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FG, states, LGs share N1.681tn FAAC allocation for April

By Friday Omosola



The Federal Government, FG, 36 states, and 774 local government councils have shared a total of N1.681 trillion as revenue for April 2025, the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) announced.

The amount represented a 6.5 per cent increase—equivalent to N110 billion—over the N1.578 trillion distributed in March.

According to a statement by Bawa Mokwa, Director of Press and Public Relations at the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, the revenue was shared during the FAAC meeting held in May 2025 in Abuja.

The distributable revenue of N1.681 trillion comprised statutory revenue of N962.88 billion, Value Added Tax (VAT) of N598.08 billion, Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL) of N38.86 billion, and Exchange Difference revenue of N81.41 billion.

The FAAC communique stated that the gross VAT revenue for April stood at N642.27 billion, up from N637.62 billion recorded in March, marking an increase of N4.65 billion.

From this amount, N25.69 billion was deducted as cost of collection and N18.50 billion was set aside for transfers, interventions, and refunds, leaving a balance of N598.08 billion for distribution.

Of the distributable VAT, the FG received N89.71 billion, states received N299.04 billion, and local government councils were allocated N209.33 billion.

Gross statutory revenue for April rose to N2.084 trillion, compared to N1.718 trillion in March—an increase of N365.60 billion.

From this, N73.74 billion was deducted for the cost of collection, while N1.047 trillion went to transfers, interventions, and refunds.

The remaining N962.88 billion in statutory revenue was shared as follows: the FG received N431.31 billion, states received N218.77 billion, and local governments got N168.66 billion.

An additional N144.15 billion was allocated to oil-producing states as 13 per cent derivation revenue.

From the N40.48 billion collected as Electronic Money Transfer Levy, N38.86 billion was shared among the three tiers of government.

The FG received N5.83 billion, states received N19.43 billion, and local governments got N13.60 billion. The remaining N1.62 billion was retained as collection cost.

Lastly, from the N81.41 billion generated from exchange rate differences, the FG received N38.45 billion, states got N19.50 billion, local governments received N15.03 billion, and oil-producing states were allocated N8.40 billion.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
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Tinubu arrives in Rome for Pope Leo XIV's inauguration

By Friday Omosola



President Bola Tinubu on Saturday arrived in Rome, Italy for the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Tinubu was invited to attend the inauguration of the 267th Bishop of Rome and the new leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

The solemn installation mass is scheduled for Sunday at the Vatican.

Tinubu touched down at the Mario De Bernardo Military Airport at 6pm local time, where he was received by Nigeria's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs,

Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, along with Vatican officials and representatives from the Nigerian Embassy.

His visit follows a formal invitation from the Vatican, conveyed through Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State.

The invitation highlighted the symbolic importance of Tinubu's presence 'at this moment of particular importance for the Catholic Church and the world afflicted by many tensions and conflicts.'

In his message, Pope Leo XIV noted his personal connection to

Nigeria.

"Your great nation is particularly dear to me as I worked in the Apostolic Nunciature in Lagos during the 1980s."

Accompanying Tinubu to the Vatican are several senior members of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, including the Archbishop of Owerri and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Archbishop Lucius Ugorji; Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Abuja; Archbishop Alfred Martins of Lagos; and the Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Mathew Hassan Kukah.

Army Chief optimistic about defeating nation's adversaries

By Friday Omosola



Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Olufemi Oluyede, has expressed confidence that those threatening the country's peace would soon be decisively overcome, promising the restoration of nationwide stability.

He spoke at the conclusion of the 2025 Nigerian Army Inter-Formation Ball Games, held at the Nigerian Defence Academy's old campus in Ribadu Cantonment, Kaduna.

Represented by the NDA Commandant, Major General Abdul Ibrahim—Oluyede reaffirmed the military's commitment to upholding its constitutional duties.

The week-long event brought together 250 athletes from various

army divisions and commands.

Participants competed across four sports: football, basketball, handball, and volleyball.

Divisions represented included the 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 81, and 82 Divisions, along with the Army Headquarters Garrison and the Special Forces Command.

Oluyede praised the athletes for their dedication, discipline, and display of camaraderie.

He said the sporting competition had successfully promoted physical fitness and strengthened bonds among personnel.

"I urge you all to carry forward the spirit of discipline, teamwork, courage, and mutual respect into

your various units," he told the participants.

1 Division claimed the top spot in the competition with five gold medals, followed by Army Headquarters Garrison with two, while 6 Division secured third place with one gold medal.

The Army Chief also expressed appreciation to the Kaduna State Government, NDA leadership, and other organisers for their support in making the event a success.

He added that the Directorate of Army Physical Training had spotted promising talents during the games, who could potentially represent the Nigerian Army and the country in future competitions.

Fubara is my 'boy,' not fighting him – Wike

By **Oluwatosin Ologun**

Nyesom Wike, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, has described his successor in Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara, as his "boy," amid the political rift between the two.

Wike, who is the former governor of Rivers State, said that though the President, Bola Tinubu, had sued for peace, he was not opposed to the move.

"That boy is my boy, my son. How can I fight a battle with him? Those I fight are people who want to steal what they did not work for.

"The President called me to make peace; I said, 'Boss, how will you tell me to make peace and I won't?'" he said in an interview with the BBC Pidgin.

The disagreement between Wike and Fubara led to a political crisis in the state.

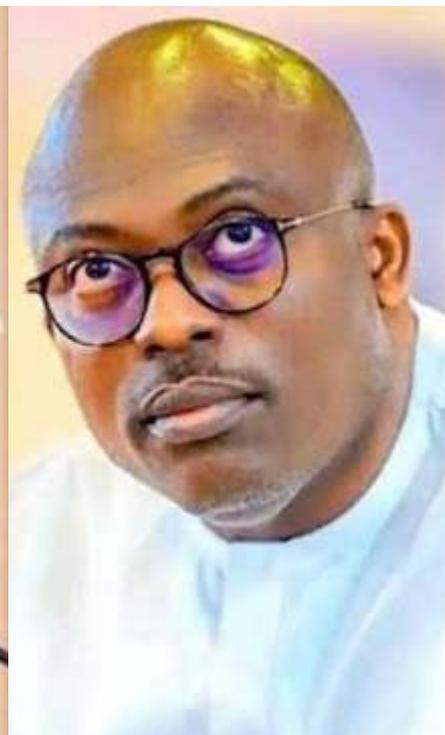
Consequently, President Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Rivers, suspending Fubara, his deputy, and the House of Assembly.

