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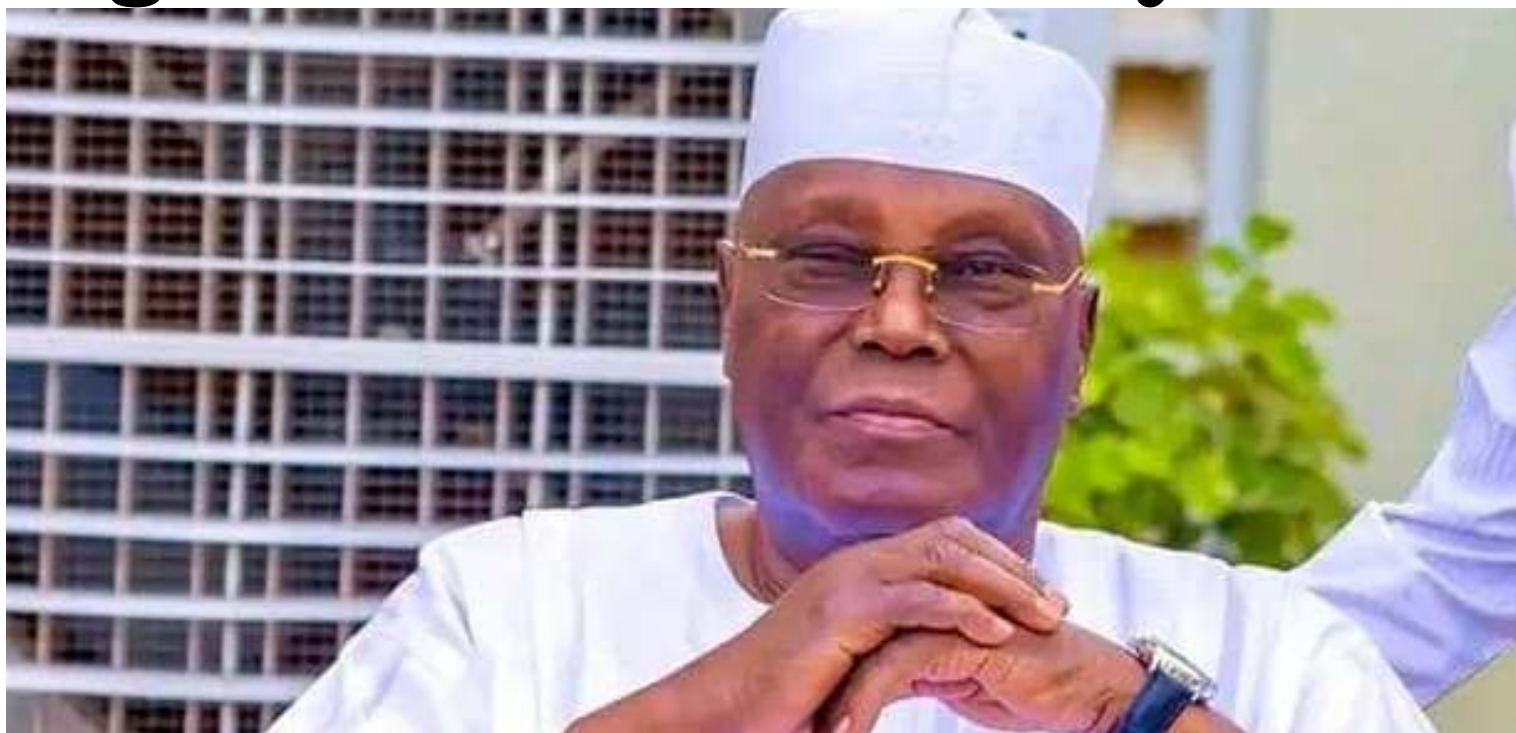


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FG, states, LGs share N2.001trn FAAC for July 2025

By Helen Okechukwu



The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) has shared a total of N2.001 trillion to the three tiers of government as allocation for July 2025.

The distribution followed the committee's August meeting chaired by the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Wale Edun.

The shared sum came from a gross revenue inflow of N3.836 trillion, comprising statutory revenue, Value Added Tax (VAT), Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL), and exchange gains.

Out of the distributable amount, the Federal Government (FG) received N735.081 billion, while the states got N660.349 billion.

Local Government Councils (LGC)

collected N485.039 billion, and oil-producing states earned N120.359 billion as 13% derivation.

FAAC explained that N152.681 billion went for the cost of revenue collection, while N1.683 trillion was set aside for transfers, interventions, and refunds.

On sectoral breakdowns, VAT revenue for the month stood at N687.940 billion, slightly higher than June's figure of N678.165 billion.

From this, N640.610 billion was distributed after statutory deductions, with the Federal Government receiving N96.092 billion, the states N320.305 billion, and Local Government Councils N224.214 billion.

Statutory revenue contributed N3.070 trillion, which was lower

than the preceding month by N415.108 billion.

After deductions, N1.282 trillion was shared, with the Federal Government taking N613.805 billion, states N311.330 billion, councils N240.023 billion, and oil-producing states N117.714 billion as derivation.

Similarly, FAAC allocated N39.168 billion from EMTL and N39.745 billion from exchange differences to the three tiers of government.

