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Shettima calls for stronger synergy to harness Nigeria's skills potential

By Friday Omosola



Vice President Kashim Shettima has called for greater collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders to unlock Nigeria's full potential in skills development.

He emphasised that a united national strategy is crucial for transforming the country's workforce.

Shettima stressed that Nigeria's demographic advantage can only translate into real economic gains if the youth and workforce are equipped with critical, market-relevant skills.

"We know that isolated programmes, no matter how well-intentioned, cannot substitute for a unified national strategy. That is why this council's work remains indispensable. There are challenges, but we can conquer them if we act with unity,

urgency, and foresight," he stated.

Meanwhile, during the NEC meeting he chaired yesterday, the council discussed strategies for aligning Nigeria's skills agenda with President Bola Tinubu's 8-point development priorities.

The council also expressed strong support for the forthcoming Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) initiative, set to be launched on May 16, 2025.

The council emphasised the importance of improved coordination among relevant ministries and agencies, particularly in promoting digital skills among young Nigerians.

It reiterated its commitment to policy coherence, effective implementation, and the adaptation of strategies to evolving

labour market demands.

In a major policy shift, the council approved the adoption of the National Skills Qualification (NSQ) certification for training centres across ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs), all 36 states, and the private sector.

It also acknowledged the pivotal role of private sector actors in driving skills development nationwide.

Ministers from Education, Youth Development, Communications and Digital Economy, Industry, Trade and Investment, Works, and Women Affairs were in attendance, alongside state government representatives, heads of key agencies, private sector leaders, and development partners.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
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7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
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5X5	110,000.00
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POLITICAL COLOUR

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8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
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PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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CONTACT US

Correspondent Address:
Real Group Plaza, No.1 Junaid Dosumu
Street, CBD, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos
Call the Editor on: 07025014298, 09014323792

E-mail Address:
info@newdailyprime.news
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Akpabio leads Nigeria's delegation to Pope Francis' funeral

By Friday Omosola

Senate President Godswill Akpabio has been appointed by President Bola Tinubu to lead Nigeria's five-member delegation to the funeral of Pope Francis, scheduled for Saturday, 26 April.

In a statement issued on Friday, Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, announced that the delegation also includes the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu Ojukwu; Archbishop Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria; Archbishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of the Sokoto Diocese; and Archbishop Ignatius Ayua Kaigama of the Abuja Diocese.

Pope Francis, the revered head of the Roman Catholic Church, passed away on Monday, 21 April 2025, at the age of 88—just a day after presiding over Easter Sunday celebrations at the Vatican.

The Nigerian delegation will formally present a letter of condolence from Tinubu to the Acting Head of the Vatican, expressing the nation's sympathy on the passing of the Pontiff.



On Monday, President Tinubu joined Catholics and Christians around the world in mourning Francis, whom he described as “a humble servant of God, a tireless champion of the poor, and a guiding light for millions.”

In his condolence message, the President remarked that the timing of Francis' passing—shortly after the celebration of Christ's resurrection—signified a sacred return to his Maker at a moment of renewed hope for Christians globally.

The funeral service will be held at 10:00 a.m. local time in St Peter's Square, Rome.

The outdoor Mass will be presided over by Cardinal Giovanni Battista

Re, the Dean of the College of Cardinals, and is expected to draw dignitaries from over 170 countries, along with tens of thousands of mourners.

The New Daily Prime gathered that approximately 50,000 people attended the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI—Francis' immediate predecessor—held at the same location in January 2023.

In the days leading up to Francis' funeral, tens of thousands have queued to pay their final respects.

His body lay in state in an open wooden coffin at St Peter's Basilica from Wednesday morning.

By Friday morning, over 130,000 people had filed past the coffin.

Obi: Nigeria's woes stem from failed political leadership

By Friday Omosola



Former presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi, has identified poor political leadership as the primary factor behind Nigeria's persistent underdevelopment

The former Anambra State governor said this during his lecture delivered yesterday at Johns Hopkins University, USA.

Speaking on the theme 'Politics and Change in Nigeria' at the invitation of Professor Peter Lewis—renowned author of 'Growing Apart: Comparing Indonesia and Nigeria'—Obi drew sharp contrasts between Nigeria and three peer nations: China, Vietnam, and Indonesia, over the last 35 years.

Obi noted that in 1990, all four countries were ranked in the medium category of the Human Development Index (HDI).

However, by 2025, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia all progressed to the high HDI category, while Nigeria regressed into the low category.

Citing economic data, the 63-year-old recalled that in 1990, Nigeria had a GDP per capita of \$556, higher than China (\$317), Vietnam (\$99), and slightly below Indonesia (\$578).

"Today, Nigeria's GDP per capita is just one-fifth of Indonesia's (\$5000), less than that of Vietnam (\$4400), and below one-tenth of China's (\$13,000)."

He also highlighted Nigeria's alarming poverty trends.

"In 1990, Nigeria had approximately 50 million people living in poverty—fewer than China's 750 million, Indonesia's 85

million, or Vietnam's 60 million."

Obi noted, "Nigeria has more poor people than the three countries combined."

"The key difference," Obi stated, "lies in leadership."

He praised the political leadership in those nations for their character, capacity, and compassion—qualities he said have enabled them to invest meaningfully in education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation.

"Competent, capable, and compassionate leadership with integrity is essential for achieving sustainable development," Obi stated, stressing that political will, more than resources, determines a nation's trajectory.

Defection: PDP undergoing rebirth, not crisis – Saraki

By Friday Omosola



Former Senate President, Bukola Saraki, has weighed in on the wave of defections currently affecting the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Reacting to the recent defection of Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori, alongside the party's 2023 vice-presidential candidate, Ifeanyi Okowa, and several other prominent PDP leaders to the All Progressives Congress (APC), Saraki described the situation as a phase of 'rebirth' rather than decline.

In a statement posted on his Instagram page on Friday, the 62-year-old politician stated that those intent on leaving the party should feel free to do so, as their exit would allow the PDP to identify its core loyalists and refocus its vision.

Saraki added that the PDP's path forward rests on the commitment of those who choose to stay.

The Kwara-born politician also noted that the current defections have vindicated the position of individuals like himself who opted to remain silent and observe the unfolding events.

"I have seen that there was no sincerity with supposed leaders of the opposition. One was not sure of the next person one was talking to. My appeal to PDP members nationwide is that we should know that the sustenance of democracy is not a sprint. Rather, it is a marathon. It is not a knock-out football match series. It is a league.

"24 hours is a long time in politics and

nobody can predict how the dynamics will evolve in the coming weeks and months. That is why PDP members across the country should not be discouraged, disillusioned, disappointed, or demoralised by the development in Delta State. We should stay strong and focus on strengthening the party. It is not necessary at this point to lament why they left", said Saraki.

He further stated that members of the PDP should refrain from attributing the party's challenges to the APC, describing such a stance as a lazy and unproductive approach.

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Saraki noted that the APC is simply engaging in political manoeuvres to secure electoral victory.

He urged PDP members to disregard these tactics and instead focus on harnessing the current momentum to strengthen and revitalise the party.

The statement further read, “My view is that those who want to leave the PDP should leave now and let the rest of us who want to stay concentrate on rebuilding the party and refocusing it to play the role of a viable opposition that will provide a better alternative for the good people of Nigeria. I am convinced that it is important for all Nigerians to work for the sustenance of democracy. And to sustain democracy, there must be viable choices for people at every point.

“Also, there must be a viable opposition to keep people’s hope alive and create credible alternatives to keep the government on its toes. A one-party state as being disingenuously designed by some people will not augur well for a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multicultural, multi-religious, and highly diversified society like ours. It is even more dangerous when we eliminate

alternatives and make people hopeless. Therefore, it is in the interest of Nigeria and the survival of our democracy for the opposition to be vibrant and strong enough with the capacity to replace the ruling party at any point.

