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General News

No militia training in Bawku! - Police deny any such activity

/By Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty

The Ghana Police Service (GPS) has strongly dismissed claims that militia training is taking place in Bawku, Upper East Region.

In a statement posted on Facebook on Wednesday, August 21, the Police clarified that their investigation found no evidence of such activities in the area.

The Service's probe followed reports suggesting that armed groups were being trained locally. The Police have since launched a manhunt for those responsible for spreading these false claims, which

have caused public unrest.

"The Police are working to bring the perpetrators to book and the public should be assured that we will get them," the statement read.

According to the GPS, this is the second instance of misinformation this week, with unpatriotic individuals attempting to stir unnecessary panic.

Earlier this month, a joint inter-security agencies patrol was established in Bawku to enhance peace and security in response to previous clashes involving security personnel and local residents.



Ghana Police Service

\$300m per annum needed to achieve Ghana's HIV/AIDS elimination target by 2030

/By Sebastian Akaho-Tay

Ghana faces a daunting challenge in reaching its HIV/AIDS elimination target by 2030, with the Director-General of the Ghana AIDS Commission, Dr. Kyeremeh Atuahene, revealing that the country needs \$300 million each year to meet its goal.

In a media briefing on August 22, 2024, Dr. Atuahene stressed that donor funding is unlikely to rise due to the government's insufficient contribution.

He warned that without a significant increase in government funding, Ghana will fall far short of its target, potentially taking over 50 years to achieve the desired outcomes.

"The analysis clearly shows that from now until 2030, donor funding is unlikely to rise. This points to the need for the government to significantly increase its contribution to the program. We will require almost \$300 million annually for the AIDS program to achieve its target. Otherwise, if the current situation persists, it will take us more than 50 years to reach those targets," Dr. Atuahene said.

UNAIDS Country Director Hector Sucilla Perez also called on the government to focus on mobilising domestic resources.

"We need to reflect on the fact that Ghana still heavily depends on donor support. While we are happy to partner in changing this narrative, we appeal to all multisectoral partners to continue exploring innovative ways to mobilise sustainable domestic

funding resources," he suggested.

In 2022, the Commission spent over \$126 million, a slight decrease from the \$127 million spent in 2021.

Donor funds made up 43% of this amount, with the government contributing \$51 million and the private sector donating \$20 million.

The majority of the expenditure

went towards treatment, care, and support, with development and research receiving the least funding.

The National AIDS Spending Assessment (NASA) tracks financial flows and expenditures for HIV/AIDS in Ghana. As of 2023, there are 334,095 people living with HIV/AIDS in the country, including 17,550 children under 15.



Dr. Kyeremeh Atuahene, Director-General of the Ghana AIDS Commission



General News

2024 WASSCE: Fire destroys girls' dormitory at Jacobu SHS, exam materials lost

/By Phoebe Martekie Doku

A fire ravaged the girls' dormitory at Jacobu Senior High Technical School in the Amansie Central District, Ashanti Region on Wednesday, August 21.

The blaze not only razed the dormitory but also obliterated educational materials, practical tools, equipment, clothing, and personal belongings of the final-year students who are currently sitting for the 2024 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

A video circulating online, reportedly filmed by a student, indicates that the fire may have started when a student attempted to boil rice with a gas cooker, and the situation quickly escalated.

However, the school and the Ghana

National Fire Service (GNFS) have yet to confirm the exact cause of the fire.

The affected students have called on the government for assistance to replace their lost educational materials and support their exam preparation.

This incident follows a similar fire at Ahantaman Girls' Senior High School in Sekondi-Takoradi on July 17, which also destroyed a dormitory block.

The WASSCE, which began on Monday, August 19, 2024, is a crucial examination for final-year students in West Africa.

This year, 460,611 candidates from 1,003 schools across Ghana are participating, with exams being conducted at 1,000 centres nationwide.



Fire ravaged the girls' dormitory at Jacobu Senior High Technical School

Elon Musk's Starlink to commence operations in Ghana by end of August - NCA

/By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

Ghana is poised to launch Elon Musk's Starlink internet service by the close of August 2024, according to an announcement by the National Communications Authority (NCA).

The regulatory body has confirmed that all required administrative and licensing formalities have been completed, clearing the path for Starlink to begin delivering its high-speed internet services across the country.