He also appointed a retired naval chief, Ibok-Ete Ibas, as the sole administrator to pilot the affairs of the state for the first six months.

The president's decision led to protests and counter-protests by different groups in the state.

Worried by Tinubu's decision, 11 Peoples Democratic Party governors filed a suit at the Supreme Court to challenge his action.

But the National Assembly urged the court to dismiss the suit filed by the PDP



governors challenging the declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State, contending that the suit was procedurally flawed and lacked merit.

It further argued that the court lacked the jurisdiction to entertain the suit and should award N1 billion in costs against the plaintiffs for filing what it termed a frivolous and speculative suit.

However, Fubara, on May 11, said he was not desperate to return to office.

Speaking at the service of songs held in honour of the late elder statesman, Edwin Clark, in Port Harcourt, the state capital, he said, "Do you even know if I want to go back there? My spirit has already left there," he said.

He further warned that some of the actions taken by some of his supporters, though well-intended, had only worsened the situation.

I will not contest against Tinubu in 2027

– Wike

Nyesom Wike, has said that he will not contest the 2027 presidential election against President Bola Tinubu.

He, however, said he remains a member of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

"I will not contest again. I cannot contest against someone I'm working with. Who would win, if not him?" he said in an interview with BBC Pidgin.

Wike, who is a former governor of Rivers State, had contested the ticket of the PDP in a bid to emerge as the party's presidential candidate for the 2023 election, but lost to a former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar.

The minister was also irked by the party's decision not to zone its presidential ticket to the South, a development that snowballed into an internal crisis that affected the party's performance in the election.

Lagos prioritises clean energy, education, jobs in new SDG plan

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has unveiled a strategic plan to prioritise 10 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a bid to fast-track inclusive growth, environmental sustainability, improved quality of life, and shared prosperity across the state.

The announcement was made yesterday by the Special Adviser to the Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu on Sustainable Development Goals, Oreoluwa Finnih, during the Y2025 Ministerial Press Briefing held at the Bagauda Kaltho Press Centre, Alausa, Ikeja.

Finnih stated that the decision to focus on 10 high-impact SDGs is rooted in a comprehensive framework that assessed the goals' impact and feasibility within the state context.

The prioritised goals include: Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

“This is not a policy shift but a deliberate and pragmatic approach inspired by both global and local realities,” she said.

She noted that Lagos chose to prioritise areas where it holds a comparative advantage while still integrating the remaining goals into broader development strategies.

Finnih emphasised that the approach aligns with global best practices, whereby



cities tailor the 17 goals to local priorities, often informed by outcomes from Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).

She added that the selected goals are those with the highest multiplier effects capable of accelerating progress across other SDGs.

Highlighting the achievements of the Office of SDGs in recent years, she cited the maiden Lagos sustainability summit as a landmark effort that laid out a roadmap for inclusive development, climate resilience, sustainable infrastructure, green jobs, and livelihoods.

She also spotlighted the Lighthouse Project—a flagship initiative targeting over 650,000 residents in hard-to-reach communities across Lagos' 20 LGAs—which has delivered critical interventions in education, healthcare, and sanitation, impacting over 800,000 people.

Furthermore, under the Advocacy for Women's Financial Inclusion programme, and in collaboration with African HCD+, Opay, Cowrywise,

NIMC, LASRRA, and LASHMA, 1,200 women in 12 underserved communities have been empowered with digital identification, health insurance, and financial literacy.

In partnership with the UNDP and the Insurance Development Forum, the Lagos Flood Risk Insurance Product has also been introduced to provide quick payouts and disaster resilience for vulnerable populations using a parametric insurance model.

Finnih said the Office is working to institutionalise the SDGs in public institutions, foster youth leadership through SDG Clubs in secondary schools, and improve civic engagement via the “SDGs and I” handbook.

Plans are also underway to replicate these clubs in all public primary schools.

She revealed that 3,400 households have so far benefitted from temporary employment under the NG-CARES programme, while 5,000 youth-led SMEs have received digital training through partnerships with the Alibaba Foundation and other innovation partners.

Experts urge urgent action to tackle obesity as 2 in 3 adults over age 25 may be overweight by 2030

By Helen Okechukwu

Health experts have called for urgent intervention from governments globally due to the growing number and implications of obesity, stating that 2 in 3 adults aged above 25 may become obese by 2030 if nothing is done.

One of the researchers who compiled the World Heart Federation report, Mariachiara Di Cesare, a Professor of Population Studies and Global Health, emphasized the need for health systems to strengthen and provide affordable healthcare access for obesity and cardiovascular disease patients.

