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General News

We have not paid salaries to non-existent staff - Tamale Teaching Hospital Management

The Tamale Teaching Hospital has denied allegations of paying salaries to non-existent staff, often referred to as 'ghost names.'

This denial comes after an investigation by the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP) and the Controller and Accountant General's Department (CAGD), which uncovered payroll irregularities in several Northern Region institutions, including the hospital and educational facilities under the Ghana Education Service (GES).

In an interview with the media, the hospital's Public Relations Officer, Aliu Zuberu, clarified that they had not received formal communication from the OSP.

He emphasized the hospital's dedication to transparency and addressing the issues raised.

"We disagree with the information circulating. We have not had any formal communication from the OSP; we only saw a document online," Mr Zuberu said.

He added, "While awaiting formal communication, we are taking the issues seriously. We are reviewing

our HR data and staff information. We've heard about ghost names and validation issues, but we don't have the full details yet."

Mr Zuberu stressed the importance of verifying payroll accuracy, ensuring no ghost employees are

listed, and confirming that only active employees are validated.

"We are conducting an internal assessment to verify the OSP's claims and ensure there are no ghost names. We need to ensure we are not validating any non-

existent employees," he added. "We will respond appropriately to the OSP after our review," he said.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Tamale Teaching Hospital

My faith in your principles is badly shaken - Asiedu Nketia tells Martin Amidu over OSP saga

The National Chairman of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), Johnson Asiedu Nketia, has expressed his loss of faith in the principles of the esteemed legal luminary and former Special Prosecutor, Martin Amidu.

He stated that he once believed Mr Amidu to be a very principled man until his recent petition to President Akufo-Addo, seeking the removal of Kissi Agyebeng as Special Prosecutor.

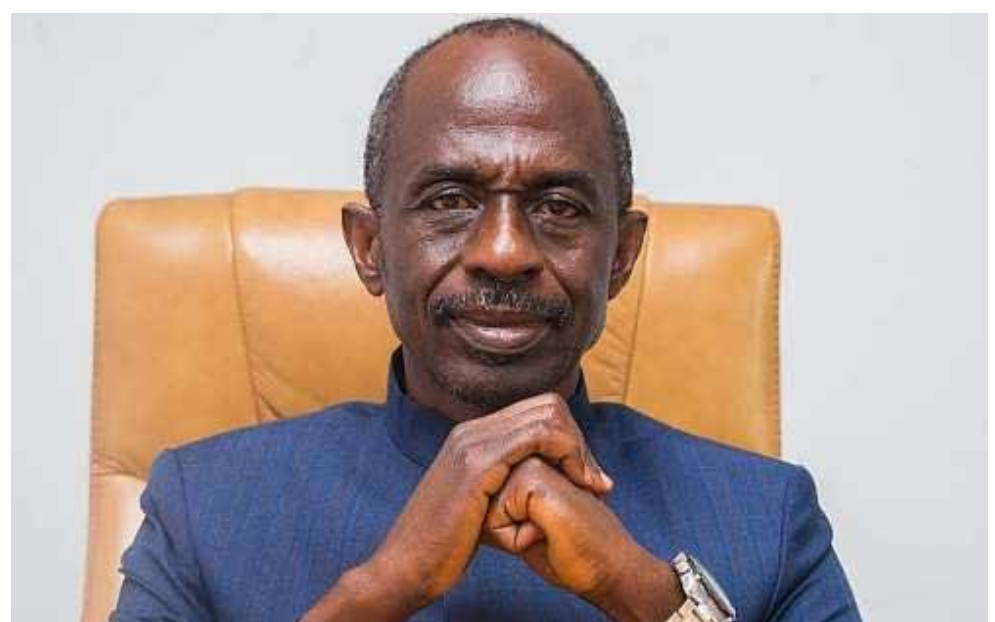
Speaking to the media on May 23, he said, "The Martin Amidu I

know, until this thing was done, I trusted that he was a very principled person. My faith in his being principled is badly shaken."

This comment follows a petition, dated April 30, 2024, which Mr. Amidu sent to President Akufo-Addo and was subsequently forwarded to Chief Justice Gertrude Torkornoo on May 6, 2024.

In his petition, Mr Amidu alleged procurement breaches in the purchase of vehicles for the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP) and abuses involving judges and

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Johnson Asiedu Nketia, National Chairman of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC)



General News

My faith in your principles is badly shaken - Asiedu Nketia tells Martin Amidu over OSP saga

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the administration of justice.

He also cited violations of citizens' rights through arrests and detentions, violations of the right to information, and improper appointments of personnel to the office.

According to the National Chairman of the NDC, the motive behind Mr Amidu's petition remains unclear to him.

He expressed surprise that Mr

Amidu, who once referred to President Akufo-Addo as the "Mother serpent of corruption," would petition him to address perceived corrupt acts.

The NDC Chairman stated that Mr Amidu's decision to petition the President has weakened his credibility and undermined his previous efforts to fight corruption.

