

## Airlines Take Centre Stage at FIFA World Cup 2026



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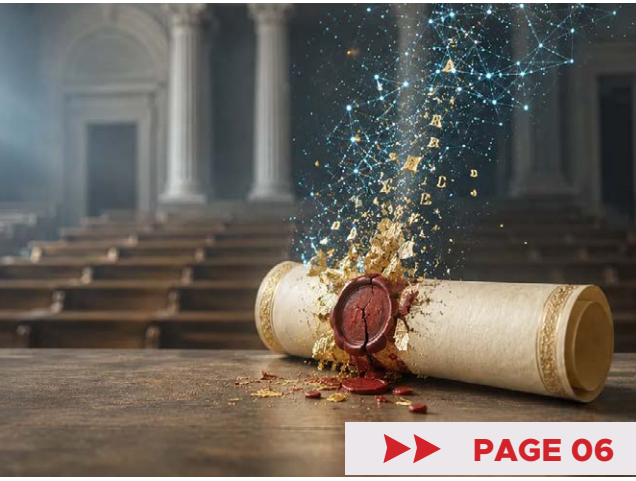
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# Airlines Take Centre Stage at FIFA World Cup 2026

By Prince Offeh



The success of the FIFA World Cup 2026 was shaped not only by the performances on the pitch but also by the aviation industry, which played a central role in transporting millions of fans, teams, officials and cargo across the United States, Canada and Mexico during the

month-long tournament.

With matches spread across three countries and multiple host cities, airlines became the backbone of the tournament's logistics, providing the connectivity required for what has been described as the largest FIFA World Cup ever staged.

International carriers including Qatar Airways, Emirates, United Airlines, Air Canada, Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, Aeromexico and other regional operators significantly increased capacity and coordinated schedules to accommodate the surge in passenger

demand.

Qatar Airways, FIFA's Global Airline Partner, maintained one of the highest profiles throughout the competition. Beyond transporting supporters from around the world, the airline featured prominently during the tournament, including participation in medal presentation ceremonies and extensive branding throughout the competition.

The partnership demonstrated how airlines have evolved from transportation providers into strategic commercial partners for global sporting events, using football's worldwide audience to strengthen brand recognition and customer loyalty.

Such sponsorships also generate significant tourism benefits by stimulating travel before, during and after major sporting events. Record passenger demand drives airline revenues

The tournament generated one of the busiest travel periods in recent aviation history across North America.

Flights between host cities experienced exceptionally strong demand as supporters followed their national teams throughout the competition. International

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services linking Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East with North America also recorded high passenger loads.

For airlines, the World Cup translated into stronger yields, improved aircraft utilisation and increased premium cabin demand as corporate sponsors, government delegations and football executives travelled throughout the tournament.

Airport operators equally benefited from higher passenger throughput, while ground handling companies, security agencies, hotels and tourism businesses experienced increased activity.

Technology and operational resilience on display

The tournament also highlighted the aviation sector's growing technological capabilities.

Airlines relied heavily on artificial intelligence, predictive scheduling, digital check-in systems, biometric processing and real-time operational management to minimise disruptions despite exceptionally high passenger volumes.

Airport authorities across the three host nations coordinated closely with airlines, border agencies and security services to maintain efficient passenger flows while meeting stringent security requirements.

The largely seamless movement of millions of travellers demonstrated the industry's improved resilience following years of investment in digital transformation.

Champions crowned after memorable tournament

The tournament concluded with a spectacular closing ceremony celebrating the unity of football, music and culture across the three host nations before the final match crowned the 2026 FIFA World Cup champions.

The closing celebrations featured world-class entertainment, cultural performances representing the United States, Canada and Mexico, and the traditional trophy presentation before a

global television audience of billions.

For aviation, however, the tournament's legacy extends beyond the final whistle. Dr. Dominick Andoh, Managing Partner of AviationGhana, an Accra-based integrated aviation communications company serving the broader West Africa sub-region, noted that: "The FIFA World Cup 2026 demonstrated that modern airlines have become indispensable partners in delivering global sporting events, connecting continents, enabling tourism, supporting economic activity and ensuring that millions of supporters can experience football's biggest spectacle in person."



