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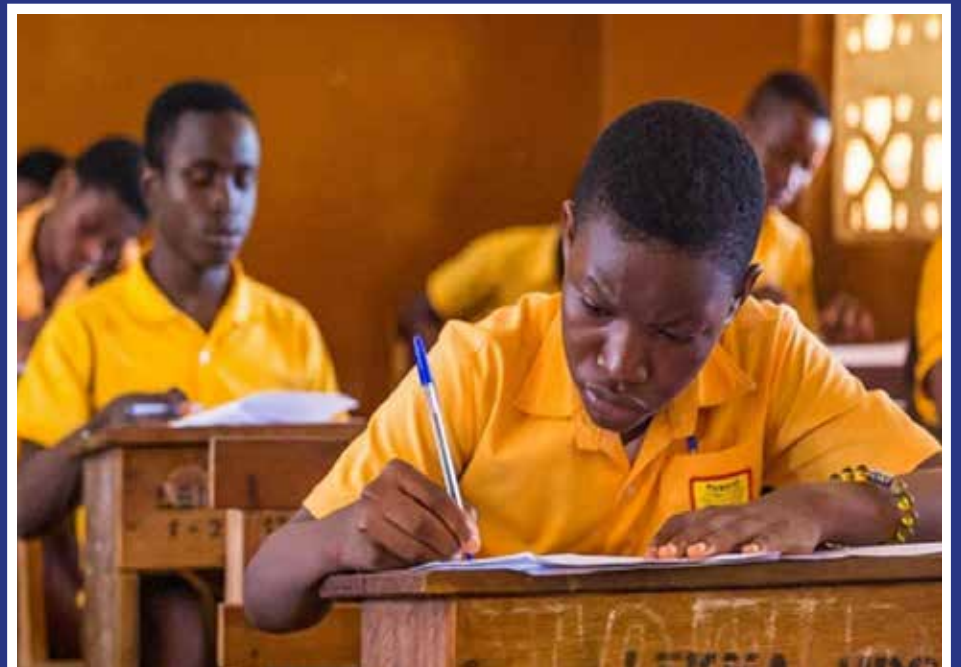


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General News

More Ghanaians losing trust in Courts, Police, EC – Afrobarometer Reports

The latest Afrobarometer survey has unveiled a stark decline in public trust in Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC), courts, and police, painting a troubling picture for these pivotal institutions.

The data, spanning from 1999 to 2022, reveals a dramatic erosion of confidence that poses significant concerns for the country's democratic process and rule of law.

Once a beacon of trust, the Electoral Commission has witnessed a precipitous drop in public confidence. In 1999, the EC enjoyed a commendable trust rating of 63%.

This figure surged to an impressive 75% in 2005. However, the latest data from 2022 shows that only 33% of Ghanaians now have faith in the EC.

This sharp decline reflects growing public skepticism about the commission's ability to conduct free and fair elections. The courts have not been immune to this trend.

In 1999, 58% of respondents expressed confidence in the judiciary, and this number rose slightly to 62% by 2005. Yet, by 2022, trust in the judicial system had plummeted to a mere 36%.

This significant decline indicates a deepening distrust in the courts' ability to deliver justice impartially and effectively.

The police force, often the most visible arm of law enforcement, has also experienced a severe drop

in public trust.

In 1999, trust in the police stood at 49%, climbing to 64% in 2005. However, by 2022, only 28% of Ghanaians expressed confidence in the police.

This decline persists despite the efforts of IGP George Akufo Dampare to enhance the police's image and effectiveness.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Ghana Police Personnels

569,095 candidates sit for 2024 BECE today

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has announced that 569,095 candidates will be taking this year's Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), starting on Monday, July 8, 2024.

This announcement follows the government's release of GH¢55,873,689.87 to WAEC, with additional funds expected to cover the remaining examination fees.

Head of Public Affairs at WAEC's National Office, Mr. John K. Kapi,

shared these details during a press conference in Accra. The event aimed to update stakeholders and the public about the forthcoming BECE for both public schools and private candidates.

The candidates will commence the examination with English Language on July 8, 2024, and conclude with Arabic on Monday, July 15, 2024. Among the total candidates, 282,648 are males and 286,447 are females, representing 19,506 schools.

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File photo



General News

569,095 candidates sit for 2024 BECE today

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"This figure represents a decrease of 5.29 percent compared to the 2023 entry figure of 600,900," noted Mr. Kapi.

The examination will be conducted at 2,123 centers across the nation, with the involvement of 2,123 supervisors, 1,889 assistant supervisors, and 19,973 invigilators to ensure the smooth administration of the exam.

School candidates will be assessed based on the newly introduced

Common Core Curriculum, while private candidates will follow the old syllabus.

To facilitate a smooth examination process, WAEC has developed and distributed the Guidelines, Scheme, and Structure of the examination to all school heads, with additional access available on the WAEC website for interested stakeholders.

For the private candidates, WAEC registered 1,366 individuals this

year, consisting of 735 males and 631 females. This number reflects a 25.7 percent decrease compared to the 2023 entry figure of 1,839. The examination for private candidates will be held at 15 centers, primarily located in regional capitals.