"He shouldn't have done that at all. I am still trying to understand why. Comrade Martin, have you

abandoned your view that Nana Akufo-Addo is the mother serpent of corruption? Or you still hold that view? If you still hold that view, when you came to a roadblock that I want to do this thing against finance minister and the president said no way, you resigned and came to open up.

"If your successor has come to a similar road block and the president is demanding his resignation, won't you show

solidarity? But you are rather making yourself the tool for the president to be able to achieve his objective of fighting those who are fighting corruption."

M. Asiedu Nketia stated that he cannot support either Amidu or the Special Prosecutor until ongoing investigations are completed and more information is available.

Source: *The Independent Ghana*

Information Minister entreats media to support advocacy on Broadcasting Bill

Minister for Information, Fatimatu Abubakar, has appealed to the media to assist the Ministry in advocating for the passage of the Broadcasting Bill into law.

She emphasized that the bill has received significant attention under the current administration and requires support to prevent any delays in its enactment.

"I believe you are aware that over the past few years, we've invited stakeholders on the draft broadcasting bill. We've done validation exercises, we've been going to the AG back, and we've called for input among others."

"Earlier this year, we got a final draft, which we sent back to the AG's office for their comments. We've received the comments, but looking at the scope of work, that is what I must say, so far as the draft is concerned, we are about 90% through with the scope of work, based on the inputs that have come from our stakeholders. That being said, we know that in terms of the draft we are at the final stage," she emphasised.

Progressing through various stages, the draft Bill is now poised for its final stage, awaiting presentation before parliament.

During her visit to the Multimedia Group Limited in Accra, Fatimatu Abubakar emphasised the significance of the Broadcasting

Bill's advancement.

The Minister encouraged the management to engage in the 3rd Cohort of the Media Capacity Enhancement Programme, aimed at training 100 journalists nationwide.

Highlighting other media support initiatives like the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM), Fatimatu Abubakar stressed the government's

dedication to fostering a conducive environment for journalists.

Emphasizing collaboration between the media and government, the Minister reiterated the government's commitment to upholding press freedom and supporting media operations.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Multimedia Group Limited, Ken Ansah, underscored the

need for regulation in the media space, expressing concerns about declining standards.

The Multimedia Group expressed gratitude for the support from IFPIM and assured the Minister of their commitment to fulfilling their mandate.

Source: *The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey*



Honourable Fatimatu Abubakar (M) with executive members of Multimedia Group Limited

General News

No politician is worth even a drop of your blood - NCCE Chair tells public

Chairperson of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Kathleen Addy, has emphasised that no political agenda is worth the sacrifice of any Ghanaian's life.

As the country gears towards the general elections come December 2024, Mrs. Addy has issued a fervent plea for peaceful and nonviolent acts urging all Ghanaians to abstain from resorting to aggression and allowing themselves to be contracted by politicians to perpetuate violence for their selfish thirst for power.

Politicians who supply arms to people to cause havoc during elections, according to Mrs Addy are proof that they disregard the

well-being of their supporters hence the need to uphold peace and solidarity throughout the electoral process.

"Really, no politician, no political party, is worth one drop of your blood, not a drop. So please let us all sit back and take a deep breath. No one is worth it. Anybody who comes to you and say, here is a machete, here is a gun, you must know that they do not value your life.

"Because as for machetes and guns, anybody can get them. So, if somebody says that this is the role that you have to play in bringing me to power. You must know that the person does not have your interest at heart. Their family members are not holding guns,

running around, or misbehaving" she advised during an interview with the media on Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

Encouraging open dialogue as a constructive approach to addressing any emerging challenges during the election period, Mrs Addy highlighted its significance in fostering understanding and resolution.

Furthermore, she acknowledged the inevitability of encountering sporadic hotspots during such a pivotal time but emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts among stakeholders to swiftly identify and mitigate potential areas of concern.

"It is unrealistic to think that you are going to go through the whole

election season, and you will not have one or two hotspots or a couple of eruptions."

"That is an unrealistic expectation. What you need to do is ensure you have a mechanism for addressing those issues when they come up, and that is not to say that all of it would be done and there would be nothing but a squeak; there would be some, but for these interventions, it would have been so much, so when issues come up, what we need to do is come together and find the mechanism for addressing the issue rather than saying at this point there is no coming back" she noted.

Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo



Kathleen Addy, Chairperson of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE)



General News

Your reckless borrowing has weakened Ghanaian banks - Banking consultant tells gov't

Renowned banking consultant, Dr Richmond Atuahene, has expressed concern about the government's current borrowing strategies, warning that they are pushing many banks toward financial distress and possible bankruptcy.

While engaging the media, Dr Atuahene criticized the government's domestic debt exchange programme, claiming it has opened the door to irresponsible borrowing.

He contends that this practice is placing excessive pressure on local banks and adversely affecting the stability of the Cedi.

"Ever since we went through the domestic debt exchange programme, the government has borrowed as if it's nobody's business," Dr Atuahene remarked.

He expressed concern that the government's borrowing strategy—using short-term funds to finance long-term projects—is unsustainable.

"The way we are going, if we continue the trajectory that we are taking, the banks are going to be in trouble because the government is out of the financial market and it is not paying its outstanding debts," he added.