“Yes, it is unbecoming and shocking for the running mate to the standard bearer of a leading party to abandon ship to join the ruling party. This is unprecedented and nobody should try to justify such an act with the talk of being put under pressure. It is simply a sign of how low we have sunk as a polity. The country is experiencing a collapse of leadership values.

“These developments in the polity are the reason why I have always canvassed the idea that we should emphasize building and strengthening our institutions and not individuals. With the defection of the governor of Delta State, even if the party has only ten governors in its fold, the PDP is still in a good position to win the next round of elections.

“Our numerous party members should know that the POP is better with fewer members who are loyal, sincere, determined,

dedicated, and committed to its ideas, ideals, and progress than to have so many who will identify with us in the afternoon and be romancing the ruling party in the night.

“We still have about two years before the next election. That is a tough time in politics. We have enough time to brace up to the challenge. There is nothing that prevents us from getting some governors from the other parties to join our ranks. My appeal to our young party members is that this defection is just a mere challenge to us to further mobilize and put our house in order. Also, our women’s wing should seize the opportunity to help in the rebuilding mission. The PDP will come out stronger from this development.

“I am very sure the various leadership organs of our party will soon make public their reaction to this development and convey the necessary meetings to strategize on how to strongly and strategically respond to it. Therefore there is no cause for alarm. Our party members should not lose focus, hope, or the determination to win. We should see the current development as a challenge to rebuild and refocus the party. Tomorrow is very bright.”

FG to launch agribusiness policy to tackle food prices — Shettima

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government (FG) is set to roll out the National Agribusiness Policy Mechanism (NAPM), a sweeping policy initiative designed to boost agricultural productivity, stabilise food prices, and accelerate economic growth.

The Vice President Kashim Shettima announced on Friday while speaking at a meeting of the Presidential Food Systems Coordinating Unit (PFSCU) Steering Committee at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Shettima escribed the initiative as a critical step toward aligning Nigeria's agricultural policies with modern data-driven practices and robust public-private partnerships.

“We have had many interventions in the past, but we must make this work. It is the states that will drive the process,” Shettima said, stressing the urgency of making agriculture a cornerstone of national development.

“The Green Imperative Project is an idea whose time has come. It has been in the incubation period for several years, and now it is coming to fruition. We must get it right.”

The Green Imperative Project (GIP), signed between Nigeria and Brazil on 17 March 2025, is a \$1.1 billion initiative that aims to modernise 774 mid-sized farms across Nigeria with Brazilian technology.

It is expected to create jobs and significantly enhance food



production.

In a related development, Shettima disclosed that President Bola Tinubu has approved ₦15 billion for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to prepare for potential flooding as the rainy season approaches.

“This is one of the first proactive decisions by the government to prepare for the flooding season,” he said.

However, the Technical Assistant to the President on Agriculture and Executive Secretary of PFSCU, Marion Moon, explained that NAPM is designed to address persistent challenges such as high food inflation, inefficient subsidies, and agricultural yields that trail 60% behind global benchmarks.

According to her, pilot surveys for the NAPM have been concluded in 13 states, with a nationwide rollout

planned for June 2025.

The initiative, she said will be underpinned by real-time data analytics and a digital platform currently in development, aimed at providing a unified framework for public spending, rural development, and agricultural innovation.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders, including Governors Umar Namadi (Jigawa) and Biodun Oyeboji (Ekiti); Deputy Governors Umar Kadam (Borno) and Patricia Onyemaechi Obila (Ebonyi); Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari; Minister of State, Aliyu Abdullahi; and several private sector and international development representatives.

FG hopes the new policy mechanism will help reposition agriculture as a driver of inclusive growth and national food security.

Tribunal upholds \$220m fine against Meta, WhatsApp

By Friday Omosola

The Competition and Consumer Protection Tribunal has upheld \$220 million administrative penalty imposed by the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) on Meta Platforms Incorporated (Facebook) and WhatsApp LLC.

In a statement issued on Friday, Ondaje Ijagwu, Director of Corporate Affairs at the agency, announced that the tribunal upheld the commission's legal authority and validated its investigative findings.

On 19 July 2024, FCCPC imposed a \$220 million fine on Meta, the parent company of WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, over multiple breaches of data privacy regulations.

Meta has, however, indicated its intention to appeal the penalty.

The case originated from a 38-month joint investigation launched in 2020 by the FCCPC and the Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC), examining the companies' handling of consumer data and their adherence to privacy standards.

The judgment delivered by a three-member panel of the tribunal, led by Thomas Okosun, ruled in favour of the FCCPC on nearly all disputed issues raised by the appellants.

Meta and WhatsApp had filed an appeal challenging the Commission's July 2024 Final Order, which concluded that the companies engaged in discriminatory and exploitative practices against Nigerian consumers.

The tribunal affirmed that the FCCPC



acted within the bounds of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), complied with applicable laws, and exercised its statutory mandate lawfully.

It held that the commission's findings were valid and its procedures met constitutional due process requirements.

Among the key determinations, the tribunal ruled that the FCCPC provided a fair hearing to the appellants and fully discharged its quasi-judicial responsibilities.

It also held that the commission acted within its legal mandate under Section 104 of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act (FCCPA) in handling matters related to data protection and privacy.

Furthermore, the tribunal validated the FCCPC's findings that Meta's privacy policies violated Nigerian law.

However, while Issue 7 was largely resolved in the commission's favour, order 7 of the final order was set aside for lacking sufficient legal basis.

The tribunal also awarded \$35,000 to the FCCPC as the cost of its investigation, in addition to affirming the \$220 million penalty.

Legal representation for Meta and WhatsApp was led by Professor Gbolahan Elias, while the FCCPC's team was headed by Babatunde Irukera.

Final arguments were presented on January 28, 2025.

Reacting to the judgment, FCCPC Executive Vice Chairman/CEO, Tunji Bello, hailed the decision as a milestone for consumer protection and regulatory enforcement in Nigeria.

He commended the commission's legal team for their diligence and forensic expertise.

He reaffirmed the FCCPC's commitment to safeguarding consumer rights and promoting fair business practices in line with the FCCPA (2018) and President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

World Malaria Day: Tinubu's wife urges Nigerians to promote clean environment

By Helen Okechukwu



Nigeria's First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, has called on Nigerians to practice and promote clean environmental habits to prevent breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

The wife of Tinubu made this call on Friday through her Media Aide, Busola Kukoyi, while marking the 2025 World Malaria Day (WMD).

"We should also ensure that our environment and surroundings are clean and free of stagnant water, which is a breeding ground for mosquitoes," she said.

Celebrated every April 25, this year's

theme is "Malaria Ends With Us: Reinvest, Reimagine, Reignite." She said it's time to recall that malaria is not just a public health challenge for Nigeria, but a national emergency.

"Nigeria bears the heaviest global burden of this disease. We must continue to work hard to reverse this trend."

She called for urgent collective efforts from all government agencies, private sector partners, NGOs, health workers, and community leaders to fight against malaria with resolve.

Adding further, Mrs. Tinubu said, "Malaria ends with us, with our

voices, our choices and our actions."

WHO noted that roughly 600,000 lives were lost to the disease in 2023 alone. Despite significant gains, malaria remains a major public health challenge.

In 2022, data from WHO noted that in Nigeria, malaria had become a serious public health concern with an estimated 68 million cases and 194,000 deaths in 2021.

With this data, Nigeria accounted for nearly 27% of the global malaria burden, with 38% of global deaths occurring in children under five.

WHO calls for urgent action to stop FGM in new guidelines

By Helen Okechukwu

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released new guidelines calling for urgent action to stop the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), especially its growing “medicalization” — where health workers themselves are carrying out the harmful procedure.