In preparation for the BECE, WAEC has organized sensitization programs to educate candidates on the examination's rules and regulations. The Council has also distributed necessary examination

materials, including objective answer cards, answer booklets, and pencils, to District Education Offices nationwide.

Additionally, WAEC has made provisions to accommodate candidates with special educational needs, ensuring that no candidate is excluded from the examination process.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey

Ghana recorded 610 cases of missing persons from 2021-2023 – Report

A recent report by the non-profit organization Missing Ghana, in collaboration with the Ghana Police Service and Department of Social Welfare, reveals that since 2021, 610 individuals, predominantly children, have been reported missing in Ghana.

Former Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection, Nana Oye Bampoe-Addo, emphasized significant gaps in Ghana's efforts to protect children.

During an interview with the media, she expressed concern about the lack of a dedicated unit within security agencies focused on missing children, leading to inadequate data on these critical issues.

"Regarding security, it seems that our security agencies do not have a unit specifically focused on missing children or child protection. Additionally, we lack a strategic framework to address this issue effectively," said the former minister.

"I am uncertain if such a unit exists; we know about the trafficking unit, but even they lack sufficient data. Organizations like Missing Ghana provide vital data that is missing from our local agencies. For example, between 2021 and 2023, 610 people went missing, with the majority being children."

Security Analyst Richard Kumadoe has also raised concerns about the fragmented approach to addressing cases of missing children, highlighting it as an escalating public safety concern.

Given these alarming statistics, security experts have urged the public to take proactive measures.

They recommend educating children on personal information and emergency contacts, establishing safe zones and protocols, utilizing technologies like GPS trackers and safety apps, and maintaining vigilance in public spaces as crucial precautions.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Nana Oye Bampoe-Addo, Former Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection

General News

ECG collects GHS11.44m from customers with unpaid bills

The Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) has recovered GH¢11.44 million in outstanding payments from primarily business customers nationwide in the first half of this year.

Alongside, 17 customers of ECG and the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) received GH¢552,972 through bill adjustments for the same period.

These successful recoveries were facilitated by the Greater Accra Region office of the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission (PURC), responding to complaints from both utilities and consumers.

PURC's Greater Accra Regional

Manager, Gifty Bruce-Nelson, highlighted that under the Public Utility Regulatory Commission (Consumer Service) Regulation, 2020, 738 out of 804 complaints (91.7%) were resolved. ECG accounted for 695 complaints (86%), with GWCL receiving 109 complaints (14%).

Bruce-Nelson emphasized the commission's role in conducting meticulous investigations and community monitoring to ensure precise utility service delivery across the Greater Accra Region, often dealing with complaints involving damaged appliances.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Mathias Asuma Puozaa, Former NDC MP

Ken Kuranchie challenges legal establishment of OSP at Supreme Court

Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Searchlight Newspaper and a 2024 independent parliamentary candidate, Kenneth Kwabena Agyei Kuranchie, has filed a writ at the Supreme Court targeting the legality of the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP).

The legal action, directed at Special Prosecutor Kissi Agyebeng, seeks to have the establishment and powers of the OSP declared unconstitutional.

Mr Kuranchie's writ challenges the OSP's authority, particularly its powers to arrest, detain, freeze, and seize assets, labeling these capabilities as abusive. He is calling for the Supreme Court to rule the Special Prosecutor Act, 2017 (Act 957) in violation of several articles of the 1992 Constitution.

Specifically, he cites Articles 11, 17. (1)(2) and (3), 88. (3) and (4), 289.(2) 290. (1) (f)) and 290. (2) to (4), 12. (2), and 107 (b).

Mr Kuranchie's primary argument is that the OSP's prosecutorial powers should

fall under the direct supervision of the Attorney General, akin to other investigative bodies such as the Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO), the Police, and the National Investigation Bureau (NIB).