In a statement released on Thursday, August 22, 2024, the NCA disclosed that Starlink's operations in Ghana would be managed by SpaceX Starlink GH LTD, a local branch of Musk's SpaceX.

"Starlink will officially commence operations in Ghana by the end of this month. This follows the conclusion of all administrative and licensing procedures with the National Communications

Authority (NCA).

Starlink will be operated by SpaceX Starlink GH LTD," the statement confirmed.

This marks a significant turnaround from the NCA's stance in December 2023 when it declared Starlink's operations illegal due to the absence of a licence and proper equipment approval.

At that time, the public was warned against purchasing Starlink's equipment, and distributors were ordered to halt all activities.

However, by March 2024, the tides began to shift as discussions around Starlink's licensing resumed, fueled in part by widespread internet disruptions across West and Central Africa.

During a Parliamentary session, the Minister of Communications and Digitalisation, Ursula Owusu-Ekufu, hinted at the possibility of Starlink gaining authorization.

"We have licensed satellite gateway

air stations, landing rights, and satellite air station networks. One web has already been licensed. Starlink is in the process of being licensed, and other operators are being encouraged to land in Ghana," she stated.

Starlink, a project by SpaceX, aims to deliver high-speed, low-latency internet across the globe, with a particular focus on rural and remote areas that have long struggled with poor connectivity.



Elon Musk's Starlink internet service



General News

Floodgates of violence will open if peace pact is not signed – IDEG

/By Sebastian Akaho-Tay

Executive Director of the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), Dr Emmanuel Akwetey, has issued a stark warning about the potential for widespread violence if political parties fail to sign a peace pact ahead of the 2024 elections.

During a media briefing held on August 22, Dr. Akwetey noted that regardless of concerns raised by the National Democratic Congress (NDC), a peace pact signed by all political parties, will persuade party supporters to desist from undertaking actions that would mar the electoral process.

“The peace pact is crucial for a peaceful and stable election period. While the NDC has raised valid points, it is imperative that the NPP addresses these issues swiftly. Whether through legal means or other avenues, it is vital to resolve these matters to prevent the floodgates of violence from opening,” Akwetey said.

Background

The debate over the peace pact has gained momentum due to the National Democratic Congress (NDC)’s reluctance to endorse it.

The NDC is demanding several conditions including the full implementation of recommendations from the Ayawaso West Wuogon election commission, prosecution of individuals behind the deaths of eight people during the 2020 elections, and accountability for the illegal printing of one million extra ballot papers in 2020 before assenting to the pact.

They also require President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to publicly commit to respecting the 2024 election results, full disclosure on missing equipment from the Electoral Commission, and signatures from key figures such as the President, the Inspector-General of Police, the Chief Justice, the National Security Coordinator, and the Attorney General.

The NDC argued that these steps are crucial for a fair and peaceful election.

Adding to the discussion, the newly appointed Executive Director of the West Africa Network for Peace-Building (WANEP), Levinia Addae-Mensah, has also urged stakeholders to address the NDC’s concerns with urgency.

“It is important that we talk about the concerns for which there are hesitations around signing a peace pact, but I want to believe that there is an overriding willpower to really see constructivism and that will help,” she stated on August 21.

Former Executive Director of WANEP, Emmanuel Bombande, also backed the NDC Chairman’s stance on the peace pact, urging the Peace Council to hold individuals accountable.

“The National Democratic Congress has a point. Peace is

not about pacification. Peace is about justice, that is why we say another name for peace is justice. So what we need to do is to hold not only political actors accountable. Honourable Bryan Acheampong, three times, talks about not handing over and he repeats it each time by doubling down. The last time was ‘you can burn the sea’ and none of his party people has come out to contradict him. So what are we talking about? We must have the courage to call individuals to account,” Bombande said.



Dr Emmanuel Akwetey, Exec. Director, IDEG

Ghana faces \$112m extra bill in Trafigura judgement debt case

/By Andy Ogbarmey-Tetty

IMANI Africa’s Honorary Vice President, Bright Simons, has revealed that the government now faces an additional \$112 million payment to a subsidiary of Swiss energy trading giant, Trafigura, due to mounting interest on an unresolved judgement debt.

In an article titled “What Ghana’s Latest Judgment Debt Says About Accountability”, Mr Simons expressed concern over the country’s decision-making process in handling the debt, which he believes lacks proper analysis and foresight.