FGM involves cutting or injuring parts of a girl’s private parts for non-medical reasons.

It is usually done to young girls before puberty and is considered a serious “violation of human rights.”

WHO says that even when health workers perform FGM, it still causes harm and can sometimes be even more dangerous.

According to WHO, around 52 million women and girls have undergone FGM by the hands of health workers, making up about 1 in 4 cases globally.

This trend is worrying because it gives the false idea that FGM is safe or acceptable if done by a professional.

The new guideline shared on Friday to journalists, titled “The prevention of female genital mutilation and clinical management of complications,” provides a plan for how health workers, governments, and communities can work together to stop FGM and support survivors.

Dr. Pascale Allotey, WHO’s Director for Sexual and Reproductive Health, said, “The health sector has an essential role in preventing FGM –



health workers must be agents for change rather than perpetrators of this harmful practice, and must also provide high quality medical care for those suffering its effects.”

The guideline strongly recommends that medical organizations clearly ban FGM in their professional codes of conduct. It also urges health workers to be trained on how to respond to requests for FGM and educate families about its dangers.

Christina Pallitto, a WHO scientist who helped develop the guideline, said, “Engaging doctors, nurses and midwives should be a key element in FGM prevention and response, as countries seek to end the practice and protect the health of women and girls.”

Read Also: Expert reveals men with large breasts at higher risk of breast cancer

The guideline also calls for

community education, especially including men and boys, to help raise awareness and protect girls. It also gives steps for how to care for survivors, who may face serious health problems throughout their lives.

There is hope. Countries like Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia have reduced FGM rates among teenage girls by up to 50% in the last 30 years, thanks to strong political action and community work.

Since 1990, the chances of a girl undergoing FGM have dropped threefold, but it is still practiced in about 30 countries. An estimated 4 million girls remain at risk yearly.

The health organization believes that with the right efforts, FGM can be ended for good — protecting millions of girls around the world from this harmful tradition.

LWC partners with WaterAid, Armani Beauty to provide clean water to over 100,000 residents in 6 month

By Helen Okechukwu

To ensure that residents of Ojudu Local Council Development Area (LCDA) have access to clean water, the Lagos Water Corporation (LWC), in partnership with WaterAid and Armani Beauty, has embarked on the rehabilitation of the Akilo Micro Waterworks.

In a post shared on Friday via the Lagos State Government (LGS) Facebook page, it was noted that the initiative aims to provide quality water to over 100,000 residents.

The agency described it as a significant milestone in expanding clean water projects to underserved areas.

Additionally, the LWC revealed that rehabilitation works at Adiyani I, Iju, and Akute, as well as the construction of mini 2 MGD treatment plants at Alexander and Magodo, have been completed.

The statement read, “The Alexander Waterworks, situated in the Ikoyi area of Lagos, is a vital facility that serves key areas including Victoria Island, Ikoyi, Lekki, and Magodo Phase 2 Estate.”

These efforts have resulted in a significant increase in water



production capacity, thereby improving access to clean water for residents.

Among their efforts to provide clean water for residents, the 70 MGD Adiyani II project—which is set to be completed in 2027—was revived to supply 70 million gallons of potable water daily to serve five million Lagosians.

To end a 25-year water scarcity and improve the quality of life for residents of the Baruwa-Abesan community, the 2 MGD Mosan Okunola Waterworks was recommissioned.

In 2024, rehabilitation of the Isashi Waterworks was completed, with the project targeted to increase the supply of potable water by 200%.

“This vital state utility asset has undergone extensive rehabilitation to enable 24-hour operation,” LWC stated.

Meanwhile, to address longstanding gaps, the LSG—through the LWC—established the Lagos WASH Policy, which aims to prioritize rural water and sanitation with integrated water management, transparency, and efficiency.

To enhance efficiency and ease water bill payments, the agency introduced Quickteller and PayDirect platforms, noting that this digital initiative will enhance revenue collection and reduce payment bottlenecks.

Lagos signs MoU with Phasur Green Energy to boost wastewater management

By Helen Okechukwu



The Lagos State Government has taken a big step toward improving sanitation and waste management by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Messrs. Phasur Green Energy.

This new partnership will help boost the State's wastewater management system.

According to the Lagos State Wastewater Management Office, the agreement will tap into Phasur Green Energy's expertise to make better use of wastewater.

One of the company's key plans is to turn dewatered sludge into biogas — a move that supports a cleaner environment and a circular economy.

This partnership is part of ongoing efforts under the Lagos State Climate

Adaptation & Resilience Plan for the Sanitation Sector.

The State has been working closely with other stakeholders like WaterAid and FSD Africa through the Resilience Water Accelerator (RWA) to find sustainable solutions.

As part of efforts to build local capacity, officials from the LSWMO also teamed up with the Jospong Group of Companies for a study visit to Sewerage Systems Limited in Ghana.

The goal was to learn and adopt best practices in wastewater treatment that can be implemented in Lagos.

In the drive to meet Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) — clean water and sanitation for all — the agency cracked down on illegal wastewater discharge.

It inspected 2,315 facilities, served 1,005 abatement notices, and confirmed that 1,091 facilities complied with proper sanitation practices. Enforcement actions were also taken against 208 non-compliant facilities.

During the review period, the agency received 65 complaints from the public and successfully resolved 63 of them.

To ensure smooth operations and reduce wastewater pollution, major maintenance work was also carried out on sewerage systems in Alausa, Abesan, Oke-Afa, and Iponri.

These efforts reflect Lagos State's commitment to building a smarter, cleaner, and healthier city for all residents.

I'm straight, but I love my gay friends, actor Uzor Arukwe addresses rumours

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nollywood actor Uzor Arukwe has finally spoken out about ongoing rumours surrounding his sexuality.

The actor addressed the speculations during a recent appearance on the talk show *Unfiltered and Extra Spicy*, where he firmly denied claims suggesting he is gay.

The rumours, which have been making the rounds on social media and gossip blogs for some time, gained fresh attention earlier this year. Many of Arukwe's fans and critics alike have debated the issue, but until now, the actor had remained silent.

Shock and mixed emotions

In his candid and heartfelt interview, Arukwe opened up about how he first heard the rumour and what it meant to him.

"The worst rumour I've ever heard about myself is that I'm gay," he said. "When I first heard it, I was shocked to my bones. But at the same time, a part of me was excited. They say once people start talking about you like that, it means you're becoming a big deal. So, I told myself, maybe this is it."

Support for the LGBTQ+ community

Despite the false claim, Arukwe made it clear that he holds no hatred towards the LGBTQ+ community. He emphasised that he has many gay friends whom he loves and respects deeply.

"I have a lot of gay friends, and I love them," he stated. "They are my friends, so I know their sexuality, and I love them to death. I have nothing against them whatsoever."

Setting the record straight

The actor stressed that although he supports and respects his friends in the community, he does not identify as gay



himself. He said it was important for people to hear directly from him rather than rely on gossip or speculation.

"But I'm not gay," Arukwe said plainly. "And I won't agree to something I'm not. That's not who I am. If it were true, I would own it. I would not hide it. In fact, I'd probably be one of the hottest out there."

Public reaction and online debate

His statement was met with mixed reactions online. Some fans praised him for his honesty and maturity, while others debated the way he addressed the issue. Still, Arukwe stood his ground and called for more understanding and less judgment.

He also called for people to respect others regardless of their sexuality and to avoid spreading unfounded rumours.

A call for respect and privacy

"We live in a world where everyone is quick to judge or label you," he added. "It's unfair, and it's hurtful. People should focus on more important things, like being kind and respectful."

Arukwe's appearance on the show

marks the first time he has publicly discussed the matter. His openness and calm approach have sparked new conversations about privacy, public figures, and how society handles issues of sexuality.