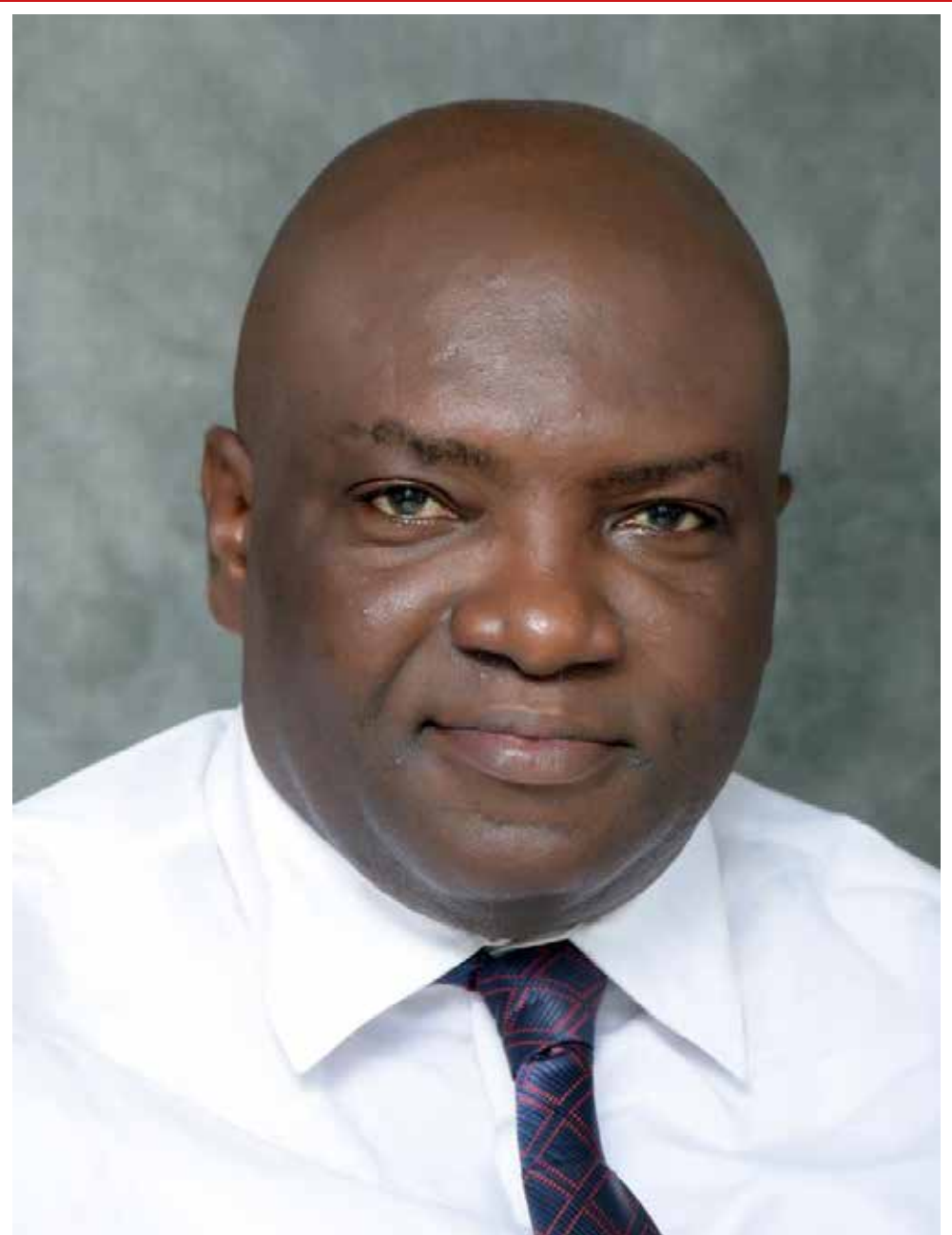
The Special Prosecutor Act was enacted to create the OSP as a specialized agency tasked with investigating and prosecuting specific instances of corruption and related offenses involving public officers, politically exposed persons, and private sector individuals implicated in corruption.

The OSP operates under the authority of the Attorney General.

In a related development, former Special Prosecutor Martin Amidu previously filed a petition seeking the removal of Kissi Agyebeng from his position.

This petition was dismissed by Chief Justice Gertrude Torkonoo on July 5, who found it baseless and without merit.

Source: The Independent Ghana



Kenneth Kwabena Agyei Kuranchie, Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Searchlight Newspaper



General News

All locked up Global Fund donated medications cleared – GHS

The Ghana Health Service (GHS) has confirmed receipt of all medications cleared from the Global Fund containers previously held at the port.

Director General of the Service, Dr. Patrick Kumah-Aboagye, announced that these medications are now being distributed to areas facing shortages.

The Country Coordinating Mechanism for the Global Fund in Ghana recently verified that almost all commodities stuck at the port have been released, as assured by the Minister of Health.

Dr. Kumah-Aboagye stated that the GHS has already received and distributed the medications to affected areas using an electronic delivery system that provides real-time updates on supply situations.

“The containers, a significant proportion like the Minister said, have been cleared, and with all those shortages, we are working to ensure they are delivered. We have an electronic delivery system that gives us the real time situation of all our suppliers.

“So based on that, we put in when the requests come. We also have trucks that take medications to the facilities and deliver them as

and when they come. So, we are rapidly deploying to make sure that any shortage is averted and where there are shortages and impending shortages, we are correcting them,” he disclosed.

He emphasized their efforts to swiftly address any existing or potential shortages.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Dr. Okoe Boye confirmed that essential medications, including those for TB and malaria, have been cleared from over 260 containers, with only a few new containers containing mosquito nets yet to be processed.

He assured that these remaining items would also be cleared promptly.

Dr. Okoe Boye highlighted improvements in the coordination between the Ministry and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) to prevent similar delays in the future, ensuring smoother clearance processes for essential health commodities like those for managing HIV/TB and malaria in the country.

“The media worked with us to ensure some of the medicines, including TB/MALARIA and mosquito nets were cleared from

the port and I am happy that after we all voiced out and made a passionate appeal.

“As I speak, we have over 260 containers cleared. So all the TB and Malaria medicines are out. But it appears that there are some nets that after clearing all the goods, we have just been informed at the Ministry that new discoveries have been made of more mosquito nets,” he explained.

He assured that the remainder

would also be cleared accordingly.