“Despite paying nearly \$100 million of the original judgement debt, which was less than \$140 million, the outstanding balance remains over \$112 million today and continues to rise daily,” Mr Simons wrote.

He criticized the government’s approach, noting that the decision to stretch out the payment schedule is exacerbated by the high interest rate.

“The interest at that time was about 6.2%. Today, it would have been more than 11%,” Mr Simons revealed.

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Bright Simons, IMANI Africa’s Honorary Vice President



General News

Ghana faces \$112m extra bill in Trafigura judgement debt case

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The judgment debt stems from a dispute between the Ghanaian government and the Ghana Power Generation Company (GPGC), a subsidiary of Trafigura, over a power purchase agreement that Ghana unilaterally terminated in 2018.

In 2015, the government entered an agreement with an Italian-owned company, Ghana Power Generation Company (GPGC), with the goal of producing 107 megawatts of electricity between two plants.

GPGC proceeded to court and in January 2021, an arbitration

panel in London ruled in favour of GPGC, ordering Ghana to pay \$134,348,661 in damages. Despite partial payments, Ghana still owes over \$111 million, with interest continuing to accumulate.

Mr Simons pointed out that Ghana's failure to meet critical deadlines to appeal the UK tribunal's ruling has worsened the situation.

The District of Columbia Court in the U.S. recently ordered Ghana to pay the outstanding amount plus post-judgment interest after GPGC sought enforcement of the judgement.

IMANI's Vice President also emphasized that the events leading to the termination of the contract and the government's subsequent handling of the arbitration raise serious concerns about governance and accountability in Ghana.

"The chain of events... raises critical concerns about the quality of governance and accountability in Ghana," he stated in his article.

Ghana's Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Godfred Yeboah Dame, has clarified that no new judgment has been made

against Ghana by a U.S. court. He explained that the \$134 million award was given in 2021, and the government has been working to meet its payment obligations.

"It is the failure to exhaust payment which has led the company to seek enforcement orders in other jurisdictions," Dame clarified, adding that there has been no fresh judgment against Ghana.

"It is only an enforcement order... due to a failure to pay a judgment debt that accrued way back in January 2021," he said.

Voter exhibition exercise sees low turnout

/By Phoebe Martekie Doku

Voter registration exhibitions across the Greater Accra Region and other parts of Ghana are experiencing a notable lack of public interest.

The lack of participation has led to some Electoral Commission (EC) officers being observed taking naps while waiting for eligible voters to request updates, challenge entries, and perform other tasks ahead of the upcoming general election.

Some EC officials who spoke to the media on Wednesday, 21 August, noted that minimal engagement was evident from the first day of the exercise.

An officer in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis reported that 27 prospective voters were recorded across three polling stations on Tuesday, 20 August. However, the following day, Wednesday, 21 August, saw a significant drop in engagement.

"Yesterday [Tuesday, 20 August], we recorded a number of 27 for three polling stations. Today [Wednesday, 21 August], as of 9:00 am, we've recorded just two. I think education should be sent out more, so people can come and register," the officer said. "But I think that the reason why people are not coming in is because of the shortcode that has been given to

check your name online. We are also pleading with them that they should come and register."

The officers suggested that increased public education efforts might improve turnout and encourage more individuals to participate in the registration process.

The EC launched the voter exhibition on Tuesday, 20 August, and it is expected to end on 27 August 2024.

According to the Deputy Chairman of the Electoral Commission (EC) in charge of Corporate Services, Dr Bossman Asare, the purpose of the voter registration exercise is to assist voters in locating their designated polling stations.

In a press briefing on 19 August, the EC added that this activity will streamline the voting process on 7 December, making it easier and less stressful for individuals to cast their ballots.

"The commission is again entreating all registered voters, especially those who registered in the 2024 limited registration exercise at the district offices of the commission and selected electoral areas as well as during the mop-up exercise, to visit the exhibition centres to ascertain whether they were assigned to the correct polling stations or not," he said.



Voter exhibition exercise

General News

Dansoman, Weija Gbawe chiefs accused of selling flood-control gutters for construction

/By Amanda Cartey

Some traditional leaders in Dansoman and Weija Gbawe are facing accusations of enabling construction activities that compromise critical flood-control infrastructure.

According to a UTV report, some chiefs have allegedly hired individuals to fill essential flood-control gutters with plastic waste, allowing them to sell the land for development.