Dr. Atuahene further highlighted that the government's borrowing spree is depriving the private sector of essential capital, thereby stunting economic growth. He refuted claims of economic growth, suggesting that the figures do not reflect reality.

"When I hear them say the economy is growing, from the figures available, I don't see the

growth anywhere because it is the private sector that grows the economy and not the government sector. Unfortunately, the private sector is deprived of capital and

cannot expand business," he noted.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



Dr. Richmond Atuahene, Banking consultant

GMet to launch weather forecast app for easy access to information

The Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet) has announced its intention to launch a new application software designed to provide weather forecast information to the public.

According to the Head of Central Analysis and Forecast at GMet, Felicity Ahafiany, the upcoming app will offer Ghanaians the convenience of accessing weather updates regardless of their location.

This initiative aims to assist individuals in planning their daily activities effectively, taking into account prevailing weather conditions.

"Currently we are trying to come up with an app where every Ghanaian irrespective of where you find yourself you will be able to have access to information," she said during an interview with the media on May 23, 2024, amid the recent floods, particularly in Accra and other areas.

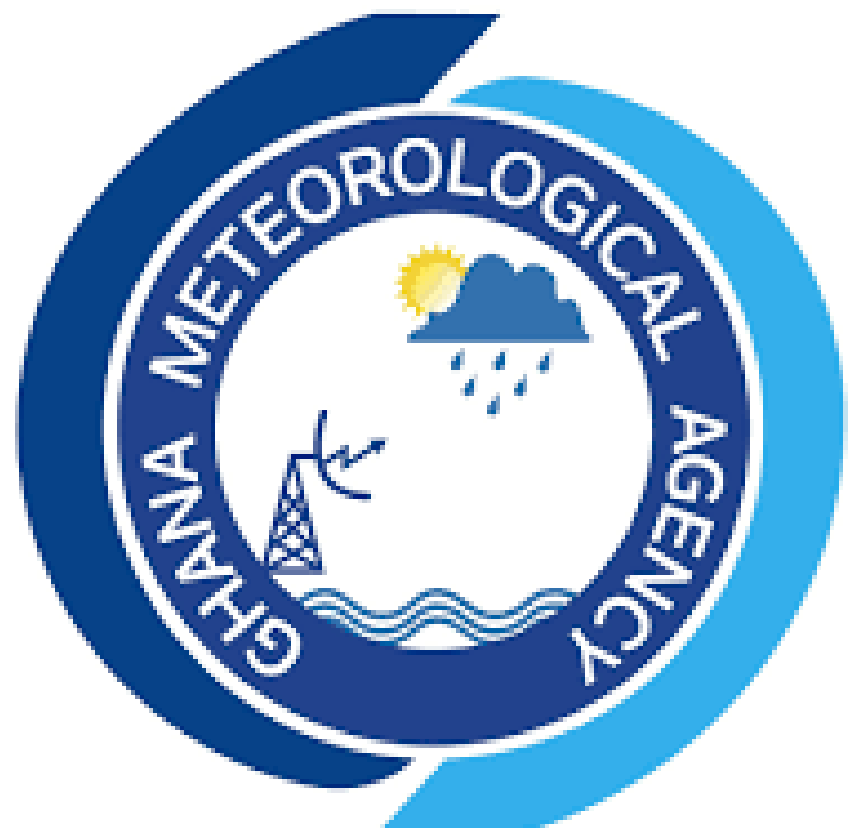
Felicity Ahafiany noted that the first app which was introduced was mainly to assist residents in the capital, Accra but the one which is yet to be launched will be for all irrespective of one's region or location.

"The first pilot we did was my Accra Flooding App which is basically for Accra. We are going to expand it to cover the entire country and then any other forecast will also be attached. So that wherever you find yourself just like Google people are doing, we will also be doing similar things but with a higher accuracy rate" she added.

Earlier, on May 6, 2024, a storm wreaked havoc in parts of Accra, causing flooding and trees to collapse onto vehicles around the Airport Residential area.

On May 13, 2024, Kasoa and its surrounding areas were thrown into chaos as heavy rainfall led to severe traffic congestion and

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Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet)

General News

GMet to launch weather forecast app for easy access to updates and help planning

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flooding.

The West Hills Mall Car Park near Weija along the Accra-Cape Coast Highway was submerged under floodwaters, while the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) office in

Bortianor faced a similar fate.

In response to these challenges, the Ghana Hydrological Authority has unveiled plans to tackle the persistent flooding on the Mallam-Kasoa Highway.

The authority aims to construct storm drains along the road, with the project expected to be completed within 17 months. This initiative seeks to alleviate siltation and minimise flooding

incidents in the area.

Source: Independent Ghana / Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

SML owes gov't GHC31.88 million in taxes - KPMG report

The KPMG report on the contract between the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) and Strategic Mobilisation Limited (SML) has revealed that SML owes the government over GHC31 million in taxes.

During the period from 1 September 2020 to 30 April 2021, a bulk payment to SML covering invoices for an eight (8) month period did not have VAT and WHT deductions, amounting to GHE13.38 million.