“So, this morning, the GRA informed me that they have put in a system to gazette them and get those ones too out of the port. I think what I want to mention which is very important is that the processes between the Ministry and the GRA have been streamlined, so that in the future we will not have this occurring again,” he stated.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Dr. Bernard Okoe Boye, Health Minister

We need \$1m for 2024 election-related activities - National Peace Council

The National Peace Council of Ghana has raised urgent concerns about its financial capacity as it gears up for the upcoming 2024 general elections.

Chairman of the Council, Reverend Dr Adu Gyamfi, underscored the critical need for additional funding to effectively carry out essential election-related activities amidst increasing demands and challenges.

Dr Gyamfi emphasized that the current workload has stretched their resources thin, hindering

their ability to perform crucial functions such as mediating conflicts, facilitating dialogue among political parties, and ensuring a peaceful electoral process.

“In dollar terms, we need approximately \$1 million for election-related activities. Some donors have shown interest in assisting, but more support is necessary,” Dr Gyamfi disclosed during a recent statement.

The Council, known for its pivotal

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Reverend Dr Adu Gyamfi, Chairman of the Council

General News

We need \$1m for 2024 election-related activities - National Peace Council

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role in maintaining peace and stability during elections, faces mounting pressures exacerbated by the complex electoral environment in Ghana.

The need for adequate financial resources is critical to enable the

Council to effectively manage and mitigate potential election-related conflicts and violence.

Addressing concerns raised during inter-party dialogues on election violence mitigation, Rev. Adu Gyamfi highlighted the strain

on regional secretaries who are currently overburdened with their responsibilities.

“Our regional secretaries urgently require additional support, including more staff and logistical resources such as drivers.

The workload has increased significantly, necessitating a bolstering of our capabilities,” Rev. Gyamfi stressed.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty

Asantehene to destool chiefs engaging land guards

The Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, has declared his readiness to destool any chief found sheltering or supporting the illegal activities of land guards within their domains.

This declaration was made during the inaugural Asanteman Council meeting following the conclusion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations at the Manhyia Palace in Kumasi on Thursday, July 4, 2024.

In his address to the assembly, Otumfuo emphasized the rise of land guards in Asanteman, a previously uncommon occurrence in the region.

“A practice that didn’t have any place in Asanteman has started

gaining roots - Land guards,” Otumfuo remarked, expressing his deep concern over the growing presence of these illegal operatives involved in land disputes. He disclosed that a committee comprising security agencies has been established to investigate and root out this unlawful practice.

The Asantehene minced no words in his threat, stating, “The police and the military will inform me about the locations where these practices are occurring. Any chief implicated in the report will face destoolment. Let us await the findings of the committee.”

He stressed the sanctity of land and traditional dispute resolution

methods, questioning the need for land guards.

“Land is immovable and cannot be taken away. When I allocated land to you, I did not authorize the use of land guards,” he affirmed, emphasizing Asanteman’s traditional principles of land ownership and conflict resolution.

Beyond addressing the land guard issue, the Asantehene also tackled illegal mining in Asanteman, highlighting complicity among some traditional leaders. He promised to investigate implicated chiefs and swiftly destool those found guilty.

Support for Otumfuo’s measures to protect the region against these

security threats was expressed by the Asanteman Council, comprising traditional leaders and stakeholders.

The Ashanti Regional Security Council previously acknowledged the region’s historical absence of land guards, credited to effective stewardship of stool lands under Otumfuo Osei Tutu II and his chiefs.

They emphasized the importance of using established channels for resolving land disputes and urged all parties to adhere to accepted protocols.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe Martekie Doku



Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene



General News

NPP to conduct Manhyia South primary on July 14

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) has announced the timelines for the upcoming parliamentary primary in the Manhyia South Constituency of the Ashanti region, following the nomination of the current MP, Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh, as the presidential running mate for the 2024 general elections.

Dr. Opoku Prempeh, who also serves as the Minister for Energy, has been the MP for Manhyia South since 2008, securing re-election in 2012, 2016, and 2020. His nomination as the NPP's vice-presidential candidate necessitates a by-election in his constituency.

In a statement released on Friday, July 5, by the party's General Secretary, Justin Kodua Frimpong, the NPP detailed the schedule for the primary.

Nominations will open on Monday,

July 8, 2024, and close on Tuesday, July 9, 2024. The primary itself is slated for Sunday, July 14, 2024.

Prospective parliamentary candidates must procure a nomination form after paying a non-refundable application fee of GH¢3,000.00.

Additionally, to complete the filing process, candidates are required to pay a non-refundable filing fee of GH¢35,000.00 in Bankers Draft to the NPP National Headquarters in Accra.

The NPP also announced a 50 percent rebate on filing fees for women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). This means eligible candidates will pay a reduced fee of GH¢17,500.00. The party clarified that youth are defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 40.

The Electoral Commission is yet to set a date for the by-election.

This primary and subsequent by-election come as part of the NPP's efforts to ensure strong representation in the Manhyia South Constituency, while supporting

their vice-presidential candidate's campaign in the national elections.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty



Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia(L) and Dr. Opoku Prempeh(R)

Ghana named 5th African country with significant lithium resources

Lithium development projects are poised to expand in Africa, with Ghana ranking 5th on the continent in terms of lithium deposits.