Staying focused on his craft

As one of Nollywood's rising stars, Arukwe has built a career on strong performances and dedication to his craft. He's known for his roles in hit films and series, often praised for his ability to take on complex characters.

But off-screen, the actor now finds himself at the centre of a different kind of spotlight one that shows how public figures, no matter how private, are still vulnerable to gossip and rumours.

Final words from the actor

For now, Arukwe says he is focused on his work and staying true to himself. He urges fans to support him based on his talent, not on hearsay.

"Let God be the judge," he concluded. "I know who I am, and that's what matters."

Fela claims my music was 'rubbish', says Femi Kuti

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeat star Femi Kuti has opened up about the struggles he faced after stepping out of his father's shadow to start his band.

In a candid chat on the Sonically podcast hosted by Elmo Chong, Femi revealed that both his father, Fela Kuti, and the late legend's loyal fans opposed his decision to leave.

Femi, now a multiple Grammy-nominated artist, said he made the bold move in 1986. But it came with a heavy price.

Fan rejection and misunderstanding

"When I left my father's band, his fanbase turned against me," he said. "It was like, 'How dare you fight Fela?'"

But for Femi, it wasn't a fight at all. It was a search for identity.

"I was lost," he confessed. "I had no formal education. How was I going to become a great musician? I was crying inside. But people didn't see that. They thought I was protesting."

Choosing to keep going

Rather than quit, he chose to press on.

"I just focused," he said. "I told myself I can't turn back now. I would rather die trying. So, I continued. And I have never stopped since then."

A crushing blow at his album launch

Femi also recalled how hurt he felt when his father publicly criticised his debut album.

The launch took place in 1989. It was meant to be a proud moment. But Fela's reaction crushed him.

"The first time my father heard my album, he said it was rubbish," Femi said. "He walked on stage and told the press that it was rubbish. I was so upset.



He was the last person I expected to say that."

The long wait for approval

At that point, Femi could have given up. The criticism from his own father, in front of the media, was painful. But once again, he chose to keep going.

Over time, things changed.

Years later, Fela watched Femi perform live at the African Shrine. Two songs stood out — No Place For My Dream and Mind Your Business.

That moment marked a turning point in their relationship.

Femi said his father was impressed. He finally gave him the approval he had long waited for.

"After the show, my father went back to the press," Femi recalled. "And this time, he boasted about me. He told them how proud he was of my music."

Earning his name

For Femi, that public praise meant the world. After years of hard work, doubt, and rejection, he had earned his father's respect.

Femi Kuti's journey was never easy. Starting under the shadow of Fela Kuti, one of Africa's greatest musical icons, brought both pressure and expectations.

But he found his voice, built his band, and stayed true to his path.

More than Fela's son

Today, he is not just known as Fela's son. He is respected worldwide as a powerful Afrobeat artist in his own right.

His story is one of courage, determination, and the will to keep moving forward, even when the people closest to you don't believe in you at first.

Femi's career has now spanned decades. He continues to perform, record, and inspire a new generation of musicians across Africa and beyond.

And perhaps the biggest lesson from his story is this: success doesn't always come with applause. Sometimes, you have to walk through criticism and doubt even from family before finding your own light.

Nigerian music industry gatekeepers wanted me down, Burna Boy opens up

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeats star Burna Boy has claimed that powerful figures in Nigeria's music industry made repeated efforts to hold him back early in his career.

The Grammy-winning artist made this bold statement while responding to a video that went viral online. The clip featured veteran music executive Obi Asika, who stated in a recent interview that certain gatekeepers within the Nigerian music industry had tried to stop Burna Boy's rise.

Despite their efforts, Asika said, Burna Boy managed to bypass them and achieve international success on his terms.

Burna Boy reacts on Instagram

The afrobeat star didn't hold back when reacting to the video. Commenting under a blog post on Instagram that shared the clip, he said:

"This is not even half of the story. They did everything they possibly could to break me. They are still trying their best. Lol. But all they did was create this unquenchable fire that will continue to burn them for eternity."

The comment quickly caught attention, sparking conversations among fans and industry observers. Many praised Burna Boy's resilience, while others expressed shock at the idea that major players in the Nigerian music industry could try to stop one of their own from growing.

A rocky rise to fame

The grammy-winner, whose real name is Damini Ogulu, first gained national recognition in 2012 with the release of *Like to Party*, a catchy track off his debut album *L.I.F.E* (Leaving an Impact for Eternity).

The song quickly made him a household name in Nigeria's music scene. However, the journey that followed was far from smooth.



In the years that followed his early success, Burna Boy found himself pushed to the margins. Despite his talent and a loyal fan base, he was often overlooked in mainstream spaces.

Some critics labelled him difficult to work with, while others claimed he lacked the commercial appeal of other rising stars. Behind the scenes, Burna Boy says, it was even worse.

Breakthrough with 'Ye'

Although he faced setbacks at home, he kept working. He refined his sound, blended genres, and continued to release music that connected with audiences. Then came the turning point: the release of *Ye* in 2018, a standout track from his third studio album *Outside*.

The song became an international hit, boosted in part by a happy accident, as many fans who searched for Kanye West's *Ye* stumbled upon Burna Boy's version instead. What started as a coincidence quickly turned into global exposure.

With *Ye*, he found the global stage that had eluded him in Nigeria. From there, his career exploded. He went on to release a string of successful albums, perform on major stages, and tour across

Europe, North America, and beyond.

His 2020 album *Twice as Tall* earned him a Grammy Award for Best Global Music Album, cementing his status as one of Africa's most important musical exports.

Homecoming and recognition

Ironically, the success that had once seemed out of reach brought him back into the spotlight at home. Nigerian music fans who had once overlooked him began embracing him again. Radio stations, blogs, and music heads that once ignored his work now couldn't get enough.

A star who won't be silenced

In recent years, Burna Boy has become the most consistently touring African artist, selling out venues from Paris to New York. His fiery style, powerful lyrics, and outspoken personality have won him a global fan base.

Despite the recognition, Burna Boy hasn't forgotten the obstacles he faced or the people who tried to silence him.

"The fire they tried to kill," he wrote, "is now the same fire that burns brighter every day."

I lost my sight after smoking with Snoop Dogg, Ed Sheeran

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

British pop star Ed Sheeran has shared a surprising story about a recent encounter with American rap icon Snoop Dogg. According to Sheeran, he briefly lost his vision after smoking weed with the rapper.

The Shape of You singer made the revelation in a lighthearted TikTok video. In the clip, Snoop Dogg is seen rolling what appears to be marijuana, while Sheeran adds a cheeky caption: "Last time I smoked with Snoop I lost my ability to see."

The post quickly caught attention online, with fans reacting in shock and amusement. It gave them a glimpse into a side of Sheeran they don't often see relaxed, humorous, and completely honest.

Snoop Dogg's history with cannabis

Snoop Dogg's love for marijuana is no secret. He's built much of his public image around cannabis culture. From music lyrics to interviews, weed has remained a part of his brand for decades.

Last year, Snoop stirred up the internet when he announced he was "giving up smoke." Fans were stunned. Could the world's most famous smoker be quitting weed?

It turned out to be a clever marketing trick. Days later, Snoop revealed he was promoting a smokeless stove in an ad campaign. The "smoke" he mentioned wasn't about weed at all. The joke landed perfectly, and fans got a laugh out of it.

Ed Sheeran's other weed stories

This isn't the first time Ed Sheeran has talked about cannabis use. In past



interviews, he has shared stories about working with other artists who smoke heavily.

One name he mentioned was Nigerian music star Burna Boy. According to Sheeran, Burna is one of the heaviest weed smokers he has ever worked with. Despite their different musical backgrounds, the two artists have worked closely together.

They collaborated on Stormzy's hit single "Own It", which went to number one in the UK. They teamed up again on "For My Hand", a track from Burna Boy's Love, Damini album.