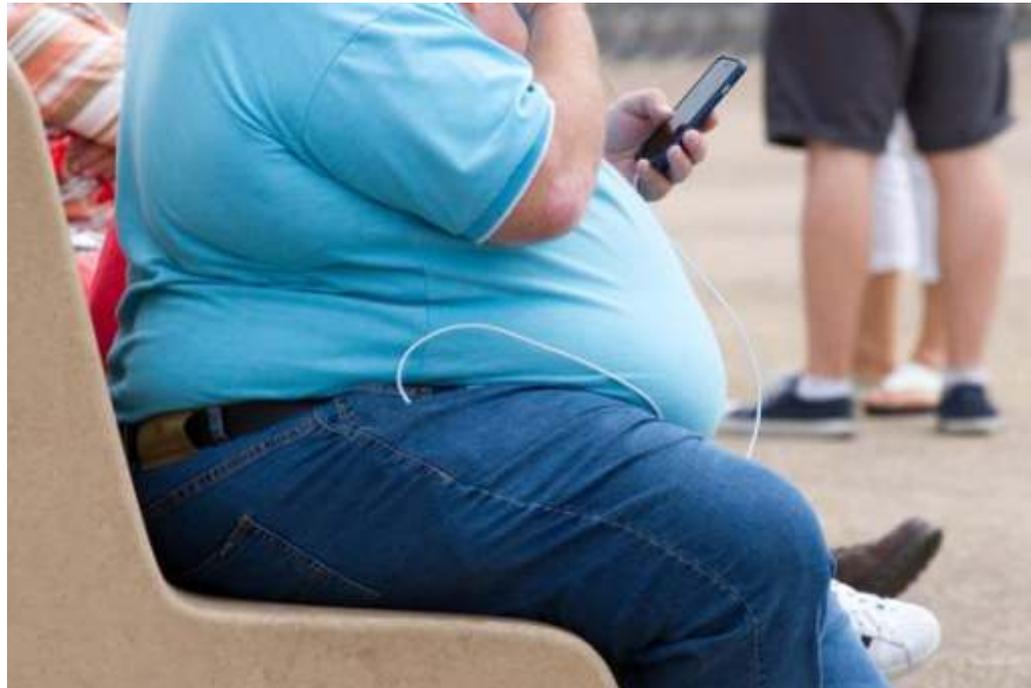
However, the World Heart Report attributed green spaces, access to affordable food, a shift towards desk jobs, and longer working hours to the rising number of obesity cases.

Also, the report acknowledged that “game-changing” medical interventions such as weight loss drugs show significant improvement.

With about 194 million adults living with obesity in 1990 rising to 878 million in 2022, it is noted that the number has quadrupled and is expected to increase.

Obesity, known for its health implications and risks, leads to 3.7 million deaths yearly. The NHS said it can lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and some cancers.

The World Heart Federation issued a stern warning that obesity is one of the major drivers of deaths from cardiovascular disease and needs to be addressed.



The report revealed that high BMI now contributes to nearly 10% of all cardiovascular deaths globally, doubling to 1.9 million fatalities over the past 30 years. Children with high BMI face a 40% higher risk of developing heart disease by midlife compared to peers with healthier weights.

The economic toll of obesity is also climbing. Globally, obesity-related healthcare costs, productivity losses, and early deaths now account for 2.2% of GDP—just under \$2 trillion annually—with projections rising to 3% by 2060.

Countries like the UK, Japan, and Rwanda are addressing the crisis by limiting fast-food outlets near schools and in high-obesity areas.

New medical treatments, such as the weight-loss jab Wegovy, offer promising

results.

However, the report warns that weight stigma remains a major barrier to progress. Many health professionals reportedly hold biased views, seeing patients with obesity as “non-compliant,” which discourages them from seeking care.

The stigma has lasting effects, particularly on children, who face bullying that harms their education and mental health.

“Longstanding weight stigma and discrimination have hindered efforts to tackle obesity and contributed to the rise of CVDs, so it is urgent to address both,” said a Mayo Clinic professor and report co-author while emphasising that effective policies must support underserved groups without reinforcing stigma.

Customs handovers N24.6 million worth of illicit drugs to NAFDAC

By Helen Okechukwu



Nigeria Customs Service, Federal Operations Unit Zone “A” has hand over large consignment of smuggled and unregistered pharmaceutical products worth N24.6 million to the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC).

This was made known through NAFDAC X page on Saturday.

The seized drugs include Tramadol 250mg in unauthorized pack sizes, which were illicitly brought into the country by suspected traffickers.

Read Also: NAFDAC alerts public on Zovirax IV Infusion 250mg RN3T, recalls over quality concern Along with the illegal drugs, Customs also transferred custody of a suspect to NAFDAC for further inquiry.

The statement, NAFDAC acknowledged the critical role the Customs Service plays in supporting national efforts to keep unsafe medicines out of circulation.

The agency praised Customs for its vigilance and consistent collaboration in protecting public

health.

“The banned Tramadol 250mg in unapproved pack sizes, which had been smuggled into the country by criminal traffickers. The seizure is valued at ₦24.6 million,” NAFDAC noted, adding that investigations are ongoing.

The agency reaffirmed its dedication to cracking down on the distribution of falsified and unapproved drugs, while calling on the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious pharmaceutical activities.

I made my girlfriend reject N3bn offer from Netflix to play kissing role, Peller says

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

In a surprising revelation during a recent livestream, popular Nigerian content creator and TikTok personality Habeeb Hamzat, who is widely known as Peller, claimed that he once rejected a ₦3 billion offer from Netflix.

The offer, according to him, was made to his girlfriend, Jarvis, for a kissing scene in a proposed film project.

The claim was made while Peller was chatting with Nigerian music star Peter Okoye of the music duo P-Square. The conversation quickly caught the attention of fans online, with many questioning the details and truth of the story.

“Netflix offered my girlfriend ₦3 billion” During the live session, Peller said Netflix had approached his girlfriend Jarvis with a huge offer. According to him, the deal involved her acting in a kissing scene, which he strongly opposed.

“Netflix offered 3 billion Naira to my girlfriend, Jarvis, to do a kissing scene, but I turned it down,” Peller said firmly during the livestream.

His statement shocked Peter, who quickly asked for clarification.