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# The Death of the Degree

By: Iryna Volnytska



Just as French aristocrats under the ancien régime could hardly imagine the abolition of their noble titles, most of today's university leaders cannot conceive of a world in which the degrees they confer become worthless pieces of paper. The former were in for a rude awakening in 1790; the latter are barreling toward a similar shock.

No longer a social service, education has become the new infrastructure of power. Whoever controls the development of technical talent controls the future. The countries that understand this have stopped arguing about teaching quality and

started measuring how fast knowledge translates into capability. The rest are reforming a 20th-century system and calling it progress.

Large employers like Google, Apple, and IBM now have hiring practices that focus on skills rather than degrees. More than half of employers have gone so far as to drop degree requirements entirely for some roles. Recruiters no longer want to know how much applicants have memorized; they want to know how they make decisions amid uncertainty and how quickly they learn.

YCombinator funds Stanford dropouts—or people who

forgo university altogether. A GitHub profile now says more about what you can build than a college transcript. To be sure, degrees still hold value, but mostly for entry to regulated professions like law and medicine, public-sector jobs, and prestige networks. But notice that this value lies in access, not knowledge.

In an AI-transformed world, capability is the new dividing line. True, a free AI chatbot will explain quantum mechanics to anyone. But access to a tool is not the same as the ability to use it. A chasm is growing between people who can harness AI to solve a hard problem and people who only consume

the answers it hands them. The defining skill of the next decade will be orchestration: running several AI agents toward an outcome defined by the individual.

This raises an important question: Is AI in education a threat or an opportunity? My answer is that it is an opportunity, but only for institutions willing to rebuild around the technology. That means overhauling assessment methods, because reproducing knowledge is no longer as important as demonstrating judgment and application skills. The key is to test whether a student can command and

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critique an AI system, rather than outsource thinking to it. With this shift, AI can become education's largest-ever scaling lever, providing personalized tutoring at near-zero marginal cost, simulation at scale, and instant feedback.

platform leaves a trace of their cognitive processing, speed of adaptation, and capacity to collaborate. Universities sit on terabytes of this information but do little with it.

All this points to the need for AI-native institutions. The dramatic death and rebirth of the edtech sector suggest

became a university of founders, compressing years of iteration into a few months. And yet, elite universities' real product was never education—MIT has given away lectures for two decades. It is the network. Four years in the same room builds social capital that compounds for life. That, not the curriculum,

Most of the world treats education as a cultural mission to be improved at the margins, even though it has become a crucial determinant of strategic advantage. Why else would Canada, Germany, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates have fast-track visas to import tech workers that someone



Consider the live drone-hack simulation that Ukraine's SET University, where I am president, ran with IronCyber, my cybersecurity startup. When applying AI, it was completed roughly six times faster. The technical layer can be compressed, but the orchestration layer cannot—a reality that the old educational model, which was built to be AI-resistant, fails to grasp.

The university does not know its own value. Its campus, faculty, and academic programs are ostensibly its most prized assets. But in the digital era, data trumps all else. Every interaction a student has with a learning

that such a shift is already underway. The companies that simply moved lectures online are disappearing. The investors who once scaled some of Silicon Valley's most prominent tech firms are funding their replacements. Outsmart, launched by former Duolingo executives, has raised more than \$36 million from Khosla Ventures, Lightspeed, and DST Global on a single promise: to build "the university of the future."

Other powerful tech players who no longer trust universities have also started building alternatives. Peter Thiel pays young people \$100,000 to drop out of school and launch startups. Y Combinator

is what people pay for. It follows, then, that the future of the university rests on deliberately designing environments that foster strong connections—which almost no one is doing. Moreover, the focus should be less on the number of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) graduates, and more on the pipeline from university to product. Many have fretted that China graduates more STEM PhDs than the United States. But what sets China apart is the speed with which it turns research into innovation that people can use—a few years, compared to a decade or more elsewhere.

else paid to train? Developing talent for export is a subsidy to other economies. The question that should guide education reformers is how fast they can convert a person's knowledge into a country's gain, before someone else beats them to it.