These gutters, which run from McCarthy South to Weija, play a crucial role in managing water flow and preventing flooding during heavy rains. Despite government efforts to clear these areas and invest in flood-control measures, the problem persists.

"The town can get extremely congested from Mallam Junction to NCC and Dansoman. Leaders noticed that the area reserved for water drainage during rainfall, specifically where water flows from Mallam Market to Mallam Junction, was blocked," UTV journalist Jacob Kubi, reported.

"Despite the government's efforts, including spending money to construct large gutters that run underneath the Kasoa-Winneba highway, the problem persists. When it rains, water still floods the road."

The Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) of Weija Gbawe, Michael Danquah, acknowledged the situation and indicated that steps were being taken to address it. He organised a visit to McCarthy South with journalists and soldiers, where they discovered the extent of the issue.

"We were shocked by what we saw. The area, previously used for waste disposal, was now gated, restricting access to only those known as waste collectors. Once inside, we realised that the filling extended from McCarthy South to Dansoman, which is the same area meant for water drainage into the sea during rainfall," the MCE noted. "When the MCE asked who was responsible, we were told that the chiefs of Dansoman and Weija Gbawe had instructed the work."

In May this year, the Weija-Gbawe

Municipal Assembly announced plans to construct storm drains to address frequent traffic congestion on the Mallam-Weija Highway during rainy seasons.

The Municipal Engineer, Dr Daniel Sowah, explained that erosion, rather than sand winning, was the primary cause of the problem, with sediments washing down

from the Broadcasting area to SCC and Old Barrier.

Discussions have been initiated with Greater Accra Regional Minister, Daniel Nii Kwatei Titus Glover to find a solution. The Minister has called for a roundtable discussion to strategise on resolving the issue.



Weija flood

Bawumia's manifesto sparks public doubts

/By Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo

As the 2024 elections draw near, Ghanaians are increasingly becoming vocal about their concerns, particularly regarding the manifesto unveiled by Vice President Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia.

In a visit to Madina, residents expressed deep scepticism about the promises made by the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), with many citing economic hardships as the basis for their doubts.

Madam Comfort, a shoe seller at Madina Goil filling station, was unequivocal in her criticism. "All that he said are lies. Because even Akufo-Addo has disappointed us. He didn't fulfil any of the promises he gave us; it is all lies," she said.

Mr. Anokye, a fellow trader, dismissed Dr. Bawumia's claim of being merely a "driver's mate" in the administration, arguing that the Vice President is complicit in what he described as "wicked" policies. "Every policy implemented under his watch is proof that none of the promises, such as scrapping the e-levy, are anything more than stillborn ideas," he stated.

Commuter Mr. Meyers took a more measured stance but still questioned the leadership needed to guide the country. "I have no problem with Bawumia, but Ghana needs a strong leader who will be able to build us," he remarked.

Wahab, a belt seller, shared his doubts, pointing to the



Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, Flagbearer of the NPP

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General News

Bawumia's manifesto sparks public doubts

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rising cost of goods. "Under Mahama's government, a belt at wholesale was 10 cedis. Now, under the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia government, we buy at 20 and sell at 30," he noted.

Aunty Grace, a self-proclaimed staunch NPP supporter, expressed her disillusionment with

the government's unfulfilled promises, vowing never to vote again. "As I have always said, never would I vote in any election in Ghana again. The deception has become too much, too much deception. Now we have 'shine-our eyes,'" she declared.

Dr. Bawumia's manifesto includes

promises to abolish the e-levy, remove VAT on electricity if still on the books, scrap the emissions tax and betting tax, and fully automate Tema Port. He also pledged to align port duties at Tema with those at Lome Port, introduce flat-rate duties for spare parts importers, and reduce the cost of data by

working with industry players to establish clear policy guidelines.

As the election season progresses, whether these promises will sway voters or if the scepticism heard in places like Madina will dominate the public's perception remains to be seen.

Halt provisional election results declaration - Peace Council to the media

/ By Amanda Cartey

The National Peace Council (NPC) has advised the media against announcing the 2024 election results before an official declaration is made by the Electoral Commission (EC).

According to the council, the authority to declare who wins an election has only been accorded to the Electoral Commission by law.

Thus, the media should consider it an unlawful act if they go ahead of the EC to make declarations.

