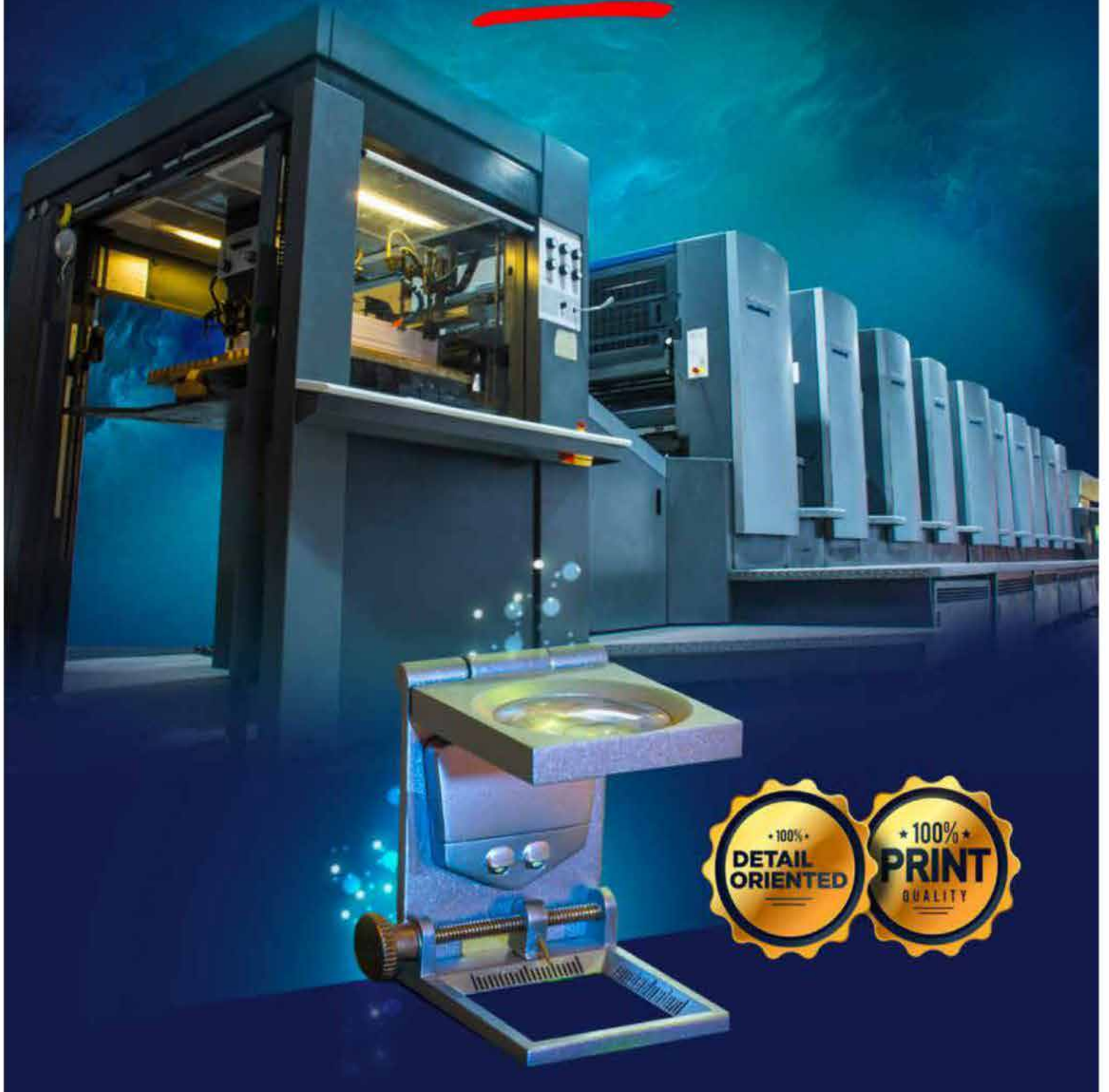
Source: BBC



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