Fitch Solutions anticipates the commencement of production at the Ewoyaa project mine in 2025.

Over the next decade, mining companies are expected to increase exploration efforts in other regional markets such as Namibia, Mali, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

"In the coming decade, we expect mining companies to broaden exploration activities in other markets in the region including Namibia, Mali, Ghana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). However, we expect that resource nationalism, legal difficulties and political instability in the region will pose a threat to the development of new lithium projects", the London-based firm said.

However, the London-based firm notes that challenges like resource nationalism, legal complexities, and political instability may hinder new lithium projects' development.

In June 2023, Australian firm Atlantic Lithium disclosed findings from the definitive feasibility study (DFS), projecting that the Ewoyaa site could yield 3.6 million metric tonnes (mnt) of spodumene concentrate over a 12-year mine life.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo leads Africa with abundant lithium resources, followed by Mali,

Zimbabwe, and Namibia in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th positions respectively.

Lithium, a crucial raw material for transitioning to a green economy, is expected to attract foreign investment into Africa as major economies seek to secure lithium for their battery supply chains.

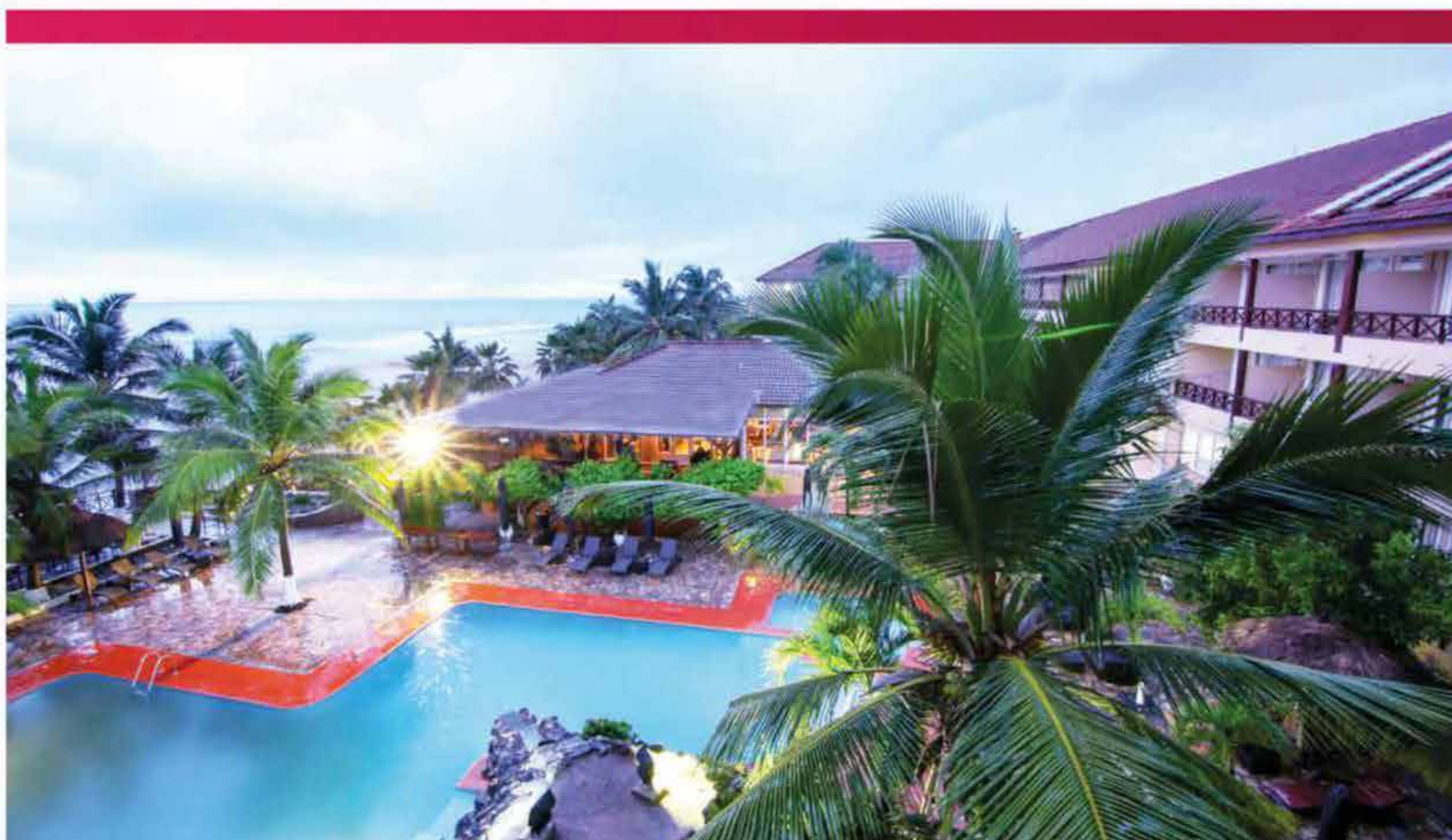
"We expect mining firms to broaden exploration activities to Africa in

markets such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mali, Ghana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This includes all African markets with known reserves, those that are current lithium producers, such as Zimbabwe, as well as those with ongoing lithium developments", Fitch Solutions added.