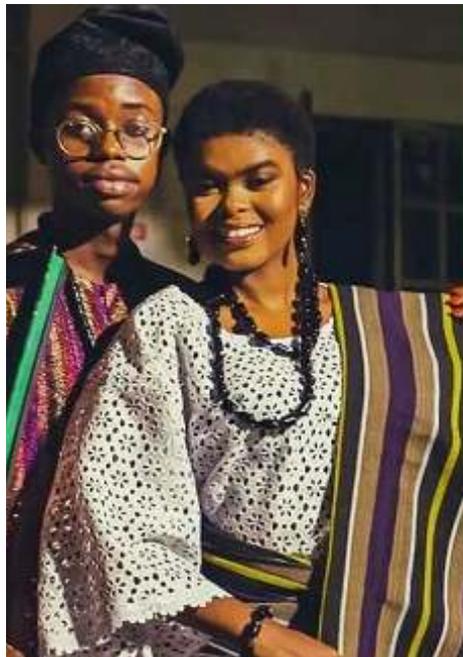
“Do you mean 3 million or 3 billion?” Peter asked, visibly surprised.

Peller responded without hesitation.

“Three billion! I know you might not believe me, but I have the record of the video call. I warned them never to contemplate such ever again. I love my baby. I don’t joke with my baby. She is my life.”

A bold declaration of love

While the claim sparked disbelief and debate online, Peller stood by his words.



He insisted that he made the decision out of love and loyalty. For him, the emotional value of his relationship outweighs any financial offer, no matter how large.

His remarks painted a picture of a man deeply protective of his partner. He repeated that Jarvis means the world to him and that no amount of money could change how he chooses to treat her.

“I don’t care how much they are offering,” Peller said. “She’s my life. I’m not trading that for anything.”

Peter Okoye responds

Peter, who listened carefully throughout the conversation, reacted calmly. While he did not confirm or deny the details of the story, he gave a short but thoughtful response:

“Always look out for her,” he said.

Peter’s comment appeared to support Peller’s decision to prioritize love and loyalty over money. However, the story still left many fans with questions.

Public reaction and social media buzz

Following the livestream, social media users quickly picked up on the story. Some expressed admiration for Peller’s strong feelings toward his girlfriend. Others, however, questioned whether such a massive offer from Netflix could be real.

Who is Peller?

Habeeb Hamzat, aka Peller, is known for his energetic TikTok videos and bold personality online. Over the past year, he has gained a strong following among young Nigerians, especially Gen Z fans who enjoy his content.

He often shares moments from his life and relationship with Jarvis, making them a popular couple on social media. Their frequent livestreams, dancing videos, and romantic posts have earned them a loyal fan base.

Final thoughts

While the truth behind the ₦3 billion claim may remain unclear, the livestream added another layer to Peller’s growing fame. Whether exaggerated or not, the story showed how seriously he values love and loyalty.

Women offer me millions for sex, gospel singer Toluwani Sings

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian gospel musician, Toluwani Sings, has revealed that some women have offered him millions of naira in exchange for sex.

The singer made this shocking claim during a recent interview where he opened up about the pressures of fame.

Speaking with media personality Teju Babyface, Toluwani explained how he deals with the temptations surrounding his growing popularity. According to him, fame has opened doors, but not all of them are good. Some, he said, are dangerous and full of traps.

‘I tell my wife everything’

The gospel singer stressed the importance of honesty and communication in his marriage. He said that one of the ways he protects himself from falling into temptation is by being completely transparent with his wife.

“If any woman asks me out, I always discuss it with my wife when I get home,” he said. “There’s nothing I hide from her.”

Toluwani explained that this open communication keeps him grounded and accountable. He believes that keeping secrets in such situations can lead to bigger problems, especially when fame brings unwanted attention.

Women offer money and trips

Toluwani shared that women constantly make bold moves on him. Some go as far as offering him large sums of money just to date them. Others even offer him international trips.

“Several women make advances on me. Some want to give me millions to date them,” he said. “Even older women want to take me out of the country.”



He recalled a shocking experience that happened while he was working in the studio. A woman called him on a video call, and what he saw left him stunned.

“I was in the studio one day when one woman called me on video. I shouted ‘Jesus!’ at what I saw when I picked up the call,” he said.

Toluwani did not go into detail about what he saw, but his reaction showed it was something he considered inappropriate and unexpected.

The dangers of fame

Beyond the shocking offers and attention, Toluwani warned that fame can become a danger if not managed well. He believes that without strong moral values, many people can lose their way.

“Fame can be very destructive,” he said. “And if you aren’t born again, you will misbehave.”

For Toluwani, having a strong spiritual foundation is key. He emphasised the need for gospel artists and anyone in the public eye to stay rooted in faith and humility.

Without it, he said, the pressure and temptations that come with fame can easily lead to a downfall.

Advice to young artists

Toluwani also used the opportunity to advise up-and-coming musicians. He encouraged them to stay focused on their purpose and not be distracted by the flashy lifestyle or attention that may come with fame.

“Don’t let popularity control you,” he said. “You must know who you are, and why you are doing what you do.”

He pointed out that not every opportunity is a blessing, and not every admirer has good intentions. According to him, artists must learn to say no and always remember their values and their mission.

Faith and family keep him grounded

Throughout the interview, Toluwani made it clear that his faith in God and the support of his wife play a big role in helping him stay on the right path. He said being honest at home and staying close to God are the best defences against the temptations that fame brings.

Chris Brown remanded over assault charges UK

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

American R&B singer Chris Brown has been remanded in custody by Manchester Magistrates' Court following allegations of a violent assault, London's Metropolitan Police said on Saturday.

The court denied the star bail on Friday, citing the seriousness of the charges and the limits of the court's jurisdiction.

Bail refused by magistrate

Justice Joanne Hirst, who presided over the brief court hearing, ordered that Brown remain in custody pending further proceedings. According to the judge, the case involved severe allegations and was beyond the scope of the Magistrates' Court.

As a result, she transferred the matter to Southwark Crown Court in London. The next hearing is scheduled for June 13, 2025.

Brown, 36, appeared calm in court but showed little emotion when the judge announced the bail refusal and case transfer.

Arrest at Salford Hotel

The singer was arrested on Thursday at The Lowry Hotel in Salford, Greater Manchester. Officers reportedly detained him without incident in connection with an alleged attack that took place last year.