Iryna Volnytska, Founder and CEO of cybersecurity startup IronCyber, is President of SET University, a Ukrainian tech institution that offers four master's programs and hosts an accelerator and two embedded startups. © Project Syndicate 1995–2026

# A cavalcade of international stars headlined the World Cup's first-ever halftime final show

Anastasia Tsioulcas



Colombian singer, songwriter and producer Shakira (C), Nigerian singer, songwriter, and record producer Burna Boy, actor Jason Sudeikis gesture with performers at the Half Time Show during the 2026 World Cup football tournament final match between Spain and Argentina at the New York/New Jersey Stadium in East Rutherford on July 19, 2026.

As of halftime, the World Cup final Sunday was still anybody's game, with Argentina and Spain tied 0-0. But there's been one winner already – if for nothing but sheer logistics: FIFA managed to pull off its first-ever World Cup final halftime show, featuring a parade of many of the biggest names in music, from Madonna to Coldplay.

RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V and Jung Kook of BTS perform during the Topps Final Halftime Show in the FIFA World Cup 2026 Final match between Spain and Argentina at New York New Jersey Stadium on July 19, 2026 in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

The organizers summoned big names from six continents, and oh boy, did they show up to represent.

From North America: Justin Bieber and Madonna (whose new album just debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200).

From Asia: the world's most famous K-pop group, BTS.

From South America: Shakira (the undisputed World Cup queen) and conductor Gustavo Dudamel, who led hemisphere-spanning musicians from his two orchestras, the New York

Philharmonic (where he will start as artistic and music director this September) and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela.

From Africa: Burna Boy, the Afrobeats superstar who duetted with Shakira on this year's official World Cup song.

From Europe, even in this post-Brexit era: Coldplay, fronted by Chris Martin.

From Australia, the Iraq-born singer Emmanuel Kelly.

Plus the eternally lovable Muppets including Kermit and Miss Piggy, the viral dance troupe Ghetto Kids from Kampala, Uganda, who danced with Shakira, and children from Staten Island's PS22 Chorus, who closed out the show singing with Martin.

Shakira performs during the Topps Final Halftime Show at

New York New Jersey Stadium on July 19, 2026 in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

The lineup, announced this past week, signaled a feel-good, family-friendly procession of fan favorites, and that's exactly what the performers delivered. There wasn't much of a throughline in the 11-minute spectacle, save for some broadly inspiring strokes: Togetherness! Unity! Love! Madonna opened the show, reminding the audience in her roller rink setup that "music makes the people come together!" She was riding in a dune buggy manned by two of football's past kings from Brazil, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho. What was a dune buggy doing in a roller rink? Best not to ask too many probing questions.

Ronaldinho, Madonna and

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Ronaldo perform during the Topps Final Halftime Show at New York New Jersey Stadium on July 19, 2026 in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

From there, the show unspooled into a series of celebrity cameos and brief reminders of memes from this year's Cup, from the orchestral musicians mimicking the widely beloved Norwegian row to the Congolese superfan Michel Nkuka Mboladinga, who performs at games as a

living statue commemorating his country's slain independence leader Patrice Lumumba. The show also managed to tap into some non-World Cup soccer heartwarmers too: Ted Lasso (Jason Sudeikis) and Coach Beard (Brendan Hunt) were on hand to introduce Bieber — with a “Beliebe” sign, no less — and Dudamel and his musicians played the now-eternal stadium anthem, the White Stripes’ “Seven Nation Army,” along with the Muppets Animal, Janice and Floyd Pepper.