Source: The Independent Ghana



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Business

Rising cost of LPG is worrying - NPA

The National Petroleum Authority (NPA) is concerned about the increasing cost of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and its impact on discouraging the use of fuel wood, especially in rural areas.

Over the past few years, the price of LPG has risen significantly, from 5.81 cedis per kilogram in January 2020 to as high as 240 cedis currently for a 14.5-kilogram cylinder.

The LPG Marketers Association attributes this price hike to several factors, including rising world crude prices, a \$80 per metric ton tax to support the government's cylinder re-circulation model, and the NPA's failure to reduce the premium for bulk distribution companies by \$70.

This situation has raised concerns among consumers and experts, particularly since LPG, once subsidized to promote affordability, now carries multiple taxes and levies following subsidy removal.

Food vendor in Koforidua, Grace Zateh, highlighted that high LPG costs and other factors discourage her from using LPG.

She mentioned, "The price of LPG is very high, so economically, it's better for me to use charcoal. Also, some foods taste better when cooked on a coal pot, so customers prefer it. But if LPG prices come down with the Cylinder Recirculation Model (CRM), we may switch gradually."

Addressing these concerns at the launch of the Consumer Week celebration in Koforidua, NPA CEO Mustapha Abdul-Hamid expressed worry over the rising LPG prices.

He assured efforts are underway to make LPG more affordable, aiming for 50% of Ghanaian households to use LPG for cooking by 2030.

Abdul-Hamid emphasized the importance of reducing LPG prices to discourage reliance on fuel wood, particularly in rural areas where it remains a readily available option.

Regarding the Cylinder Recirculation Model (CRM), Abdul-Hamid outlined efforts to accelerate LPG distribution through supervised bottling plants and licensed cylinder exchange points.

He described the CRM as pivotal for job creation, enabling various entrepreneurship opportunities, even for recent graduates.

Deputy Energy Minister Collins Adomako-Mensah reiterated the government's commitment to expanding clean energy use, including the distribution of 28,000 LPG stoves and accessories across 13 districts.

Eastern Regional Minister Seth Kwame Acheampong emphasized the flexibility of the CRM to enhance

access to LPG without requiring consumers to purchase cylinders outright.

Mr Acheampong called for continued investment to promote LPG usage awareness and accessibility, acknowledging the CRM's role in bringing LPG closer to communities through cost-effective cylinder exchange points.

Source: Independent Ghana / Sebastian Akaho-Tay



Dr. Mustapha Abdul Hamid, NPA CEO

Ghana partners Chinese company to build \$450m manganese refinery

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Minerals Commission, Martin Ayisi, has announced a significant collaboration between the Government of Ghana and a Chinese manganese firm to build a \$450 million refinery in Ghana.

This initiative aims to enhance the value-added processing of Ghana's manganese production.

Addressing the 7th Annual Mining on Top Africa Summit in Paris on July 3, 2024, Ayisi emphasized that the refinery project is projected to increase Ghana's revenue from manganese exports from 27% to nearly 40%.

He highlighted the substantial economic impact, forecasting the creation of approximately 400,000 jobs for Ghanaian youth.

Ayisi reiterated the government's commitment to commence refinery construction by August 2024,

demonstrating Ghana's dedication to modernize its mineral sector under initiatives led by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

Highlighting Ghana's longstanding history of exporting raw manganese since 1916, Mr Ayisi outlined the current administration's strategic pivot towards local value addition.

Furthermore, he unveiled plans for the government to establish a lithium mine by late 2024, with operations set to span 22 months, bolstering Ghana's local processing capabilities and enhancing the value of its mineral resources.

Mr Ayisi advocated for increased local involvement in African mining ventures, urging policies that promote local ownership and equitable distribution of benefits across the mining value chain.

"I must emphasize the importance of stable governance frameworks in

fostering long-term partnerships with investors while advising stakeholders to consider a country's regulatory environment and practices before committing to projects," he said.

The announcement underscores Ghana's proactive stance in leveraging its mineral wealth to drive economic

expansion and foster sustainable prospects for its populace. It aligns with broader initiatives aimed at promoting industrialization and value addition within Africa's mining sector.

Source: The Independent Ghana / Phoebe.M.Doku



7th Annual Mining on Top Africa Summit in Paris, France

International

Niger Junta chiefs 'turn their backs' on West Africa bloc

Niger's military leader, speaking alongside the junta chiefs from Mali and Burkina Faso, has said they are "irrevocably" turning their backs on the wider West African bloc, Ecowas.

The three men are meeting together for the first time to cement an alliance created in the face of opposition from neighbouring countries.

Soldiers took power in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in a series of coups from 2020 to 2023.

All three countries - which now form the Alliance of Sahel States - have been affected by jihadist violence, in part a reason given for the army takeovers.

In January, they all announced a plan to leave Ecowas, which is holding its own summit on Sunday.