This contradicts GRA's standard practice of deducting such taxes for payments to SML between 1 June 2020 and 31 August 2023.

Additionally, SML failed to fulfil its statutory obligations by neither filing returns nor remitting these taxes to GRA.

Pursuant to Section 71(1) of the RA Act, the accrued interest on the tax liability is estimated at GHC18.50 million owed by SML to GRA as of 31 January 2024. Consequently, the total liability incurred by SML

amounts to GHC31.88 million.

The release of the report comes after weeks of increasing pressure from the public and civil society organizations calling for transparency due to reported issues with the contract.

President Nana Akufo-Addo commissioned KPMG to audit the contract on January 2, 2024, with an initial deadline of January 16, 2024, which was later extended to February 23, 2024.

The report has raised concerns about the management of taxpayer funds and has prompted calls for accountability and reforms within the GRA.

The government has stated that it will take appropriate action based on the findings of the report to ensure that such lapses do not occur in the future.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey





General News

Court grants Hopeson Adorye GHC20K bail, charged with publication of false news

A member of the Movement for Change, Hopeson Adorye, has been granted bail following his arrest for admitting to detonating dynamite in the Volta Region during the 2016 elections to favour the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

The Dansoman District Court set Mr Adorye's bail at GH¢20,000 with two sureties, one of which must be justified.

Mr Adorye was charged by the police with the publication of false news. Nana Ohene Ntow, a key member of the Movement for Change, provided this update in an interview with the media.

According to him, Mr Adorye was taken to the Ministries Police Station to complete the necessary procedures for his release from custody.

"He was put before the Dansoman District Court this [Thursday] morning and was charged with publication of false news. He has been granted bail and has been

taken to the Ministries Police Station with our lawyers to secure his release," Mr Ntow said.

The case has been adjourned to June 26, 2024. Hopeson Adorye was apprehended following his appearance on Accra FM on May 10, where he confessed to being part of a plot that detonated dynamite in the Volta Region to scare voters in the National Democratic Congress (NDC) stronghold, thereby favouring the NPP.

"Prior to the elections, we blasted dynamite in parts of the Volta Region, and that scared a number of people. When I finished casting my ballot in Tema, I drove to the Volta Region, and when I asked for the number of people who had voted and the expected number of voters, it turned out people did not come out to vote," he said.

Meanwhile, Yaw Buaben Asamoah, a former Member of Parliament for Adentan who has parted ways with the NPP and is now a member

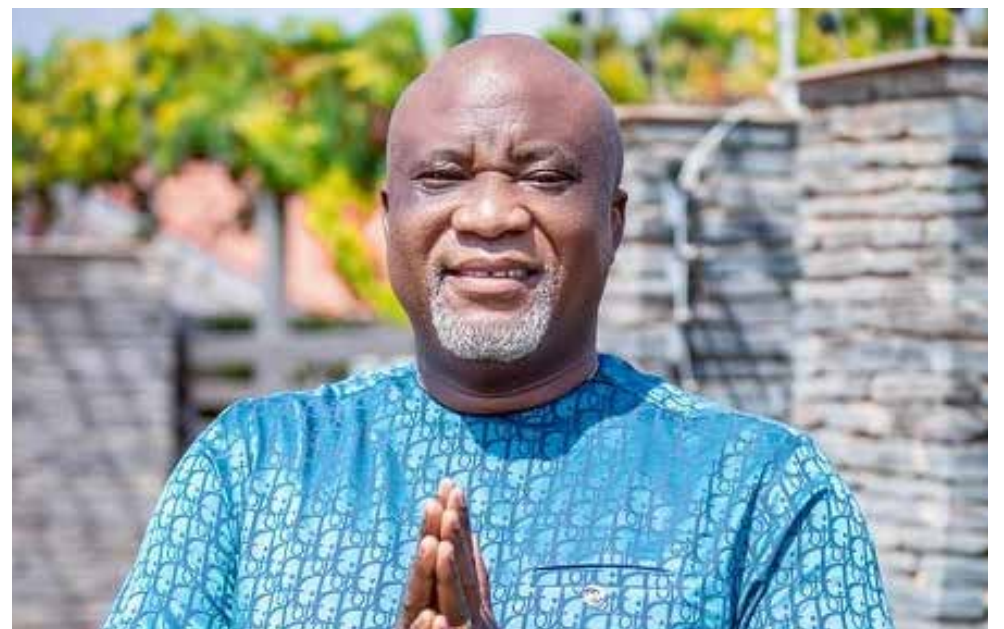
of the Movement for Change, has claimed that the arrest is politically motivated.

Following a visit by the presidential aspirant and leader of the movement, Alan Kyerematen, Mr Buaben Asamoah stated that the allegations against Hopeson Adorye are false and unjust.

"Hopeson Adorye is not about to run away from Ghana or his

home because the police intend to charge him with the publication of false information. So to go to the extent of keeping him all day in the police station and bringing him over to the Ministries to detain him, you point fingers backwards at yourself that there is something political at play and it is not fair," he said.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey



Hopeson Adorye, Member of the Movement for Change

Supreme Court adjourns IMANI Africa's case challenging presidential powers to remove public officers

The Supreme Court has delayed a case brought forward by IMANI Africa and security analyst, Prof Kwesi Aning, challenging the President's authority to dismiss key public officials.