"Don't be in a hurry to declare results, the results are declared by the Electoral Commission. No one can go ahead and declare election results because by law, no radio or TV station is entitled to that. It's the preserve of the Electoral Commissioner for the presidential and then the Returning Officers in the constituencies for the parliamentary," Chairman of the Peace Council, Reverend Dr Ernest Adu-Gyamfi, stated in an interview with the media.

He added that the council is working tirelessly to ensure peaceful polls come December as well as protect the country's democracy.

As part of their efforts in this regard, Reverend Dr Ernest Adu-Gyamfi explained that the council had embarked on a number of activities since 2020, by engaging various stakeholders, including leadership of the political parties and state institutions, such as the EC, security agencies and the court, all geared towards a peaceful poll this year and ensure

that the country's democracy was sustained.

The chairman of the council further revealed that the council had set up a Political Party Trust Building Platform to promote dialogue and consensus building among the political parties and institutions of state to manage political tensions and violence ahead of election.

"The Peace Council has set up the political party code of conduct committee to monitor the activities

of the parties," he said.

This, he said, would "free the Council" and enable it to give more attention to the over 700 cases it was currently handling

The National Peace Council (NPC) is an independent statutory national peace institution established by the government to facilitate and develop mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, resolution and to build sustainable peace in the country.

It is governed at the national level by a board made up of thirteen distinguished individuals appointed by the President. Each member serves a four-year term, though they may resign or have their membership revoked by the President for specific reasons.

Additionally, an Executive Secretary, appointed by the President, manages the Council's daily operations.



Reverend Dr Ernest Adu-Gyamfi, Chairman of the Peace Council

Business

No more loans for COCOBOD! 32-year cycle ends with self-financed 2024/2025 cocoa season

/ By *Andy Ogbarmey-Tettey*

The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has announced a major shift in its financing strategy, opting to self-finance the upcoming 2024/2025 cocoa season and ending a 32-year dependency on syndicated loans from foreign banks.

Speaking at a press conference in Accra on Wednesday, August 21, 2024, COCOBOD Chief Executive Officer Joseph Boahen Aidoo explained the move.

"For the first time in COCOBOD's history, we want to wean ourselves from the offshore syndication. Since 1992, COCOBOD has always relied on external borrowing from a consortium of banks, but after 32 years, it is time we learned our lessons and took control of our finances," Mr Aidoo said on Wednesday, August 21, 2024.

Mr Aidoo revealed that the decision

to self-finance had been under consideration since last year. "We were assessing the whole situation, and we concluded that we have to take a bold measure," he stated.

This marks the end of COCOBOD's practice of securing offshore loans to purchase cocoa beans for export. By forgoing the offshore loan this year, COCOBOD expects to save around \$150 million in interest and other associated costs.

However, this move raises concerns about Ghana's foreign exchange reserves and the stability of the cedi. The syndicated loan, typically between \$1.2 billion and \$1.8 billion, has been a significant source of foreign currency for the country, and its absence could impact the Cedi's exchange rate.

In response to these concerns, COCOBOD has revised its production target for the upcoming season,

lowering it from 810,000 tonnes to 650,000 tonnes due to adverse weather conditions in key cocoa-growing regions, particularly in Brong Ahafo and Western North.

Despite these challenges, Mr Aidoo

assured that the cocoa sector remains viable. He addressed fears of a potential collapse, stating that COCOBOD is implementing measures to tackle climate change, pests, diseases, and illegal mining.



Joseph Boahen Aidoo, COCOBOD's CEO

GUTA urges Akufo-Addo to block Ghana Shippers' Authority Act over consultation failures

/ By *Abigail Twumwaa Ampofo*

The Ghana Union of Traders' Association (GUTA) has called on President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to refrain from signing the Ghana Shippers' Authority Act, 2024 until concerns raised by stakeholders are addressed.

The Act, which was passed by Parliament on July 29, 2024, aims to regulate the activities of shippers, particularly focusing on curbing unfair and excessive charges that affect traders using Ghana's sea, air, and land borders for international trade.

However, GUTA has expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of consultation before the Bill was passed.

In a statement dated August 21, signed by its president, Dr. Joseph Obeng, GUTA appealed to the government not to give assent to the Act until the issues they raised are resolved.

"The Business Community wishes to appeal to the President of the Republic not to assent to the Ghana

Shippers Authority Act, 2024 until some critical issues raised on the Act by stakeholders are resolved," the statement read.