When weed hits too hard

Sheeran's story of going temporarily blind may sound extreme, but it's not entirely unheard of. Experts say that consuming high levels of THC, especially for people with low tolerance, can cause temporary effects such as dizziness, confusion, or blurred vision.

Though these symptoms usually fade quickly and aren't considered dangerous, they can be alarming for



someone not used to them. That might explain Sheeran's experience during his smoking session with Snoop Dogg.

Laughing it off

Despite the incident, Sheeran doesn't seem to have any hard feelings. His tone in the TikTok video is playful and light. He appears to look back on the moment with humour, not embarrassment.

Fans appreciate this side of him. Whether it's sharing silly personal moments or talking openly about his music career, Ed Sheeran remains one of the most relatable stars in pop music today.

A star who keeps it real

From international tours to laid-back hangouts with rap legends, Sheeran continues to show fans what life behind the scenes looks like. His recent story proves once again that even the biggest stars have surprising and very human moments.

Would you dare smoke with Snoop Dogg?

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By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

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Would you dare smoke with Snoop Dogg?

I'm a proud member of Celestial church, I own a parish, Kwam1 reveals his religion

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian Fuji music icon, Wasiu Ayinde, better known as Kwam1 or K1 De Ultimate, has revealed that he is a Christian. This comes as a surprise to many who had long assumed he was a Muslim.

The 68-year-old music veteran made the revelation during an interview on the Agbaletu Radiovision podcast, where he opened up about his spiritual life. Contrary to public belief, Kwam1 said he is a committed member of the Celestial Church of Christ.

Why people thought he was muslim

For years, the public believed Kwam1 practiced Islam. This was partly because of his first name, Wasiu, which is commonly used among Muslims. Another reason was the Islamic burial given to his late mother, Alhaja Halima Anifowoshe, who passed away in January 2025.

However, Kwam1 clarified that while he respects Islamic traditions, especially those tied to his family, his faith is rooted in Christianity.

His spiritual journey

Kwam1 spoke deeply about how his religious journey shaped him, especially during difficult times.

"In my tough times, I turned to religion," he said. "I sought the face of God in more than one way. There was no place I didn't go in search of God's help."

He described his path as one filled with exploration and personal discovery. He emphasised that his faith became stronger over the years and eventually led him to the Celestial Church.

A proud member of the celestial church

"Yes, I attend the Celestial Church," Kwam1 said proudly. "I'm a bonafide member of the Celestial Church of



Christ a proud one. In fact, I built a church."

He added that his connection to the church is not casual. It's where he found peace, comfort, and a stronger bond with God.

Public reaction

Kwam1's declaration has taken many by surprise. On social media, fans have shared mixed reactions, some shocked, others inspired. Many have praised him for being bold and honest about his beliefs.

Religion is a sensitive topic in Nigeria, where faith is often closely tied to culture, family, and public perception. For a public figure like Kwam1, openly speaking about a change in faith is rare and courageous.

Faith beyond labels

In the interview, Kwam1 urged people to focus on their relationship with God instead of religious labels.

"People might not understand, but it's my truth," he said. "I found peace in the Celestial Church. That's where I feel at home spiritually."

About the celestial church of christ

The Celestial Church of Christ is a Christian denomination founded in Nigeria. It is known for its white garments, spiritual healing practices, visions, and strong community worship.

Kwam1's decision to be open about his membership in the church adds a new layer to his public image. It also opens up a conversation about personal faith versus public expectations.

A new chapter in his legacy

Kwam1 has long been known for his contributions to Fuji music. With hit songs like Ade Ori Okin, he has influenced generations of musicians and built a loyal fan base.

Now, this new chapter of his life shows a different side of the man behind the music. His words may encourage others to explore their faith, stay true to themselves, and find peace in their spiritual journey, regardless of what the world expects.

Musician Terry Apala remanded in Ikoyi prison for alleged Naira abuse

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian musician Terry Apala, whose real name is Terry Alexander Ejeh, has been remanded at the Ikoyi Correctional Centre after facing charges of mutilating Nigerian currency.

The charges stem from an incident where the musician allegedly tampered with Naira notes during a social event. He was arraigned on Friday at the Federal High Court in Lagos, with Justice Akintayo Aluko presiding over the case.

EFCC charges Terry Apala with currency tampering

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) charged Terry Apala under Section 21(1) of the Central Bank of Nigeria Act, 2007. The charges relate to an incident that occurred on January 5, 2025, at La Madison Place, Oniru, where the musician was reportedly seen dancing on Naira notes. The EFCC claims that, during the event, Apala deliberately damaged the currency by stepping on it while dancing.

The charge against the artist states, in part, "...whilst dancing during a social event, [you] tampered with Naira notes issued by the Central Bank of Nigeria by marching on the same." This charge highlights the unlawful act of defacing or destroying money, an offense that has drawn significant attention in recent days.

Terry Apala pleads not guilty

Terry Apala, known for his unique blend of Apala music and contemporary sounds, pleaded not guilty to the charges. His defense team, led by Felix Nwabuda, argued that their client should be granted bail pending further proceedings. Nwabuda explained that Terry Apala had returned voluntarily from the UK to comply with the EFCC's invitation, showcasing his willingness to cooperate with the investigation.

Terry Apala. Source: X (EFCC)

Terry Apala. Source: X (EFCC)

"We undertake to produce him in court. He will not evade hearing," Nwabuda told the court. However, despite these assurances, the EFCC's counsel, S.I.



Suleiman, opposed the request for bail. He argued that the request was unusual and "alien," questioning the legitimacy of such a move.

Court denies bail request

Justice Akintayo Aluko sided with the prosecution, agreeing that releasing the defendant at this stage was not appropriate. Consequently, he denied the bail request and decided that Terry Apala would remain in custody at the Ikoyi Correctional Centre. The court set a new date for the hearing of the bail application: May 5, 2025.

Public debate over case continues

The decision to remand Apala in custody has sparked public debate, with some questioning whether the musician's celebrity status should play a role in the handling of the case. Others have expressed concern over the potential impact of such incidents on the public perception of Nigerian currency and the importance of upholding the law.

While the case continues, many are closely watching the outcome, particularly in light of the growing trend of Nigerian artists and public figures becoming embroiled in legal controversies. The EFCC has previously taken action against individuals accused

of damaging currency, and this case highlights their ongoing commitment to enforcing laws that protect the integrity of the Naira.

Next steps in the legal proceedings

For now, Terry Apala's fate rests in the hands of the courts. His fans, who have been vocal in their support, will be eager to see how the legal proceedings unfold. The court's upcoming decision on the bail application will likely set the stage for the next chapter in this high-profile case.

Impact on the Nigerian music scene

As the case moves forward, it serves as a reminder of the broader issues at play, including the need for stricter enforcement of laws surrounding the handling of currency. The public will continue to watch as this story develops, with many wondering if Terry Apala will face a lengthy legal battle or if the charges will eventually be dropped.

For now, the musician's legal team and the EFCC will continue to prepare for the next hearing, scheduled for early May. As the case progresses, it remains to be seen whether justice will be served or if Terry Apala will find a way to avoid the consequences of his alleged actions.

Daddy Showkey slams gov Bago over dreadlock arrest order

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Daddy Showkey slams Niger State Gov Umar Bago over his order to arrest people with dreadlocks, calling the move unfair and discriminatory.

The singer, famous for his reggae-influenced music and signature dreadlocks, took to social media on Thursday to express his anger and disappointment over the governor's recent order. Bago had reportedly instructed security forces in Minna, the state capital, to arrest people wearing dreadlocks as part of efforts to address rising insecurity in the area.

Governor links hairstyles to insecurity

According to New Daily Prime, Governor Bago made the directive public during a security meeting held on Tuesday in Minna. He claimed that the step was necessary to curb increasing criminal activities in the city, blaming certain appearances and behaviours for contributing to the growing unrest.