. The show was a vehicle for FIFA’s charity arm, the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund, whose goal is to raise \$100 million to expand education and soccer access for children worldwide. As kids from Staten Island’s PS22 Chorus sang alongside Chris Martin in a riot of rainbow colors emblazoned with the word “LOVE,” FIFA invited viewers to visit the fund’s website, which exhorts folks to “use the power of love to defeat poverty and and defend the planet” — a rather apolitical, if not completely anodyne, goal

in more normal times. But at a game attended by Melania Trump and President Trump — a leader whose sentiments about rainbows, global unity and good sportsmanship are not always similarly aligned — such visuals and messaging hit quite differently.

A view of New York New Jersey Stadium on July 19, 2026 in East Rutherford, New Jersey during the Topps Final Halftime Show.

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# Tourism Ministry targets Volta Region as major eco-tourism hub – Gomashie



**M**adam Ablah Dzifa Gomashie, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, has reaffirmed government's commitment to making the Volta Region a leading tourism destination through cultural promotion, eco-tourism development and private sector investment.

Speaking at President John Dramani Mahama's Citizens' Engagement in Ho on Friday, Madam Gomashie said the Volta Region was the first destination she visited after assuming office, highlighting the importance government attached to the region's tourism potential.

She said she met with the Volta Regional Minister, Mr James Gunu, and subsequently engaged all Municipal and District Chief Executives (MDCEs) in the region to identify unique tourism attractions within their jurisdictions.

"The responsibility of the assemblies is to identify what is unique and marketable in their districts, while the Ministry provides the technical expertise to package and promote those attractions both locally and internationally," she said.

The Minister disclosed that, following a directive from President

Mahama, she had met with Mr Kwame Govers Agbodza, Minister for Roads and Highways, to discuss the rehabilitation of roads leading to major tourist attractions across the country.

She expressed optimism that the second phase of the government's "Big Push" infrastructure programme would improve accessibility to tourism sites in the Volta Region.

Madam Gomashie said the region possessed enormous eco-tourism potential, citing the Adaklu Mountain range in the Volta Region and the Likpe-Todome area in the neighbouring Oti Region as locations suitable for adventure tourism activities such as paragliding.

She, however, stressed that tourism development was private sector-driven and called on investors to partner government to develop attractions into internationally competitive destinations.

"We provide policy direction, but tourism is driven by private investment. We are inviting investors to work with us to develop these sites and unlock their full economic potential," she said.

The Minister highlighted the success of the Vodza Easter Regatta,

organised in partnership with the Vodza Eco-Tourism Initiative, describing it as an emerging tourism product that had gained national attention following the participation of Vice President Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang during this year's Easter celebrations.

She said government intended to transform the southern coastal belt of the Volta Region into a vibrant cultural and marine tourism destination through strategic public-private partnerships.

Madam Gomashie identified attractions including the Wli and Agumatsa Waterfalls, Avu Lagoon, Hedzranawo Slave Market, Keta, Kedzi, Galosota and other coastal communities as key tourism assets capable of attracting domestic and international visitors.

She explained that although some attractions, particularly the Wli Waterfalls, were community-owned, government sought stronger collaboration with traditional authorities and local communities to ensure investments generated shared economic benefits.

The Minister announced that the Ghana Tourism Development Company had launched a digital tourism platform to showcase

tourism businesses and attractions across the country.

She, however, expressed concern that many hotels, restaurants, tour operators and other businesses had not registered on the platform, limiting government's ability to market them internationally.

"If you own a hotel, restaurant or tourism facility and you are not on the platform, it becomes difficult for us to promote your business to the rest of the world," she said.

Madam Gomashie commended residents of Keta for maintaining clean beaches, saying environmental cleanliness remained essential if Ghana was to compete with renowned international beach destinations such as Seychelles.

She urged Municipal and District Assemblies to support efforts to preserve the region's natural environment and tourism assets.

The Minister also revealed that government was promoting investment in the Marine Drive Project and had engaged the Agbogbomefia of Asogli to support efforts to attract investors, particularly from China, to the tourism sector.