Scheduled for hearing on May 23, the case was postponed as the state has yet to submit its responses. The state's legal representative requested seven days to prepare the appropriate responses, which the apex court granted.

In their filing alongside security analyst Prof Kwesi Aning, the plaintiffs seek a declaration that, based on a proper interpretation of several constitutional articles, the President lacks the power to terminate these officials unless there is proven misconduct or

misbehaviour.

The case specifically addresses appointments to offices like the Chief Fire Officer of the Fire Service, Inspector General of Police, Director General of Prisons Service, and Comptroller General of Immigration Service.

The plaintiffs also argue against fresh appointments by new presidents without just cause, citing instances where officials were removed before reaching retirement age.

Their plea includes a request to restrain the President from dismissing these officials except in cases of proven misconduct, retirement, resignation, death, or incapacity.

"In some cases, these removals

occur before the individual occupants of the office reach the statutory retirement age.

"For instance in 2017, the then Director-General of the Prisons Service, Mr. Emmanuel Yao Adzator

was asked to proceed on leave at the age of 54 and subsequently another was appointed in his stead," part of the writ read.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Supreme Court

General News

Madina Zongo Junction, Oxford Street, Lapaz among areas with highest levels of air pollution - Report

Madina Zongo Junction, Agboghloshie, Makola, Tudu, Oxford Street, Lapaz, and Kaneshie Market are identified as the communities in Accra with the highest levels of air pollution.

This concerning data comes from the monitoring network of the Breathe Accra Project and was discussed during a recent roundtable at the SunLodge Hotel in Tesano, Accra.

The discussion was part of the maiden Air Quality Awareness Week organized by the Ghana Urban Air Quality Project, focusing on policy interventions to address the growing air pollution problem in Accra and other metropolitan areas of Ghana.

The communique issued after the roundtable outlined several measures for the government and other stakeholders to tackle air pollution effectively. In the waste management sector, experts highlighted that open burning of waste is a major source of air pollution in Ghanaian cities due to limited and irregular waste collection services.

To curb this practice, they recommended adopting a circular economy model that involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible.

Assemblies should engage operators of tricycle waste collectors, known as 'Aboboyaa,' to form cooperatives for better regulation and streamlining of their activities. Additionally, promoting waste segregation to enable the recycling of plastics, metals, and the composting of organic waste was emphasized.

Further recommendations for the waste management sector included ensuring that waste collection contracts are performance-based, with annual evaluations by households and termination of non-performing companies.

Experts also suggested considering punitive measures for individuals and households engaging in open burning of waste. Strategic placement of waste transfer stations and securing appropriate

waste disposal sites were also recommended, along with linking waste collection services to property rate payments. Regulating e-waste sector operations to stop open burning was also seen as essential.

In the transport sector, vehicular emissions significantly contribute to air pollution in Ghanaian cities due to the growing number of vehicles, many of which do not meet emission standards.

To address this, experts recommended expediting the use of vehicle testing results by the DVLA and EPA to enforce emission standards.

Improving public transport by increasing and maintaining clean public transport vehicles running on scheduled timetables to encourage car owners to use public transport was suggested. Additionally, replacing intra-city fleets with electric buses and incorporating walking and cycling lanes in road infrastructure projects were seen as vital measures.

The transport sector recommendations also included expanding the Traffic Management Centre to cover all major traffic intersections and integrating them with actuated signal systems to reduce congestion and emissions from idling vehicles.

Promoting a park-and-ride bicycle system and sensitizing vehicle owners on maintenance practices were also recommended. Encouraging corporate organizations to implement remote working to reduce city travel and investing in private transport operations through vehicle leasing or hire purchase schemes to replace old, polluting vehicles were suggested.

Providing a conducive environment for local vehicle manufacturing and assembly at competitive prices was also emphasized. Additionally, regular watering of roads under construction to prevent dust pollution and setting speed limits on untarred roads to prevent dust pollution in residential neighborhoods were recommended.

In the household energy sector, the use of biomass fuels for cooking generates high levels of Household Air Pollution (HAP) and contributes to ambient air pollution. To reduce HAP, experts recommended sustaining the National Petroleum Authority's Cylinder Recirculation Model to improve LPG supply and access.

Removing taxes on LPG to make it affordable for low-income households and encouraging the use of low-emitting biomass fuels like briquettes were also suggested. Sensitizing households on clean cooking solutions through Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and NGOs and providing tax incentives for briquette producers to make their products affordable locally were additional recommendations.

The industrial sector also contributes significantly to air pollution due to obsolete technologies and unregulated industries. To curb industrial emissions, experts recommended ensuring that factories, especially those in residential areas, adhere to emission standards.

Enforcing prohibition notices to

prevent factories from operating if they fail to meet emission standards was also emphasized. Prioritizing air pollution issues in health and safety policies for workers and prohibiting vehicle spraying in residential areas were recommended measures. Regulating activities to control dust pollution at construction sites was also highlighted.