Daddy Showkey responds with anger

But Daddy Showkey was having none of it.

In a passionate Instagram post, the music legend called out the governor for what he described as an ill-informed and discriminatory policy. He questioned the logic behind linking dreadlocks to crime and asked whether such hairstyles were truly to blame for the insecurity troubling the state.

"Mohammed Umar, na Dada be your problem?" he wrote in Pidgin English. "I dey come to Minna but now that you asked your security agents to cut off dreadlocks, so hold your state but make you cut your beer beer."

Singer cancels trip in protest

The singer also revealed he was cancelling a planned visit to Niger State in protest. He challenged the governor to shave off his beard if he believed that changing appearances could solve the problem of insecurity.

The post quickly went viral, drawing widespread support from fans, civil rights advocates, and fellow entertainers. Many praised Daddy Showkey for speaking out and defending young people who might be unfairly targeted by the new policy.

Critics call policy dangerous

Critics of the governor's directive say the move is not only discriminatory but also dangerous. They argue that it stereotypes people based on appearance and may lead to



unlawful profiling, harassment, and even abuse by security personnel.

Legal experts question legality

Legal experts have also weighed in, warning that the order has no basis in Nigerian law. According to human rights lawyer Jide Olanrewaju, arresting people for wearing dreadlocks violates their fundamental rights to dignity and personal expression, as guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution.

"You cannot criminalise someone simply because of how they look," Olanrewaju said. "This is not how you tackle insecurity. The focus should be on intelligence, community engagement, and lawful enforcement not haircuts."

Fear grows among young residents

Several youths in Minna, especially those in the entertainment and creative sectors, have expressed fear over the new directive. Some said they feel unsafe in public spaces, fearing being stopped or harassed because of their hairstyles.

"This is not fair," said Musa Ibrahim, a 24-year-old fashion designer. "My dreadlocks are part of my identity. I don't smoke, I don't steal, I'm just trying to live my life. Now I'm scared to go outside."

Cultural experts defend dreadlocks

Cultural experts have also criticised the governor's remarks, reminding him that dreadlocks have deep roots in African history, spirituality, and identity. For many, including Rastafarians and traditionalists, the hairstyle holds religious or cultural meaning and should not be equated with crime.

"Dreadlocks are not a crime," said cultural historian Ifeoma Obi. "They are part of our

heritage. To attack them is to attack culture itself."

History of appearance-based profiling in Nigeria

This is not the first time personal appearance has been used as a basis for profiling in Nigeria. In the past, young men with tattoos, piercings, or "unusual" hairstyles have been wrongly targeted by law enforcement officers under the suspicion of being internet fraudsters or cult members.

Activists say such actions create more tension between the police and the public, especially among young people who already face high unemployment and economic challenges.

A call for sensible leadership

Meanwhile, Daddy Showkey has urged Governor Bago to rethink his position. He called for policies that protect, not punish, the youth.

"Leadership is not about cutting hair," the singer wrote. "It's about building trust, creating jobs, and protecting lives. Let's stop fighting the wrong battles."

Public awaits official response

As of Friday morning, the Niger State government had not issued an official response to the backlash. But the pressure is mounting, with many Nigerians calling on the governor to withdraw the directive and focus on real solutions to the state's security challenges.

For now, all eyes remain on Minna, as the debate over dreadlocks, identity, and governance continues to grow louder.

Trump temporarily restores foreign students' legal status

By Fatimah Idera

The Trump administration said on Friday that it is restoring the student visa registrations of potentially thousands of foreign students in the United States whose legal status had recently been abruptly terminated.

The decision was announced during a court hearing before a federal judge in Boston who was hearing a challenge by one of the many international students nationally suing over the administration's actions.

Those students' status had been revoked as a result of their records being terminated from a database of the approximately 1.1 million foreign student visa holders, putting them at risk of deportation.

Since Trump took office on January 20, records for more than 4,700 students have been removed from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement -maintained database known as Student and Exchange Visitor Information Systems, according to the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

The database monitors compliance with



visa terms and records foreign students' addresses, progress toward graduation and other information. To remain in the database, student visa holders have to obey conditions like limits on employment and avoiding illegal activity.

Shortly before Friday's hearing in Boston University student Carrie Zheng's case, U.S. District Judge F. Deniss Saylor said he had received an email from a lawyer

from the government alerting him to a change in position by ICE.

According to that email, ICE was now "developing a policy that will provide a framework for SEVIS record terminations." Until that policy is issued, the SEVIS records for Zheng and similarly situated plaintiffs will remain active or will be restored, the email said.

Feds to seek death penalty for Luigi Mangione

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Federal prosecutors announced Thursday their intent to seek the death penalty against 26 year old Luigi Mangione, who stands accused of assassinating UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson outside a Manhattan hotel last December.

The filing comes just one day ahead of Mangione's arraignment hearing, scheduled for 1 p.m. Friday in federal court.

Mangione is charged with the fatal shooting of Thompson on December 4, 2024, as the healthcare executive was en route to an investors conference. He has been indicted on multiple charges, including two counts of stalking, unlawful use of a firearm, and murder committed with a firearm.

In a formal court filing, prosecutors argued the killing was a premeditated act of ideological violence. The document states that Mangione allegedly targeted Thompson "to amplify an ideological message, maximize the visibility and impact of the victim's murder, and to



provoke broad-based resistance to the victim's industry."

Prosecutors further claimed that Mangione represents a continued threat to public safety, noting that he allegedly expressed an intent to strike against the healthcare industry as a whole. According to the filing, he fled New York immediately after the shooting, crossing state lines with a homemade firearm and a silencer in his possession.

Earlier this month, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi confirmed that she had directed federal prosecutors to pursue the death penalty in the case, citing President Trump's executive order mandating capital punishment in eligible violent crime cases. "This is about restoring law and order and making America safe again," Bondi said at the time.

Mangione's defense attorneys have condemned the move, describing it as politically motivated. In a previous filing, they wrote, "The U.S. government intends to kill Mr. Mangione as a political stunt, not for justice."

Brian Thompson, a prominent figure in the American healthcare industry, was survived by his wife and two children. His death sent shockwaves through Wall Street and raised concerns about rising threats toward public figures in controversial sectors.

The case, now carrying the weight of a capital prosecution, is expected to be closely watched nationwide.

Tesla sales plunge in Europe despite rebound in electric car demand

By Fatimah Idera

Tesla's sales in Europe are tumbling despite a broader rebound in demand for electric vehicles (EVs) across the Continent as Elon Musk gets a fresh headache as he refocuses his attention on his struggling car company.

Just 36,167 Teslas were sold in the EU during the first quarter of 2025, down 37pc compared to a year earlier, according to industry figures.

It came as overall EV sales in the bloc accelerated, rising by 24pc to 412,997, the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) said.

The drop is a fresh headache for Elon Musk as he refocuses his attention on Tesla to battle a wider sales slump at the company.

Read also: Elon Musk under fire as Tesla sales plunge to 13-year low
Critics have accused the billionaire of endangering the electric car maker's brand with his vocal support for Donald Trump and the US president's department of government efficiency (Doge), which he helped to set up on a voluntary basis.

The political interventions have enraged some of Tesla's liberal-leaning customers, sparking campaigns to boycott its vehicles and even arson attacks by extreme protesters.

At the same time, Wall Street



analysts have warned that Mr Musk needs to show improvement urgently at Tesla amid concerns the company's current car line-up looks tired.

This week the tycoon assured investors he was now set to spend "far more" time on his company – but there was no update on when a newer, lower-priced model could be expected.

Improving EV sales in Europe contrasted with a bleaker market for cars in the EU, with combined sales of all car types down by 2pc between January and March.