According to police, the arrest stems from an incident at Tape nightclub in Mayfair, London, in 2023. Brown is accused of attacking music executive Abe Diaw with a glass bottle during a heated altercation inside the club.



The alleged victim was rushed to the hospital after suffering serious injuries. He has since filed a \$16 million civil lawsuit against Brown, citing both physical harm and financial loss from the incident.

Charge of grievous bodily harm

Following his arrest, the singer was formally charged with grievous bodily harm (GBH). GBH is considered a serious criminal offence under UK law and is typically handled by the Crown Court.

The charge carries heavy legal consequences if proven, including the possibility of a long prison sentence.

In court, prosecutors described the alleged assault as "violent and unprovoked," claiming it caused significant injuries and long-term effects for the victim.

The judge, noting the seriousness of the charge and the risk of flight, ruled against granting bail. Brown will remain in custody until his next appearance before the Crown Court.

Alleged victim seeks millions in damages
The alleged victim, Abe Diaw, is a music executive with several years in the

entertainment business. He claims the incident left him with permanent scars and emotional distress, which affected both his personal life and professional standing.

In his lawsuit, filed earlier this year in the United States, Diaw accused Brown of acting "recklessly and violently" and demanded \$16 million in damages. His legal team argues that the injuries sustained in the nightclub incident have led to medical expenses, lost income, and mental trauma.

So far, Brown has not publicly responded to the lawsuit or the criminal charges.

A troubled history

Chris Brown is no stranger to legal controversy. Over the years, the singer has faced multiple accusations and arrests, many of which involve allegations of violence.

In 2009, he pleaded guilty to assaulting fellow musician Rihanna, his then-girlfriend, in an incident that made global headlines. Since then, Brown has had several run-ins with the law, including charges related to assault, drug use, and probation violations.

US ambassador to Ukraine resigns, slams Trump foreign policy

By **Fatimah Idera**

Former US Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink resigned from her role in April, citing disagreement with President Donald Trump's foreign policy.

In an op-ed published in the Detroit Free Press, Brink stated that Trump's policy has been to pressure Ukraine rather than Russia. She emphasized that peace at any price is not peace at all, but appeasement.

Brink, a career diplomat, served as ambassador to Ukraine from May 2022 until her departure last month. As a long-serving diplomat, she felt it was her duty to step down due to the policy differences. Under Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, Brink took a public line supportive of Ukraine.



After Trump assumed office in January 2025, Brink's public statements became more neutral. She was criticized by Ukrainian President Volodymyr

Zelenskiy in April for her response to a Russian missile strike that killed 20 people. Shortly after, the State Department announced Brink's departure.

Man who stabbed, partially blinded Salman Rushdie bags 25yrs imprisonment

By **Fatimah Idera**

Hadi Matar, 27, has been sentenced to 25 years in prison for stabbing and partially blinding author Salman Rushdie onstage at a Western New York Arts Institute in 2022.

The attack also wounded Henry Reese, co-founder of the City of Asylum. Chautauqua County District Attorney Jason Schmidt said Rushdie has been traumatized and experiences nightmares.

Matar was found guilty of attempted murder and assault in February. The prosecution argued that Matar's actions were a major setback for Rushdie, who had been in hiding due to death threats since the publication of his novel "The Satanic Verses" in 1988. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had denounced the book as blasphemous, leading to a fatwa calling for Rushdie's death.



The attack occurred on August 12, 2022, when Matar rushed the stage and stabbed Rushdie multiple times in the head, neck, torso, and left hand. Rushdie's injuries included blindness in one eye and damage to his liver and intestines, requiring emergency surgery and months of recovery. Reese was also stabbed and suffered a shallow knife wound and deep bruising near his right eye.

Matar's defence lawyers argued that prosecutors failed to prove intent to kill, and his attorney Nathaniel Barone said Matar would appeal the verdict. Matar faces additional federal charges for attempting to murder Rushdie as an act of terrorism and providing material support to Hezbollah, a designated terrorist organization. He will face those charges in a separate trial.

Over 140 killed in Gaza as Israel launched major offensive

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

At least 146 Palestinians have been killed in the last 24 hours in Gaza, marking one of the deadliest escalations in the war since ceasefire talks collapsed in March. The intensified Israeli bombardment comes amid a near-total blockade on humanitarian aid, sparking international outrage and fears of a looming famine.

According to Palestinian health officials, more than 300 people have died since Thursday due to Israeli airstrikes. The director of the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza, Dr. Marwan al-Sultan, described the situation as “catastrophic,” reporting dozens of victims still trapped under the rubble. “Since midnight, we have received 58 martyrs,” he said early Saturday.

The sharp increase in casualties follows Israel’s launch of Operation Gideon’s Chariots, a large-scale military offensive aimed at regaining “operational control” over parts of Gaza. Israeli officials say the campaign is intended to pressure Hamas into releasing hostages taken during the October 2023 attacks, which left approximately 1,200 Israelis dead. Hamas is believed to still be holding 57 of the 250 hostages.

UN human rights chief Volker Türk condemned the bombardment, stating the attacks and continued blockade amounted to ethnic cleansing. “This latest barrage of bombs ... and the denial of humanitarian assistance underline that there appears to be a push for a permanent demographic shift in Gaza that is in defiance of international law,” Türk said Friday.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres echoed Türk’s comments during a speech at the Arab League summit in Baghdad, calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump concluded a four-day visit to the Gulf, during which Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar pledged billions in investments in the United States. Hopes



that Trump’s presence might reinvigorate peace efforts were dashed after he proposed turning Gaza into a “freedom zone,” a controversial suggestion interpreted as a U.S. takeover plan.

Back in Gaza, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated rapidly. Since Israel’s full aid blockade began on March 2, children in Gaza have faced soaring malnutrition rates. Medical care remains scarce due to supply shortages and repeated strikes on health facilities. UN aid chief Tom Fletcher warned of an impending famine during a Security Council address, stating, “We can save hundreds of thousands of survivors... if aid is allowed in.”