In market centers, which are hotspots for air pollution due to various activities, experts recommended implementing byelaws to ban setting fires at market centers.

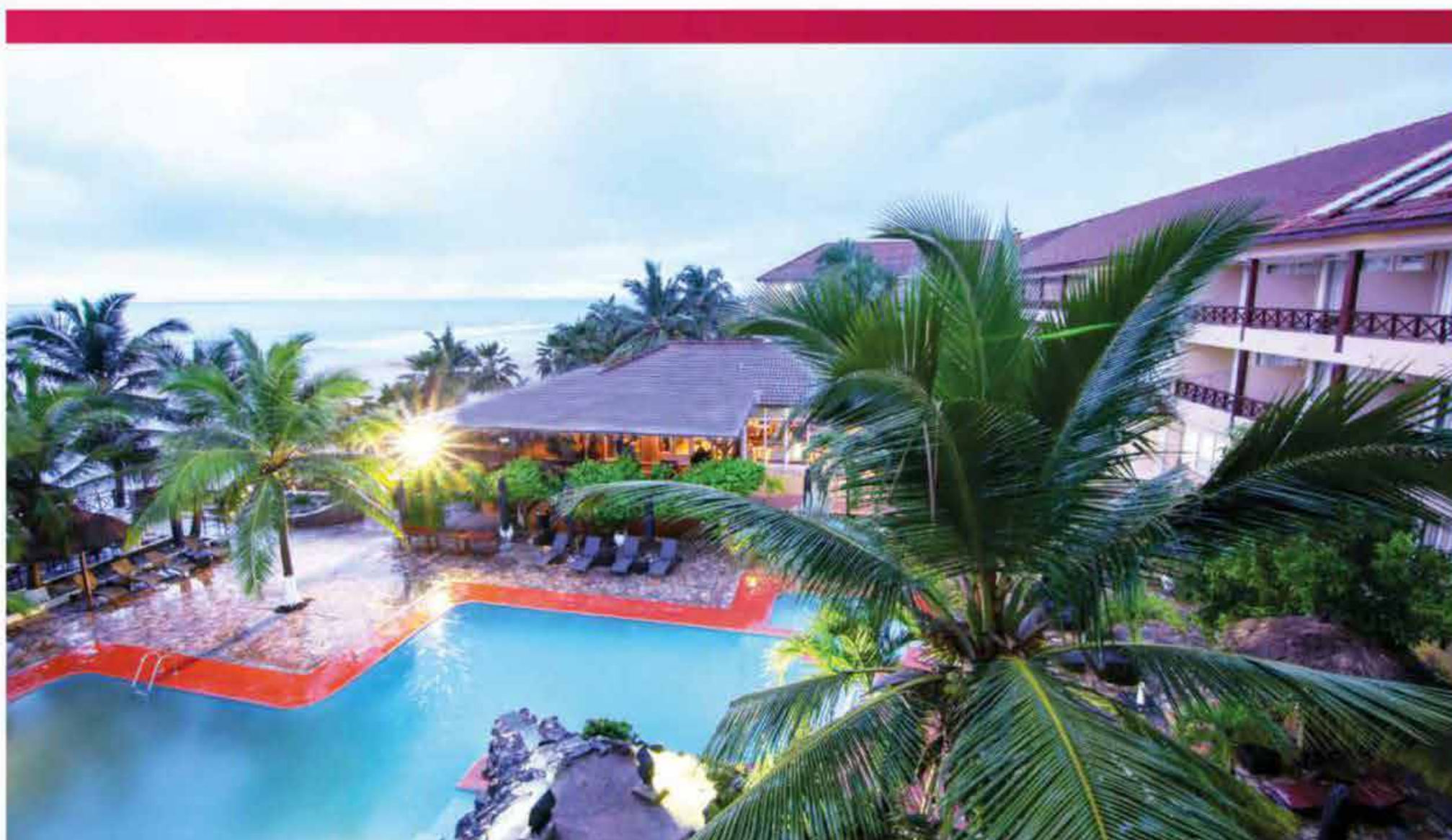
Encouraging the use of LPG and improved cookstoves among market vendors and prohibiting gasoline-powered milling machines in favor of electric-powered ones were also suggested. Additionally, displaying posters in market centers advising drivers to avoid idling their vehicles was recommended.

These comprehensive measures, if implemented, can significantly improve air quality in Accra and other parts of Ghana, addressing the urgent need for action against air pollution.

Source: Independent Ghana



File photo



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Business

CSOs call on A-G to initiate an audit on 1V1D projects in Northern Ghana

Members of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Northern Ghana have presented a petition to the Auditor-General, urging an audit of all One Village One Dam (1V1D) projects in the region.

Executive Director of the Northern Patriots in Research and Advocacy (NORPRA), Bismark Adongo Ayorogo, conveyed the petition on behalf of the CSOs and the beneficiary communities.

The petition seeks to promote transparency and accountability in the management of public resources and to ensure value for money in these projects.

"We are invoking your constitutional mandate of auditing all public

accounts to conduct an audit on all the 1V1D projects in Northern Ghana," a portion of the petition read.