While sales of EVs and hybrids were up 24pc and 21pc respectively, sales of petrol cars and diesel cars fell by 21pc and 27pc.

Electric cars' recovery compared to growth of just 3pc the previous year, and included strong sales in top

markets such as Spain, Germany, Italy and Austria.

But one outlier was France, where sales fell 6.6pc after EV subsidies were scaled back late last year.

However, the ACEA warned that EVs' market share, at 15pc, was still "far from where it was expected to be" as the EU prepares to introduce new vehicle emission curbs.

Hybrids remained the most popular type of car, taking a 35pc market share, with petrol cars second at 29pc.

Global credit ratings agency S&P previously downgraded its forecast for EU electric car sales in the first half of 2025 from 27pc of the market to 21pc, blaming "shifting economic conditions".

China grants some exemptions from US tariffs to limit trade war pain

By **Fatimah Idera**

China has granted some exemptions on U.S. imports from its 125% tariffs and is asking businesses to identify goods that could be eligible in the clearest sign yet that Beijing is worried about the economic fallout from its trade war with Washington, according to businesses notified.

The dispensation is the latest sign that the world's two largest economies were prepared to rein in their trade war, assuaging concerns about the impact of the tariffs.

Beijing's possible consideration of wider tariff exemptions for dozens of industries follows a shift in tone from Washington, pushing the U.S. dollar up slightly and lifting equity markets in Hong Kong and Japan.

A Ministry of Commerce task force is collecting lists of items that could be exempted from tariffs and is asking companies to submit their own requests, according to a person with knowledge of that outreach.

"The Chinese government, for example, has been asking our companies what sort of things are you importing to China from the U.S. that you cannot find anywhere else and so would shut down your supply chain," American Chamber of Commerce in China President Michael Hart said on Friday.

Some companies represented by the U.S. business group have reported that they had imported goods in the past week without the new tariffs being applied, Hart said.

The chief executive of French aircraft engine maker Safran said on Friday it had been informed last night that China had granted tariff exemptions on "a certain number of aerospace equipment parts," including engines and landing gear.

China's Commerce Ministry said on Thursday it had held a meeting with more than 80 foreign companies and business chambers in China to discuss the impact of U.S. tariffs on investment and the operation of foreign firms in the country.



The tariff exemptions under consideration by Beijing would provide cost relief for companies in China from drug makers to airlines and allow for less expensive imports of everything from semiconductors to petrochemicals. It could also take pressure off U.S. exports at a time when the Trump administration has shown signs of wanting to make a deal with Beijing.

The European Union Chamber of Commerce in China also said it had raised the issue of tariff exemptions with the commerce ministry and was awaiting a response.

"Many of our member companies are significantly impacted by the tariffs on critical components imported from the U.S.," President Jens Eskelund said.

A list of 131 categories of products said to be under consideration for tariff exemptions was circulating on Chinese social media platforms and among businesses and trade groups on Friday. Reuters could not verify the list, which included items ranging from vaccines and chemicals to jet engines.

Huatai Securities said the list corresponded to \$45 billion worth of imports to China last year.

China's customs agency and Ministry of Commerce did not reply to requests for comment.

While Washington has said the trade stand-off with China is economically untenable and already offered tariff exemptions to some electronic goods, China has repeatedly said it is willing to fight to the end unless the U.S. lifts its 145% tariffs.

But China's economy headed into the trade war with rising unemployment, deflationary pressures and heightened concern that a mounting backlog of unsold exports could drive domestic prices even lower.

While China ran a nearly \$1 trillion trade surplus in 2024, it also relies on the United States for key imports, including ethane, a petrochemical needed to make plastics, and some drugs.

Big pharmaceutical companies including AstraZeneca and GSK have at least one manufacturing site in the U.S. for drugs sold in China, according to Chinese government data.

Major ethane processors have already sought tariff waivers from Beijing because the U.S. is the only supplier

Russian General killed in car bombing near Moscow

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A powerful car bomb ripped through a parked vehicle in Balashikha, a town east of Moscow, on Friday, killing Lieutenant General Yaroslav Moskalik, a senior figure in Russia's military command. The explosion occurred near a residential building and has sparked a full-scale investigation into murder and explosives smuggling, according to the Russian Investigative Committee.



General Moskalik, deputy head of the main operational directorate of the Russian military's General Staff, was a key strategic figure with a prominent role in Moscow's military operations. The Kremlin confirmed that President Vladimir Putin had promoted him to the rank of lieutenant general in 2021.

The blast, which investigators say was caused by an improvised explosive device packed with metal fragments, was caught on security camera footage and shows the moment the Volkswagen Golf was torn apart by the explosion. A person can be seen approaching the vehicle seconds before it detonates.

Images circulating on Russian social media show the gutted remains of the car engulfed in flames. Though the vehicle was not registered in Moskalik's name, the independent Russian outlet Agentstvo, citing

leaked data, confirmed the general resided in the area.

The incident has raised fresh concerns about the security of Russian officials, particularly those linked to the country's military activities in Ukraine. The attack bears striking similarities to previous high-profile killings of Russian military and political figures, many of which have been linked to Ukraine's security services.

While Kyiv has not commented on Moskalik's death, it has previously acknowledged involvement in several similar operations. These include the August 2022 assassination of nationalist commentator Darya Dugina, the April 2023 bombing that killed pro war military blogger Maxim Fomin (known as Vladlen Tatarsky), and the December 2023 scooter bomb that killed Russian chemical weapons

chief Igor Kirillov. Ukrainian intelligence claimed responsibility for Kirillov's death, describing it as a "special operation."

Moskalik also played a diplomatic role as Russia's military representative during the 2015 "Normandy format" talks on Ukraine, held amid rising tensions between Kyiv and Moscow-backed separatists.

Notably, Friday's bombing came on the heels of a scheduled diplomatic visit by U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, who was set to meet President Putin in Moscow to discuss a U.S.-backed peace proposal for Ukraine.

In a rare expression of criticism following Kirillov's killing last year, President Putin acknowledged lapses within Russia's security apparatus. "We must not allow such very serious blunders to happen," he said.

ICE admits to warrantless arrest of Mahmoud Khalil amid growing legal battle

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Trump administration has acknowledged that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested Columbia University activist Mahmoud Khalil in March without a warrant, a revelation now central to a legal battle that could determine whether the Syrian-born U.S. permanent resident will be deported.

Khalil, a vocal participant in pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University, was arrested outside his New York City apartment where he lived with his pregnant, U.S. citizen wife by ICE agents who did not possess a judicial warrant. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which oversees ICE, confirmed the warrantless nature of the arrest in a recent court filing, claiming “exigent circumstances” necessitated the action, alleging Khalil was likely to flee.

However, Khalil’s legal team has strongly contested that assertion.

“Tellingly, no agent present at the scene has ever submitted sworn or unsworn testimony that Mr. Khalil attempted to flee or otherwise posed a flight risk,” his attorneys argued in immigration court filings. They maintain Khalil fully cooperated with federal agents at the time of his arrest.

Now detained in Louisiana, Khalil has spent weeks in ICE custody and was recently denied temporary release to witness the birth of his son. His detention has drawn significant public attention and intensified scrutiny of the administration’s crackdown on foreign-born students involved in campus protests related to the ongoing war in Gaza.



While the Trump administration has said its actions are aimed at combating anti-Semitism and pro-Hamas rhetoric on college campuses, civil rights groups and legal experts argue the government is punishing students for exercising their First Amendment rights.

Despite facing no criminal charges, Khalil is being targeted for deportation on two controversial legal grounds. The administration accuses him of immigration fraud for allegedly withholding unspecified information during his green card application. In addition, Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently determined that Khalil’s presence poses “adverse foreign policy consequences” for the U.S.—a rarely invoked justification under immigration law.