Israel has defended the blockade, accusing Hamas of diverting humanitarian aid for military purposes. It has proposed a new distribution plan involving private contractors under Israeli military protection. The U.S.-backed initiative, known as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, is expected to begin operations by month’s end.

However, international aid groups have strongly criticized the plan, calling it impractical and potentially illegal. They argue it could lead to forced displacement

and urge Israel to lift the blockade and restore aid coordination through established humanitarian agencies such as the UN.

In response to the escalating crisis, Arab League ministers at the Baghdad summit pledged \$40 million toward the reconstruction of Gaza and Lebanon. Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein emphasized the need for regional-led rebuilding efforts, distancing the bloc from Trump’s proposed interventionist agenda.

A potential breakthrough may still be on the horizon. Hamas confirmed on Saturday that new ceasefire negotiations with Israel are underway in Doha, Qatar. A senior Hamas official, Taher al-Nono, told Reuters that discussions were ongoing without preconditions.

Since the beginning of the conflict in October, over 53,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to local health authorities. As the war rages on, the death toll continues to climb, and international pressure mounts for a ceasefire to prevent further humanitarian catastrophe.

Iranian trio face charges in UK for alleged spying activities

By **Fatimah Idera**

Three Iranian men appeared in court in London on Saturday accused of offenses under the National Security Act following a major counter-terrorism investigation by British police.

The three men have been charged with engaging in conduct likely to assist a foreign intelligence service between August 14, 2024, and February 16, 2025, police said, adding that the foreign state to which the charges relate is Iran.

The charges come at a time of intense scrutiny of suspected Iran-backed activities in Britain. Interior Minister Yvette Cooper said Britain would take separate action to address the serious issues raised by the case of the three men.

“Iran must be held to account for its actions,” she said in a statement. “We must also strengthen our powers to protect our national security as we will not tolerate growing state threats on our soil.”

The charges against the three men come after police arrested eight men, including seven Iranians, earlier in May, in two separate operations which Cooper said were some of the biggest investigations of their kind in recent years. The three men – Mostafa Sepahvand, 39, Farhad Javadi Manesh, 44, and Shapoor Qalehali Khani Noori, 55 – were remanded in custody and will appear at a preliminary hearing at the central criminal court on June 6.

Sepahvand, whose application for bail was denied, arrived in Britain in



2016 concealed in a lorry, the court heard, while the other two men arrived by irregular means, the government said, including via small boats across the Channel. Immigration is a major political issue in Britain, where many voters are worried over the high numbers of arrivals. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has promised to reduce the number of small boat crossings by targeting people smuggling gangs.

Britain’s domestic spy chief Ken McCallum said last year that officers had responded since 2022 to 20 Tehran-backed plots that potentially posed lethal threats to UK citizens and residents. The court on Saturday heard allegations that the three men had targeted Britain-based journalists connected with Iran International, a broadcaster which is critical of the Iranian government.

Sepahvand was also charged with surveillance and intending to commit serious violence against a person in Britain, while Manesh and

Noori were charged with surveillance and the intention that serious violent acts would be committed by others. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has previously said he was “disturbed” to learn that Iranian citizens had been arrested by British authorities. He said Tehran was ready to assist in investigations if “credible allegations of misconduct are established,” while another foreign ministry official rejected any accusations against Iran as “baseless”.

In 2023, an Austrian national was convicted of carrying out “hostile reconnaissance” against the London headquarters of Iran International. Last year, a British journalist of Iranian origin who worked for Iran International was stabbed in London. The British government has placed Iran on the highest tier of its foreign influence register, requiring Tehran to register everything it does to exert political influence in the UK.

Court lifts order halting Trump from stripping federal workers' ability to unionise

By Friday Omosola



A Federal Appeal court has lifted an order blocking President Donald Trump's administration from stripping hundreds of thousands of federal employees of their ability to unionize and collectively bargain over working conditions.

The 2-1 panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit put on hold an injunction issued by U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman at the behest of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU). The union had blocked the implementation of Trump's executive order issued in March.

The NTEU and the White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the ruling. Trump's order exempted more than a dozen federal agencies from obligations to bargain with unions, including the departments of Justice, State, Defense, Treasury, Veterans Affairs,

and Health and Human Services. These agencies are said to have primary functions related to intelligence, counterintelligence, investigative, or national security work.

The union, representing about 160,000 federal employees, argued that the order violates federal workers' labor rights and the Constitution. However, the appeals court's majority found that the union failed to demonstrate it would suffer irreparable harm to justify the preliminary injunction issued on April 25. U.S. Circuit Judges Karen Henderson and Justin Walker, appointees of Republican President George H.W. Bush and Trump respectively, formed the majority.

The majority opinion stated that preserving the President's autonomy under a statute recognizing his national-security expertise is within the public interest. They also argued

that the injunction would impede Trump's national-security prerogatives. In contrast, U.S. Circuit Judge J. Michelle Childs, an appointee of Trump's Democratic predecessor Joe Biden, dissented, saying the Trump administration presented only "vague assertions" about potential interference with national security functions.

Trump's executive order affects approximately 75% of the roughly 1 million federal workers represented by unions. The NTEU estimates the order applies to around 100,000 of its members. The order significantly expands an exception from collective bargaining for workers with duties affecting national security, such as certain CIA and FBI employees. The Trump administration has also filed separate lawsuits seeking to invalidate existing union contracts covering thousands of workers.

Storms sweep Midwest, leaving 21 dead

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A sweeping and deadly weather system tore across the Midwest on Friday, leaving a trail of destruction and heartbreak in its wake. At least 21 people have been confirmed dead across multiple states, with Kentucky, Missouri, and Illinois bearing the brunt of the devastation.

In southeastern Kentucky, a catastrophic tornado caused what authorities are calling a mass casualty event, killing nine people in Laurel County alone. According to Governor Andy Beshear, the overall death toll in the state has climbed to 14, with that number expected to rise as search efforts continue.