The petition highlights a policy statement from the 2018 Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government, which promised increased audit coverage on new policies like the 1V1D initiative to ascertain value for money.

"However, we have since not sighted any audit report from your Service on these 1V1D projects," the Civil Society Organisation noted.

The 1V1D projects, funded by Ghana's oil revenue through the Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA), aims to promote double cropping annually, boost

agricultural productivity, enhance food security, and reduce the food import bill, as outlined in the 2017 and 2018 Budget statements.

The petitioners emphasized the importance of an audit to uphold

good governance, transparency, accountability, and probity in Ghana's public financial management.

Source :Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



File photo

African companies lag in digitalization beyond mobile, digital payment systems - IFC

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank has reported that African firms are slow to digitalize beyond mobile and digital payments.

Nearly two-thirds of firms in the region that have adopted advanced digital payment systems have yet to implement a second advanced digital technology for business functions.

In a discussion on "Digital Opportunities in African Business," the IFC noted that while digital payments are widely adopted, they are not the most frequently used payment method. Only 7.0% of firms using digital payment methods report intensive use.

The IFC also highlighted that although mobile phones and digital payments are crucial entry points to digitalization, they do not necessarily lead to the digitalization of other business functions.

"As many as 86% of firms use mobile phones for business operations, and 61% have adopted advanced digital

technologies for payment. These are by far the most common uses of digital technology by African firms. However, these firms are slow to digitalise beyond mobile and digital payments. Almost two-thirds of firms that adopted advanced digital payment systems in the region have not yet adopted a second advanced digital technology to perform business functions", it pointed out.

In Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal, 57% of businesses have incorporated computers and internet, compared to 44% in low-income countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, and Malawi.

These businesses employed five or more workers. According to the IFC, larger and medium-sized enterprises generally utilize digitalization more comprehensively and are more common relative to the working-age population in the former group of countries.

Therefore, firms in poorer nations have limited access to digital tools and struggle to use digital technologies effectively.

The differences in digital adoption are largely due to the prevalence of micro and informal enterprises in these lower-income regions.

Additionally, regional disparities exist within countries; for example, less affluent areas in middle-income

countries experience significant gaps in adopting digital technologies, with intensive use gaps being particularly pronounced in areas with better digital infrastructure.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Amanda Cartey



International Finance Corporation (IFC)



International

Zuma says he will fight for his rights over South Africa election disqualification

South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma said on Thursday that he will fight for his rights, after the country's top court ruled that he was not eligible to run for parliament in next week's election.

The constitutional court ruled on Monday that Zuma's 15-month jail sentence for contempt of court in 2021 disqualified him from standing in the May 29 vote, as the constitution prohibits anyone given a prison sentence of 12 months or longer from holding a parliamentary seat.

Decisions of the constitutional court cannot be overruled.

"Judges of the constitutional court have taken a decision that I can't exercise my freedom, my democracy," Zuma said in a YouTube video shared

by his uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) party.

"I am going to fight for my rights until this country agrees that freedom must be a complete freedom, not for some and oppression for others."

While Zuma's name will be removed from MK's list of parliamentary candidates, his face will remain on the election's ballot papers as he is the registered leader of the party.

Zuma endorsed MK in December, when he announced he would not campaign for the governing African National Congress (ANC), which he led from 2007 until 2017.

He resigned as South Africa's president in 2018, under pressure from current ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa's allies in the party, after nine years as head of state marred by corruption scandals

and slowing economic growth.

Zuma's jailing in 2021 triggered riots in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal in which more than 300 people died. The riots morphed into a wider spate of looting.

There had been fears that this week's court ruling could prompt a violent reaction from Zuma's supporters, but that has not materialised.

Source: Reuters



Jacob Zuma, South Africa's former president

Kenyan found dead after going missing on Everest

A Kenyan mountaineer who went missing near the summit of Mount Everest has been found dead.

Forty-year-old Joshua Cheruiyot Kirui and his Nepali guide Nawang Sherpa, 44, disappeared on Wednesday during Mr Kirui's bid to become the first African to climb Mt Everest without extra oxygen.

The guide is yet to be found by the search team that had been deployed to locate the pair, a local tourism official told AFP news agency.

Climbing Everest, the world's highest peak, is considered extremely difficult and risky, even for experienced climbers.

Nepalese newspaper the Himalayan Times quoted Mr Sherpa informing the base camp that Mr Kirui had showed "abnormal behaviour" and "refused to return and even consume bottled oxygen".

Contact with the duo was lost shortly after the message, base camp officials told the paper.

Mr Kirui's close hiking friend, Kipkemoi Limo, told the BBC that he

died from a fall.

He added that his family and friends are enquiring whether Mr Kirui gave consent to be buried on Everest, or whether he wished for his body to be repatriated to Kenya, which will cost \$190,000 (£150,000).

Last week, Mr Kirui told the BBC that he had undergone extensive physical preparations ahead of the challenge, with his descent planned for Wednesday.

"The major/specific preparation was climbing Manaslu, the eighth highest mountain in the world in 2023 September," he wrote in an email to the BBC.