She disclosed that the Ministry had litigation-free lands suitable for tourism investments and was ready to partner private investors under Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) and other Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements.

Madam Gomashie expressed appreciation to President Mahama for his continued support for the tourism sector, saying he had recently facilitated a meeting between her Ministry and the Ministry of Finance to secure additional resources for tourism development.

She expressed confidence that from 2027, the Volta Region and Ghana as a whole would witness significant growth in tourism, culture and the creative arts sector through increased investment and improved infrastructure.

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# Keta Port, Ho Airport Projects on course – Transport Minister



**M**r Joseph Bukari Nikpe, the Minister for Transport, has assured residents of the Volta Region that government is making steady progress towards the development of the Keta Port and the revitalisation of the Ho Airport as part of efforts to position the region as a major transport, logistics and tourism hub.

Addressing President John Dramani Mahama's Citizens' Engagement in Ho on Friday, Mr Nikpe said the government had completed the necessary preparatory processes for the Keta Port project,

The Ministry, he said, subsequently commissioned the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment to determine the viability of the proposed port.

"I am pleased to announce that in April this year, the EPA granted the environmental permit for the project after confirming that the proposed Keta Port is environmentally viable and capable of serving maritime trade along the West African coast," he said.

Mr Nikpe disclosed that construction of the administrative and operational block for the port, which had already

commenced, was about 80 per cent complete and expected to be completed by January 2027 to pave the way for the commencement of full port operations.

He said the government had also opened discussions with private investors to participate in financing and constructing the port under a public-private partnership arrangement.

The Minister expressed confidence that President Mahama's experience in attracting strategic investors to Ghana's maritime sector would ensure the success of the Keta Port project.

He cited the successful partnership that transformed the Tema Port into one of the leading ports in West Africa as evidence of the President's track record in maritime infrastructure development.

According to Mr Nikpe, the proposed Keta Port would include modern container and cargo terminals, a shipyard for vessel repairs and maintenance, and well-planned road infrastructure linking the port to the national road network to facilitate the efficient movement of goods and people.

Turning to aviation, the Minister

said the government had begun implementing measures to revive the Ho Airport after years of neglect.

He noted that many facilities at the airport had deteriorated due to lack of maintenance over the past eight years, but government had already restored electricity supply through the installation of a new transformer with support from the Volta Regional Coordinating Council.

Mr Nikpe said President Mahama had directed that the airport be transformed into a multi-purpose aviation hub capable of generating economic activity throughout the year.

He announced that the Ho Airport would be developed into an Aviation Academy to train pilots, aircraft engineers, aviation technicians and other professionals for Ghana's growing aviation industry.

He disclosed that government was already engaging a strategic private investor from the Volta Region to partner the Ghana Airports Company Limited in establishing the training institution.

The Minister further revealed that the airport would be equipped with aircraft hangars to provide secure parking for private aircraft and

business jets, while a Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) Centre would also be established to service aircraft operating within Ghana and the West African sub-region.

He said government was also considering introducing an air taxi service from the Ho Airport to provide charter flights for passengers and businesses across the country and neighbouring states.

On inland water transport, Mr Nikpe said government had intensified efforts to improve safety on the Volta Lake following President Mahama's directive to reduce accidents on the inland waterways.

He announced that the Ministry had established the first-ever Volta Lake Transport Safety Office at Kpando Torkor, staffed by trained personnel recruited from the region to monitor vessel operations and enforce safety regulations.

The Minister added that a dedicated search-and-rescue vessel had also been stationed at Kpando Torkor to respond promptly to emergencies and distress calls on the lake.

Mr Nikpe also highlighted improvements in transport services across the region, noting that the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) had expanded its operations by opening a new office at Vakpo in the Kpando Municipality to bring vehicle registration and licensing services closer to residents.