“Kentucky, we’re starting today with the tough news that we lost at least 14 of our people to last night’s storms, but sadly, this number is expected to grow as we receive more information. Please pray for all of our affected families,” Beshear posted Saturday on X (formerly Twitter).

Authorities reported that the tornado touched down late Friday night, tearing through rural communities and even flipping a vehicle on Interstate 75. Structures were reduced to rubble, and rescue crews have been working around the clock to search for survivors. Emergency shelters have been set up, and donations from the community have been pouring in.

“Lives have been changed forever here tonight,” said London Mayor Randall Weddle. “This is a time we come together and pray for this community.”

In St. Louis, Missouri, at least five people lost their lives. Mayor Cara Spencer confirmed over 5,000 homes were affected, describing the situation as “truly devastating.” A state of



emergency has been declared, and an overnight curfew was imposed on Friday to ensure public safety.

The National Weather Service confirmed a tornado touched down in the St. Louis area between 2:30 and 2:50 p.m., striking near Forest Park, a historic location that once hosted the 1904 World’s Fair and Olympics.

One of the most tragic incidents occurred at Centennial Christian Church, where the structure partially collapsed. Three individuals were trapped, one of whom, Patricia Penelton, a beloved church volunteer, did not survive.

Meanwhile, in Scott County, Missouri, two additional fatalities were reported. The twister there destroyed multiple homes and left several injured.

The chaos extended into Illinois, where a tornado touched down near the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Marion. While the prison itself was spared, staff housing sustained major damage, leading to temporary lockdown procedures and accountability checks.

In Texas, though spared from tornadoes, the state has been gripped

by a punishing heatwave, with emergency alerts issued for vulnerable populations.

Across the Great Lakes region, the storm left hundreds of thousands without power, toppling trees and traffic signals, and grinding commutes to a halt. In Wisconsin, more tornadoes were reported, though damage assessments are ongoing.

The National Weather Service’s Storm Prediction Center has warned that the threat isn’t over, with more severe storms, large hail, and tornadoes expected in North Texas and the Southern Plains in the coming days.

As communities begin the painful process of recovery, the stories of resilience are already emerging. From neighbors helping clear debris to shelters overflowing with donations, the Midwest is rallying together, one broken beam and one hopeful prayer at a time.

“Everything was tore up,” said Jeffrey Simmons Sr., a Missouri resident who sought refuge in his basement during the storm. “But we’re still standing.”

FA Cup: Crystal Palace defeat Man City 1-0 to win first major title

By Damilola Olufemi

In a historic triumph at Wembley, Crystal Palace clinched their first-ever major title with a stunning 1-0 win over Manchester City in the FA Cup final on Saturday. The decisive moment came early, as Eberechi Eze volleyed home in the 16th minute, sparking euphoric celebrations across South London.

Eze, a local hero and driving force in Palace's run to the final, capitalized on a rare early attack to give his side the lead against the flow of play. Manchester City, dominant in possession and packed with attacking talent, created a barrage of chances but were repeatedly thwarted by Palace goalkeeper Dean Henderson, who delivered a performance for the ages.

Despite relentless pressure, including a penalty miss from Omar Marmoush and several close-range efforts, City couldn't find a way past Henderson. The former Manchester United shot-stopper denied Erling Haaland and Josko Gvardiol in the first half, then saved Marmoush's spot-kick after Tyrick Mitchell brought down Bernardo Silva.

Crystal Palace coach makes history for self

Palace, led by manager Oliver Glasner—now the first Austrian to lift the FA Cup—stood firm despite City enjoying 81 per cent possession. Glasner, who took over just 15 months ago, guided his side through a storm of City attacks with tactical discipline and defensive resilience.

City, who have dominated English football in recent years, have now gone two consecutive seasons without an FA Cup win and will end this



campaign without any domestic silverware—a rare drought for Pep Guardiola's men.

The match opened with City in total control, pushing Palace deep into their own half. Kevin De Bruyne, playing his final Wembley match for City, orchestrated early chances, including a lofted pass to Haaland that forced an acrobatic save from Henderson.

But Palace struck against the run of play when Jean-Philippe Mateta and Daniel Muñoz combined on a counterattack. Muñoz's low cross was met by Eze, who rifled a first-time volley past Stefan Ortega.

Palace nearly doubled their lead moments later through Ismaïla Sarr, but Ortega was equal to the challenge. Henderson had a scare when he appeared to handle outside his area under pressure from Haaland, but a VAR review spared him further punishment.

City's chance to draw level came before halftime via the penalty spot, but Marmoush's tame effort was saved

by Henderson, who guessed correctly and palmed it wide. The save sent Palace fans into delirium and added to the growing sense that this might finally be their day.

City continued to dominate after the break, but Henderson made a spectacular diving stop to deny Jérémy Doku. Muñoz thought he had doubled the lead midway through the second half, but a lengthy VAR check ruled the goal out for offside.

As the match entered a nerve-racking 10 minutes of stoppage time, Palace defended with everything they had, repelling wave after wave of City attacks. When the final whistle finally blew, the stadium erupted to the sound of "Glad All Over" as Palace players and supporters celebrated a moment they had waited over a century for.

It was third time lucky for Palace, who had fallen short in FA Cup finals in 1990 and 2016. On this unforgettable day, they rewrote their history, at the expense of a faltering football juggernaut.

Bayern end season in style as Müller bids emotional farewell

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Bayern Munich signed off their Bundesliga title-winning campaign in dominant fashion with a 4-0 victory over Hoffenheim at the PreZero Arena, as club legend Thomas Müller made his final appearance for the Bavarian giants.

The 35-year-old forward, a one-club man who has been part of Bayern's senior setup since 2008, was given an emotional send-off after racking up 503 Bundesliga appearances and 248 goals for the club. Saturday's match marked the end of an era, with Müller bowing out after helping Bayern claim yet another league title—his 13th in an astonishingly decorated career that also includes two Champions League triumphs.