GUTA highlighted that key issues such as the registration of shippers and shipping service providers, as well as the submission of notice of shipment, were not discussed with relevant stakeholders before the Bill was approved.

The Union also noted that the final draft of the Act was shared with stakeholders only after it had already been passed by Parliament.

Concerns also remain about the suspension, renewal, cancellation, and outright rejection of registration, which relates to permits and licences for importers.

The reintroduction of the Advance Shipment Information System in the new Act is another point of contention, as GUTA believes it is unnecessary for the Ghana Shippers Authority's operations.

GUTA further disclosed that the Ghana Shippers Authority had initially

pledged to address these issues through Legislative Instruments (LIs) but noted that such instruments cannot override the provisions of an Act.

"For these reasons, the Ghana Shippers Authority had agreed to our concerns and promised that as the Act has already been passed

by Parliament, they would use Legislative Instruments (LIs) to correct any defect or anomaly in the operationalization of the Act," GUTA explained.

The Association has urged the President to withhold his signature until the concerns of stakeholders are fully considered and addressed.



Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana



International

World's second-largest diamond found in Botswana

/ By BBC

The second-largest diamond ever found - a rough 2,492-carat stone - has been unearthed in Botswana at a mine owned by Canadian firm Lucara Diamond.

It is the biggest find since the 3,106-carat Cullinan diamond, found in South Africa in 1905 and cut into nine separate stones, many of which are in the British Crown Jewels.

The diamond was found at Karowe mine, about 500km (300 miles) north of Botswana's capital, Gaborone.

Botswana's government said it was the largest diamond ever discovered in the southern African state.

The previous biggest discovery in Botswana was a 1,758-carat stone found at the same mine in 2019.

Botswana is one of the world's biggest producer of diamonds, accounting for about 20% of global production.

In a statement, Lucara said the stone was "one of the largest rough diamonds ever unearthed".

"We are ecstatic about the recovery of this extraordinary 2,492 carat diamond," said Lucara head William Lamb.

The diamond was detected with the use of Lucara's Mega Diamond Recovery X-ray technology, said Mr Lamb.

It has been used since 2017 to identify and preserve high-value diamonds so that they do not break during ore-crushing processes.

The firm did not give details of the stone's gem quality or its value. The 1,758-carat stone found in 2019 was bought by French fashion brand Louis Vuitton for an undisclosed sum.

A 1,109-carat diamond, unearthed at the same mine in 2016, was bought for \$53m (£39.5m) by London

jeweller Laurence Graff, chairman of Graff Diamonds, in 2017.

Lucara has 100% ownership of the mine in Karowe. Botswana's government has proposed a law that will ask companies, once granted a

license to mine, to sell a 24% stake to local firms if the government does not exercise its option of becoming a shareholder, Reuters news agency reported last month.



The second-largest diamond ever found

Uganda exploring for oil in two new regions

/ By Reuters

Uganda is exploring for oil in two new regions where potential discoveries of crude could increase the East African country's proven reserves of 6.5 billion barrels, its energy minister said on Wednesday.

Commercial quantities of crude oil were discovered in the Albertine Graben basin in Uganda's west near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo nearly two decades ago, but production is not projected to start until next year.

Government geologists are exploring two new regions located in Uganda's north and northeast, Energy Minister Ruth Nankabirwa told a press conference in the capital Kampala.

"The ministry is conducting preliminary petroleum exploration studies in the Moroto-Kadam Basin to assess its oil and gas potential. Similar surveys have started in the Kyoga Basin," she said, referring to the two new regions.

"Early results suggest the potential for commercial oil and gas in the Moroto-Kadam Basin."

Uganda has five basins where hydrocarbon potential is suspected, with only one, the Albertine

successfully explored so far, the energy ministry says.

The two oil fields in the Albertine basin - Tilenga and Kingfisher - are majority-owned by TotalEnergies (TTEFPA), with a 56.7% stake, while China's CNOOC (0883. HK), and the Uganda national oil company UNOC own the remaining share.

Commercial production has been delayed by various factors including

disagreements with oil firms over field development strategy and taxation, and a lack of infrastructure and funding to develop it.

Only 72 of 457 planned wells have been drilled in the Tilenga and Kingfisher oilfields, Nankabirwa said, and oil firms had submitted a plan for a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) facility for which the government planned to issue a license.