Earlier this month, an immigration judge in Louisiana allowed the government’s deportation case to proceed, deferring to Rubio’s determination while putting the fraud allegation on hold.

In a parallel legal effort, Khalil’s lawyers have filed for asylum and withholding of removal, protections that could block his deportation. They’ve also taken his case to federal court in New Jersey, challenging both the legality of his detention and the administration’s broader effort to target pro-Palestinian activists.

That lawsuit seeks Khalil’s release, a revocation of the State Department’s adverse designation, and a court order prohibiting the government from retaliating against noncitizens for political expression protected by the U.S. Constitution.

Khalil’s case has become a lightning rod in the debate over free speech, civil liberties, and immigration enforcement, highlighting the fraught intersection of politics and policy in the current administration’s approach to dissent.

As his legal battles continue on multiple fronts, Khalil remains behind bars, separated from his family, his campus, and a newborn son he has yet to meet.

Three killed in Russian attack on Ukraine's Pavlohrad

By Fatimah Idera



Three people, including a child, were killed, and eight more were wounded in a Russian attack on the Ukrainian city of Pavlohrad, the regional governor said on Friday.

The governor for the central Dnipropetrovsk region, Serhiy Lysak, said on Telegram that “the aggressor again conducted a mass attack on the region with drones,” adding that 11 drones were destroyed over the region.

Lysak said that several fires had broken out in the city, posting a photo of a fire raging on some levels of a multi-storey building.

He said that six of the wounded were hospitalized while two others, including a 15-year-old girl, were treated on site.

“Unfortunately, there are already three dead in Pavlohrad. Among them is a child,” he said in a later update.

Search and rescue operations were ongoing, he added.

Ukraine’s Air Force said Russia launched 103 drones in overnight attacks across Ukraine, causing damage in five regions.

The industrial city of Pavlohrad

had a pre-war population of about 100,000 people. It is an important railway hub for the Dnipropetrovsk region, connecting it to the east of the country.

As a result of the attack, fires had also broken out on the sites of enterprises in the Synelnykivskiy and Samarivskiy districts, Lysak added.

Ukraine’s northeastern city of Kharkiv was also under drone attack, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said, adding that according to preliminary information, several private buildings were damaged.

PE Executive charged in shocking sexual assault case

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A former private equity executive and licensed attorney has been indicted on 116 counts following revelations that he transformed his luxury Midtown Manhattan apartment into a dungeon of sexual violence, complete with surveillance cameras, weapons, and torture tools.

Ryan Hemphill, 43, appeared in court Thursday to face a sweeping array of charges including predatory sexual assault, rape, drug possession, and witness tampering. Prosecutors allege that between October and March, Hemphill lured at least six women, possibly many more into a brutal web of abuse involving waterboarding, electrocution, and psychological manipulation.

Hemphill, once seen as a high-flying financier, now sits in a jail cell after pleading not guilty. He is accused of using sugar-daddy websites to prey on women seeking financial support, offering them large sums of money in exchange for sex and companionship. According to Assistant District Attorney Mirah Curzer, Hemphill would sometimes pay with fake cash, or not at all.

Court documents describe Hemphill as a man who used his law degree and financial power to coerce, control, and silence his victims. Prosecutors say he recorded many of the assaults, kept disturbing trophies, and manipulated his victims into revealing past sexual trauma, only to reenact their most painful memories during the attacks.

“He told these women he was untouchable,” said Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg. “This indictment makes clear that he was wrong.”



The apartment, just blocks from the Empire State Building, allegedly contained a cache of disturbing items: cattle prods, duct tape, handcuffs, and shock collars, as well as high-capacity ammunition and a stockpile of narcotics ranging from heroin to fentanyl. Images of some of the recovered items were made public in a chilling news release.

Prosecutors say Hemphill used psychological warfare, convincing victims they’d be arrested if they spoke out, some were allegedly coerced into filming “consent” videos or signing payout agreements to drop charges. In one case, he reportedly shackled a woman to his bed for hours as she begged to be freed.

Curzer emphasized that authorities believe many more victims may be out there. Surveillance footage recovered from the apartment shows hundreds of women, many naked, blindfolded, and visibly distressed.

“This wasn’t just abuse,” Curzer stated in court. “It was calculated torture.”

Hemphill was acquitted in 2015 of

charges related to allegedly choking and threatening a former girlfriend with a knifeflaming it was consensual. Prosecutors now argue that incident was a harbinger of the systematic cruelty to come.

Given the scope and depravity of the current charges, and concerns about Hemphill’s access to wealth and international connections, Judge Ann E. Scherzer ordered him held without bail. A request from his public defender to transfer him to a rehabilitation facility was swiftly denied.

“This case is beyond disturbing,” said NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch. “It represents a prolonged, deliberate campaign of violence against vulnerable women.”

The arraignment took place down the hall from the courtroom where Harvey Weinstein faces retrial, a haunting reminder that power, money, and prestige have long shielded predators from accountability.

But this time, prosecutors say, the law is catching up.

Ruben Amorim reveals Man Utd star risks missing rest of season

By New Daily Prime

Manchester United boss Ruben Amorim has revealed Portugal defender Diogo Dalot could miss the rest of the season after suffering a calf injury.

Dalot only appeared as a substitute in last Sunday's 1-0 loss against Wolves as Amorim tried to keep him fresh for the final games of the season.

But the versatile full-back has sustained a muscle problem that threatens to bring his campaign to an abrupt end.

"Diogo Dalot is out. He has something in his muscle, in his calf. He's out for these next games," Amorim told reporters ahead of Sunday's Premier League trip to Bournemouth.

Dalot has made 51 appearances for United this season in all competitions, missing just one match through suspension.

Asked if the 26-year-old could miss the rest of the season, Amorim added: "There is that possibility, but I don't know. We'll check week by week because he works really hard, he can recover quite well.

"He had a sequence of games that he played all the time. We tried to manage but some of the players have to play a lot of minutes."

Dalot's absence is a blow for United in with a crucial Europa League semi-final first leg trip to Athletic Bilbao looming on Thursday.

United limp into the weekend languishing in 14th place in the Premier League.

Amorim, who replaced the sacked Erik ten Hag in November, could preside over their worst league finish since they were relegated from the top-flight in 1973-74.

'Things can change'

Manchester United's English defender #05 Harry Maguire (2L) and teammates celebrate with their fans after Maguire



scores their fifth goal during the UEFA Europa League quarter-final final, second leg football match between Manchester United and Lyon at Old Trafford stadium in Manchester, north west England, on April 17, 2025. (Photo by Oli SCARFF / AFP)

United are already assured of their worst points total in the Premier League era, which started in 1992.

A major overhaul of United's underachieving squad is likely even if they win the Europa League.

Quizzed on whether he knows the players he would like to sell in the close-season, Amorim said: "Yeah, I could say that.

"Of course this is a conversation for the end of the week, but I have an idea that is clear because we have to do things early. But things can change until the end of the season."

Wolves forward Matheus Cunha is among United's targets but Amorim was unwilling to talk about the Brazil international.

"I will not say nothing about Matheus because if I say one time I will have to say for any situation whether that it's yes or no, so I will not comment about that," he

said.

"We are focused on this season. Even the way we are going to prepare the next season could change in these games, so it's hard to predict what is going to happen in the future."

United need to lift the Europa League to secure European action next term, with Champions League qualification on offer to the tournament winner.

But Amorim insisted United remain an attractive club for top players regardless of their European status.

"It's Manchester United. What I feel is that there's a lot of players that want to play for our club," he said.

"I know that if you look at our club in the moment it looks like sometimes with all the problems with the staff, people going, changing coach, the results, it looks a little bit of a problem in the moment.

"But we have a clear idea and that is the easiest part to explain for a player. And then every player wants to play for Manchester United."