Müller started the match but was replaced by Harry Kane on the hour mark to a standing ovation from both sets of fans. Though he couldn't add to his impressive goalscoring tally in his final outing, his presence symbolised the stability and success Bayern have enjoyed during his tenure.

Olise Opens the Scoring

The champions wasted no time asserting their dominance, and in the 33rd minute, Michael Olise broke the deadlock with a brilliant free-kick. The French winger curled the ball over the wall and into the near post, leaving Hoffenheim goalkeeper Oliver Baumann rooted to the spot.

Despite the early setback, Hoffenheim showed flashes of resistance. Striker Andrej Kramaric, a known thorn in Bayern's side with eight goals against them in previous encounters, nearly pulled one back shortly after half-time. However, his effort in a one-on-one with Bayern captain Manuel Neuer was denied by the veteran goalkeeper, keeping the visitors ahead.



Bayern Turn on the Style

The miss proved costly as Bayern soon doubled their lead in the 53rd minute. Joshua Kimmich found the net from close range, his shot taking a deflection on its way past Baumann after Olise had turned provider.

The third goal arrived in the 80th minute when Serge Gnabry drilled a low shot from the edge of the area, capitalizing on a clever pass from Harry Kane, who was growing increasingly influential after coming off the bench.

Kane then capped off Bayern's dominant performance in the 86th minute. Set up by right-back Sacha Boey, the England captain calmly slotted the ball into the bottom corner, scoring his 26th Bundesliga goal of the season—a remarkable tally in his debut campaign in Germany.

Farewells and Futures

The match was also notable for another farewell: Eric Dier, Kane's former Tottenham Hotspur teammate, made his final appearance for Bayern before his summer move to Monaco. The versatile defender, who joined in January, was solid at the back and departs having added

a Bundesliga medal to his résumé.

There was late involvement for Leroy Sané as well, who came off the bench amid speculation surrounding his future at the club. Reports suggest a summer exit could be on the cards for the winger, who has been linked with Premier League and Saudi Pro League sides.

Champions in Command

Bayern's 4-0 win ensured they finished the season a commanding 13 points clear of their closest rivals, Bayer Leverkusen. Despite criticism earlier in the campaign, the Bavarians rallied impressively under manager Thomas Tuchel, combining youth and experience to deliver yet another league title.

As for Hoffenheim, despite the heavy defeat, they managed to steer clear of the relegation play-off thanks to Heidenheim's loss to Werder Bremen. With safety secured, they will look to rebuild over the summer.

For Bayern, the focus now shifts to life after Müller—and perhaps a summer of transition. But if Saturday's performance is anything to go by, the future still looks red, white, and ruthlessly efficient.

Henderson heroics overshadowed by VAR controversy

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Dean Henderson emerged as the headline name in a pulsating FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday, as Crystal Palace clinched their first-ever major trophy with a dramatic 1-0 win over Manchester City. But despite his match-winning performance — capped by a stunning penalty save — it was a controversial first-half incident that has sparked widespread debate and overshadowed the occasion for some.

In the 28th minute, with Palace clinging to their 1-0 lead courtesy of Eberechi Eze's 16th-minute strike, Manchester City's Josko Gvardiol launched a long ball over the top for Erling Haaland to chase. Henderson, caught in two minds, raced out of his area and reached for the ball just outside the penalty box — using his hand to push it clear and away from the advancing striker.

The moment, replayed repeatedly across social media and television screens, left many viewers stunned that referee Stuart Attwell did not issue a red card. VAR reviewed the incident but opted not to intervene, concluding that the contact did not deny an “obvious goalscoring opportunity.”

According to the explanation offered, Haaland's direction of travel was “away from goal” and Palace defender Maxence Lacroix had made up ground to cover, leading officials to decide against a dismissal.

Yet former players and pundits have reacted with incredulity. Wayne Rooney, speaking on BBC One, branded the decision a “100% red card” and slammed the use of VAR:

“Erling Haaland is about to knock it around [Henderson] and Dean Henderson sweeps the ball away. It's a red card — how can they get this wrong? Just get rid of VAR.”

Rooney's fury was echoed by Alan



Shearer, who acknowledged Henderson's outstanding performance but conceded he was “slightly fortunate” to remain on the pitch.

The rules regarding denial of a goalscoring opportunity — often referred to as DOGSO — depend on several factors: the distance to goal, the direction of play, the number of defenders, and the attacker's control of the ball. Critics argue that while Lacroix was recovering, Haaland still had a genuine chance to score, and Henderson's deliberate handball constituted a clear breach.

Adding to the controversy was the fact that Manchester City were not even awarded a free-kick for the offence. The failure to penalise the incident has only heightened scrutiny of both Attwell and the VAR team.

Despite the controversy, Henderson's performance will go down in Palace folklore. Minutes after the handball, he produced a full-stretch save to deny Omar Marmoush from the penalty spot, a moment that would ultimately define the final. City dominated possession and registered 23 shots — the most ever recorded without scoring in an FA Cup final — but Palace's resilience held firm.

Post-match, City manager Pep Guardiola remained tight-lipped, repeatedly telling reporters to “ask the referee” when questioned on the incident. Bernardo Silva, speaking to BBC Radio 5 Live, admitted the team “missed quality in the final third,” though he too acknowledged that the Henderson incident may have changed the outcome.

Crystal Palace boss Oliver Glasner, for his part, focused on the historic nature of the win.

“The spirit and togetherness on the pitch was amazing. We knew we had to be patient. Today, it worked.”

But for all the celebrations in south London, the debate over VAR's role in football — and its apparent inconsistency — rages on. For many fans and pundits alike, the FA Cup final was not just a story of triumph and underdog glory, but another chapter in the sport's increasingly complex relationship with technology.

As the curtain falls on the 2024-25 season, the question remains: was Henderson the hero of Wembley — or simply the beneficiary of a system still unable to deliver clarity?