The government expects a decision next month from Chinese funders, including EXIM bank and SINOSURE, that Uganda has been wooing to provide credit for the proposed East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), Nankabirwa said.

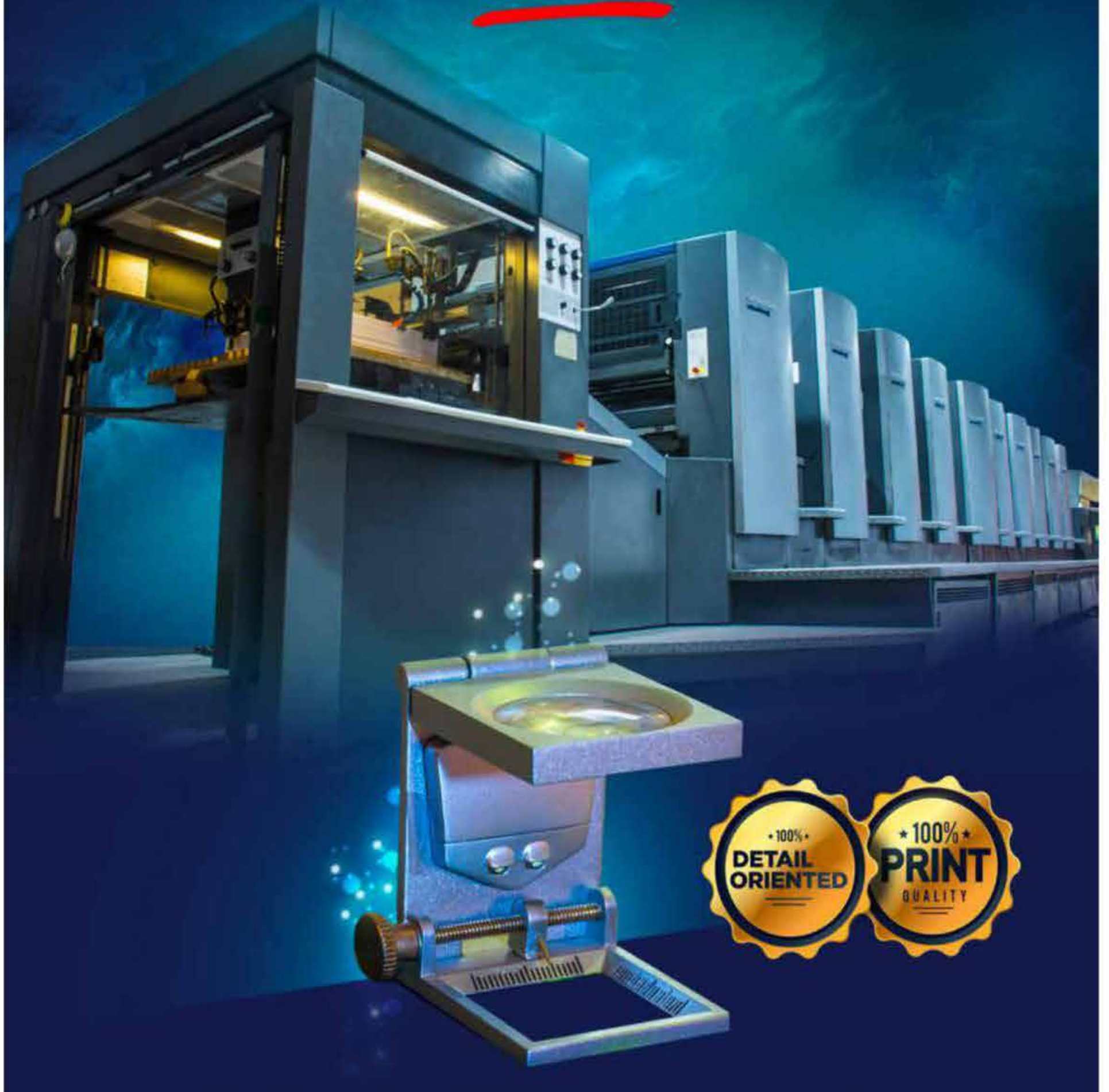
The 1,445-kilometer (895-mile) EACOP will help Uganda export its crude via a port on Tanzania's Indian Ocean coast.



Ruth Nankabirwa, Uganda's Energy Minister

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