Speaking at Saturday's meeting in the Nigerien capital, Niamey, the country's leader, Gen Abdourahmane Tchiani, said

that in the place of Ecowas, the junta chiefs wanted to build a community of sovereign peoples "far from the control of foreign powers. A community of peace, solidarity, prosperity based on our African values."

Gen Tchiani is hosting the talks with Burkina Faso's Capt Ibrahim Traoré and Mali's Col Assimi Goïta.

In a message on X, the Burkinabé leader said that "together, we will consolidate the foundations of our true independence".

Speaking at the summit, Capt Traoré went on to say that "this continent has suffered and continues to suffer from the fire of the imperialists. These imperialists have only one cliché in mind: 'Africa is the empire of slaves'."

Security co-operation is high on the agenda, but the alliance, known by its French acronym AES, will also look towards forming closer economic ties, including the aim of creating a common currency. This

would be a rejection of the France-backed CFA Franc, which is used in many states across the region.

All three countries have expelled French soldiers who were there as part of an anti-jihadist mission and turned towards Russia for military assistance.

Calls for greater sovereignty and a rejection of the former colonial power have been a key part of the rhetoric coming from the junta leaders.

The countries have also resisted calls from Ecowas for a rapid return to civilian rule.

Capt Traoré arrived in Niamey a day ahead of the meeting and was welcomed with an enthusiastic reception. Television pictures show cheering crowds waving Nigerien and Burkinabé flags.

Among them was Sidi Mohamed, the head of the National Youth Council.

"Today, as Africans, we are very

proud to see a summit where it's an African summit, a summit where states have decided to pool their energies, to pool their forces to create an alliance for their development, without any foreign stakeholders, without any counterparts from the powers that are used to ruling over us," he told journalists.

Col Goïta arrived on Saturday. The presidents of the wider West African bloc will have their chance to respond at a heads of state meeting in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, on Sunday.

They are also due to announce the activation of a standby force to fight regional insecurity.

Over the past decade, the Sahel has become an increasing focus of Islamic State militant activity, creating insecurity and instability.

The juntas in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali have so far failed to quell the violence.

Source: BBC



Niger's General Abdourahmane Tchiani (C) welcomed his Malian and Burkinabé counterparts, Col Assimi Goïta (L) and Capt Ibrahim Traoré (R), to Niamey

International

France's North African doctors consider emigration with rise of far right

In the southern French town where Tunisian doctor Tasnime Labiedh works, the far-right National Rally (RN) came top with 41% in the first round of France's election. Now, she's thinking of moving to Switzerland.

"Already we are not spoilt here, but if we have (Jordan) Bardella as prime minister, it will be grim. They play on the fear of the other," said Labiedh, 33, referring to the president of the RN.

She moved to France in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic for her medical internship and now works as a microbiologist on a salary lower than that of her French counterparts.

After the RN came top in the first round in France's legislative election last Sunday, some doctors of foreign origin are questioning whether they will stay in a country that they feel does not respect their rights or make them feel welcome.

Polls predict that the RN will win the largest share of seats in parliament but not a majority.

Among 11 doctors of North African origin or nationality interviewed by Reuters, six said they were considering leaving France because of the political situation. One doctor emigrated to Canada a month ago.

With only 3.17 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants, France has the most severe doctor shortage among the OECD countries after Luxembourg. In Labiedh's town, there are 1.73 doctors per 1000 inhabitants.

"We are living in an immense hypocrisy. The far right prospers in France on the subject of immigration, with migrants depicted as a problem. But if migrants stopped working tomorrow our whole social and economic system would be paralysed," Hicham Benaissa, a sociologist with France's national centre for scientific research, the CNRS, told Reuters.

In a study of 350 doctors of North African background in France due to be published next year, Benaissa found that 75% of doctors, including people trained abroad and those

born in France, were considering emigrating.

The RN did not respond to requests for comment.

Bardella, the most likely candidate for prime minister should the RN defy the polls and win a working majority, said last month that "our compatriots of foreign nationality or origin who work, pay their taxes, respect the law, and love our country have nothing to fear".

RN leader Marine Le Pen has previously proposed to "drastically reduce" the employment of doctors with qualifications from outside of the EU, and to prioritise French candidates for jobs.

In 2023, 29,238 doctors working in France were trained outside the EU, a 90.5% increase compared to 2010, making up around 7% of the total workforce, according to the National Council of the Order of Doctors (CNOM). North African doctors account for more than half of them.

Doctors with qualifications from outside of the EU have to complete exams and administrative procedures to be registered with the Order of Doctors, which generally takes three to five years. Before

this, they are paid less than French doctors.

Widad Abdi, a doctor and representative of the SNPADHUE union for doctors qualified outside of the EU, says that politicians are not dealing with structural problems.

"Whether foreign or not, more and more doctors are leaving - the health system does not encourage them to stay: the working conditions, the pay, the hours, the number of patients has increased and the number of doctors has gone down."

MEDICAL DESERTS

In the first round of the legislative elections, the RN performed better in regions with poor healthcare access, with a correlation rate of -52%, Reuters analysis of the results and data on access to a local doctor showed, an indicator of the party's success in deprived rural areas.