"However I've been climbing locally in Kenya, many stair climbs, gym workouts and running as specific preparation. Also for 10 years I've climbed, ran marathons and ultra marathons which adds to the general preparations".

In his latest Instagram post, Mr Kirui had expressed confidence that he could conquer Everest without additional oxygen.

He however told the BBC that he had

emergency oxygen support from Mr Sherpa and an emergency evacuation cover in case he ran into difficulties.

He was a banker with one of Kenya's biggest lenders. News of the death has hit the Kenyan mountain climbing community hard.

"Our brother now rests on the mountain. It's been a long night," fellow Kenyan mountaineer James Muhia, who had been sharing regular updates about Mr Kirui's attempt, said on X (formerly Twitter).

In an earlier post, Mr Muhia backed Mr Kirui to complete the climb, saying he was properly equipped, physically capable, resilient and well trained.

He told the BBC that he had joined Mr Kirui on last year's summit to Manaslu. Mr Kirui's death is the fourth recorded on Everest this week.

A Romanian climber and a British climber and his Nepalese guide were also found dead on Tuesday, the Himalayan Times reported.

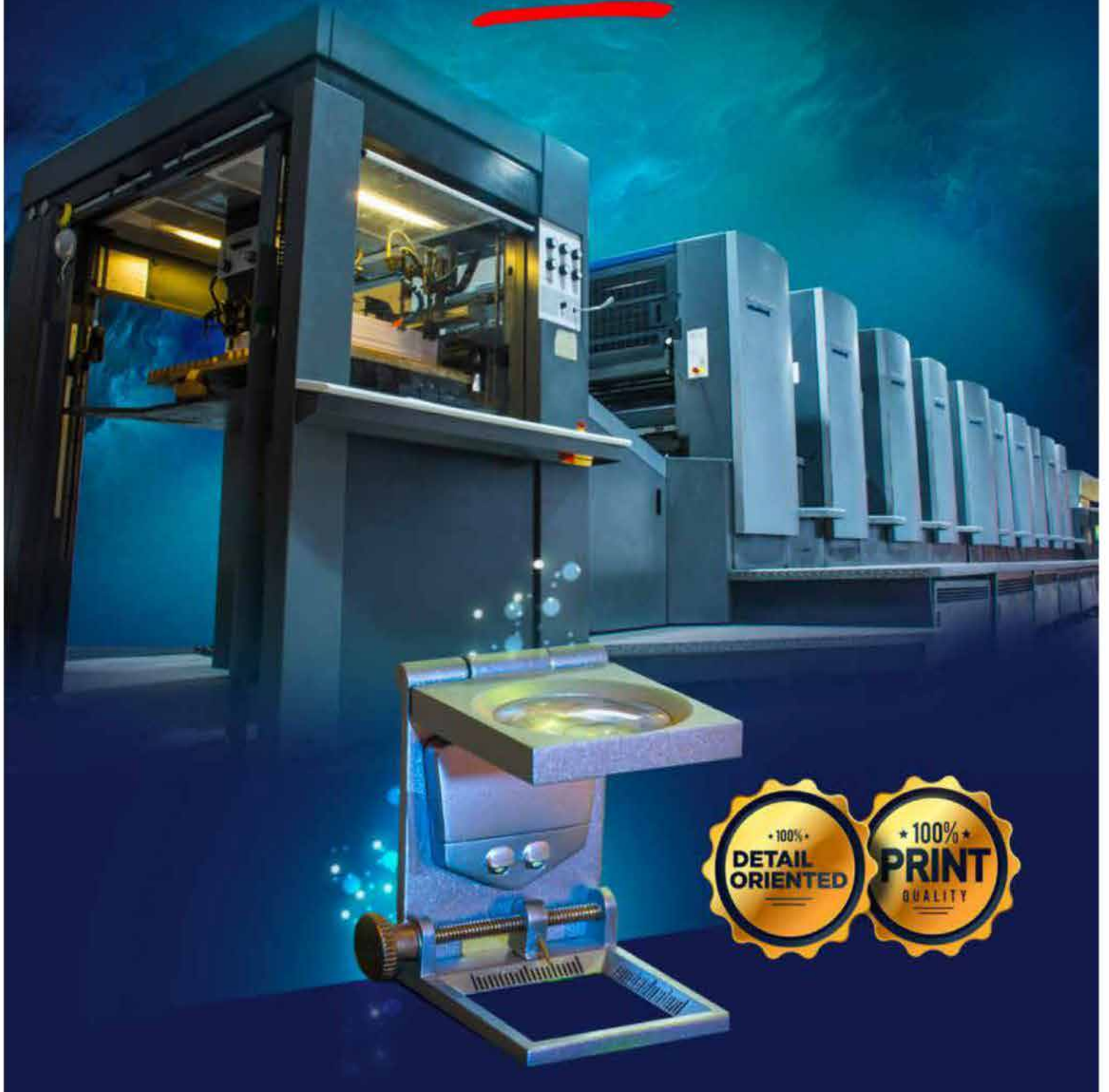
Source: BBC



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