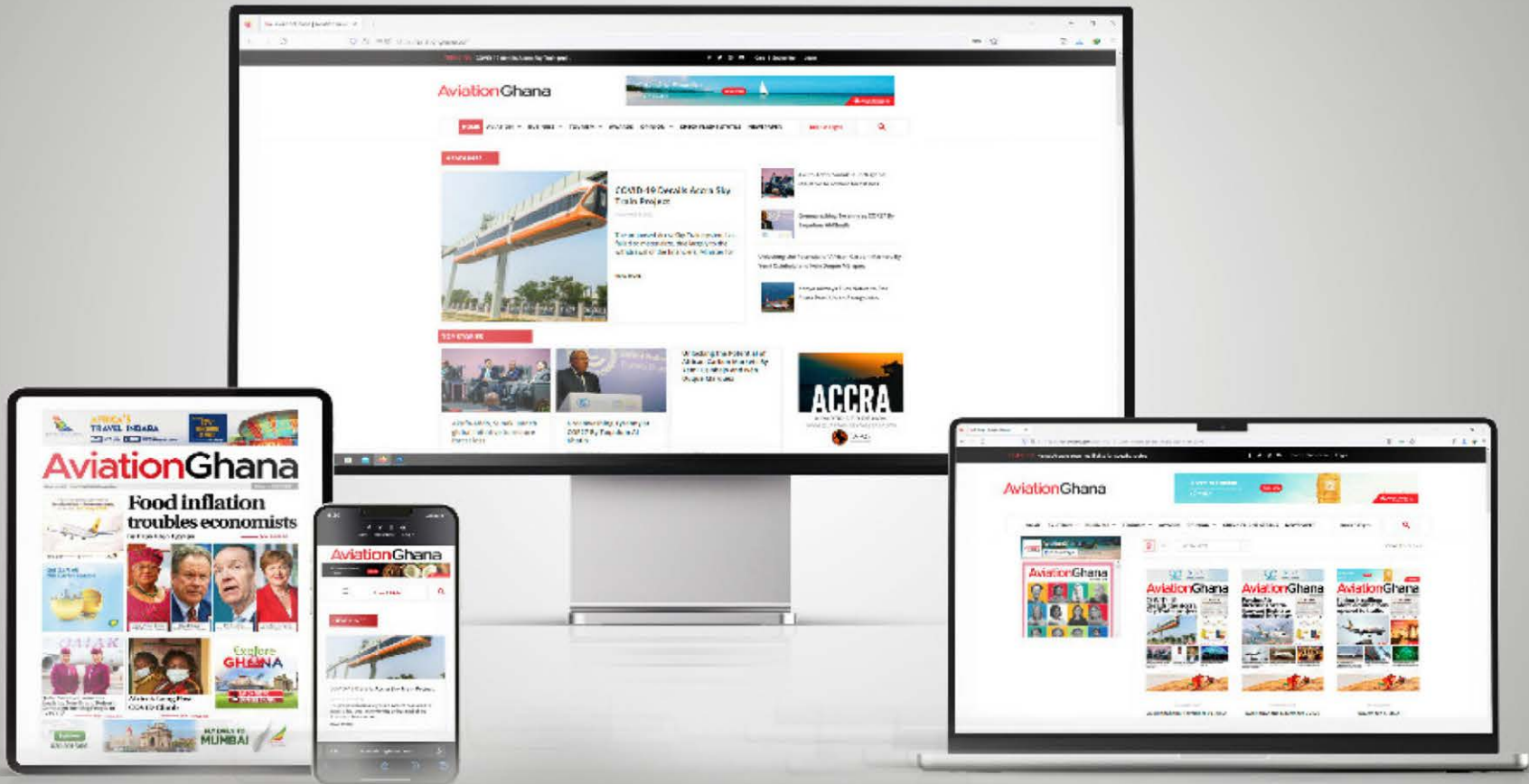
He further announced that construction of a modern DVLA office at Hohoe would commence soon to improve service delivery in the northern sector of the region.

The Minister reaffirmed government's commitment to investing in transport infrastructure to improve mobility, facilitate trade and create employment opportunities, while encouraging private sector participation in the development of Ghana's transport sector.

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