In towns that placed RN candidates in first place, more than a quarter of the population do not have access to a local doctor, compared to 13% in towns that placed President Emmanuel Macron's group first and 8% in towns won by the left-wing alliance.

Improving access to public health

services in areas with poor health care access, dubbed "medical deserts", is among the RN's campaign pledges.

Foreign doctors, as well as French doctors of immigrant origin, play an essential role in these areas, where the posts are less prestigious than in big city hospitals, says Benaissa.

In Ales in the south of France, half the vote went to the RN. A&E doctor Leila Elamrani, who moved to France from Morocco in 2004, says they feel the pressure in their service which takes patients from surrounding areas.

"People don't have GPs so they come here for a cold, for a doctor's note to take sick leave," she said. "That, plus an ageing population and lack of resources, creates a huge mess."

Lydia Boumaarafi, a French doctor of Algerian heritage specialised in addictology, is not waiting to see what happens. She moved to Canada a month ago in part because of "its approach to multiculturalism".

"The situation is now at a climax (with the RN vote) but the climate has been this way for a while," she said.

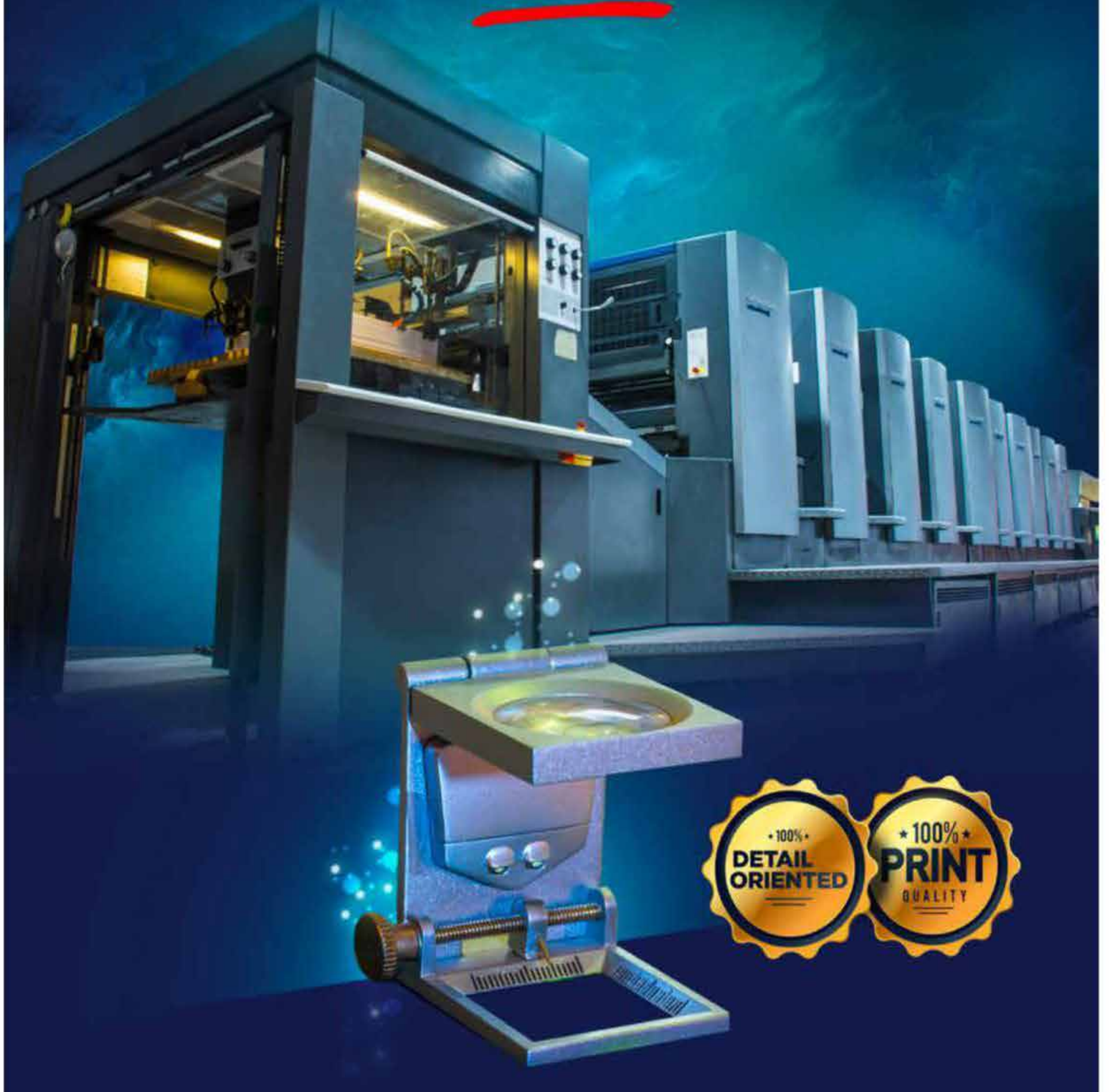
Source: Reuters



People gather to protest against the French far-right party in Paris

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