According to the committee, revenue from Petroleum Profit Tax, excise duty, EMTL, and oil and gas royalties recorded significant growth, while VAT and import duty rose marginally. However, Company Income Tax and CET levies experienced declines.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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9X4	193,500.00
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
5X3	66,875.00
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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
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5X4	65,833.00
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Nigeria to prioritise domestic arms manufacturing to combat insecurity

By Friday Omosola

In a move to bolster Nigeria's security forces, President Bola Tinubu, represented by Vice President Kashim Shettima, has pledged to fast-track the domestic production of weapons and ammunition.

Speaking at the graduation of Course 33 at the National Defence College (NDC) in Abuja, the president emphasised that this initiative would reduce the country's reliance on foreign arms suppliers and strengthen its fight against various security threats.

The president highlighted that enhancing Nigeria's capacity to manufacture its own military equipment is crucial for both national security and economic development.

He acknowledged a research paper from the NDC on "Harnessing Indigenous Manufacturing for Enhanced National Security," and said he has instructed relevant government bodies to review its recommendations.

Tinubu praised the theme of the graduating class, "Strengthening Institutions for National Security and Development in Nigeria," noting that strong, resilient institutions are the bedrock of a stable society.

He stated that his administration has made



institutional reform a top priority to uphold the rule of law, protect citizens' rights, and promote accountability.

Tinubu expressed commitment to completing the permanent site of the National Defence College, which is expected to evolve into a "Defence Postgraduate University."

He has directed the Commandant to collaborate with the Minister of Defence to create a plan for upgrading the facilities.

Tinubu also touched on his administration's efforts to revitalise the economy, noting a significant rise in the

stock market as a sign of renewed investor confidence.

While acknowledging the ongoing challenges of inflation and food insecurity, he called on the new graduates to help implement the "Renewed Hope" agenda.

The president recognised that the graduates are entering a complex and volatile world, with global economic issues, geopolitical conflicts, and technological threats.

However, he expressed confidence in their training, urging them to use their strategic skills and leadership to contribute to the nation's progress.

The graduating class of Course 33 included personnel from the Nigerian Army, Navy, Police Force, and other national and international institutions.

During the ceremony, the Commandant of the NDC, Rear Admiral J.O. Okosu, expressed gratitude for the government's support and confidence in the graduates' ability to address security challenges like banditry and oil theft.

The Deputy Commandant, Major General Kevin Ukandu, added that the curriculum provided training in areas such as defence management, strategic planning, and geopolitics.



EFCC calls on CBEX victims to aid ongoing fraud investigation By Friday Omosola



The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has called on individuals who lost money to the fraudulent crypto platform, Crypto Bridge Exchange (CBEX), to provide statements at its Ibadan and Lagos offices.

This initiative is part of an ongoing investigation into the scam.

According to a statement from the EFCC's Head of Media, Dele Oyewale, the agency is currently prosecuting three individuals, Adefowora Olanipekun, Otorudo Awerosuo, and Ehirim Chukwuebuka for their alleged involvement in the scheme.

CBEX defrauded countless Nigerians by promising unrealistic returns on cryptocurrency investments, leading to significant financial losses for its users.

The EFCC is particularly urging victims who invested through agents linked to CBEX offices in Ibadan and Idimu, Lagos, to report to its Zonal Directorates in those

cities to help with the case.

Launched in July 2024, CBEX promised high returns to thousands of Nigerians.

However, by April 2025, users were unable to withdraw their funds, leading to widespread complaints on social media.

The EFCC responded by declaring eight suspects, four Nigerians and four foreign nationals, wanted in connection with the scam.

An investigation by the EFCC's cybercrime division revealed that investors were instructed to deposit USDT, a digital currency, into wallets controlled by the suspects.

In late April, a court order granted the EFCC permission to detain six suspects pending further investigation: Adefowora Abiodun, Adefowora Oluwanisola, Emmanuel Uko, Seyi Oloyede, Awerosuo Otorudo, and Chukwuebuka Ehirim.

Two of the suspects, Otorudo and Ehirim, were charged in court on July 7, and later granted bail of ₦10 million each with two sureties.

Olanipekun and his company, ST Technologies International Limited, were also arraigned on July 18.

They are accused of operating an investment scheme without the necessary approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), a violation of the Investment and Securities Act, 2025.

The SEC has since confirmed that CBEX was never a registered or legal platform. The accused have all pleaded not guilty.

The EFCC has stressed the importance of victims coming forward to help with the ongoing investigation.

Customs reaffirms transparency, accountability as pillars of modernised agenda

By Helen Okechukwu



The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has restated its commitment to upholding transparency and accountability as central to its ongoing modernisation drive.

According to the post shared on Friday, it noted that the Comptroller Emmanuel Oshoba, who heads the Customs Intelligence Unit, gave the assurance during a sensitisation programme held recently on anti-corruption organised in collaboration with the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in Abuja.

Oshoba expressed gratitude to the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Unit (ACTU) for spearheading the initiative, noting that their efforts have been instrumental in entrenching good governance within the Service.

He described the unit as a “moral compass” that continues to reinforce integrity across the organisation.

The sensitisation programme, brought together senior Customs management staff to deliberate on strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of ACTU operations.

Declaring the workshop open earlier, Deputy Comptroller-General Greg Itotoh, who represented the Comptroller-General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, said the exercise reflected the Service’s sustained fight against corruption.

He noted that knowledge gained at the session would not only sharpen internal controls but also be cascaded to other officers, boosting service delivery.

Similarly, ICPC Chairman Musa Aliyu, represented by Olusegun

Adigun, lauded the Customs leadership for prioritising integrity.

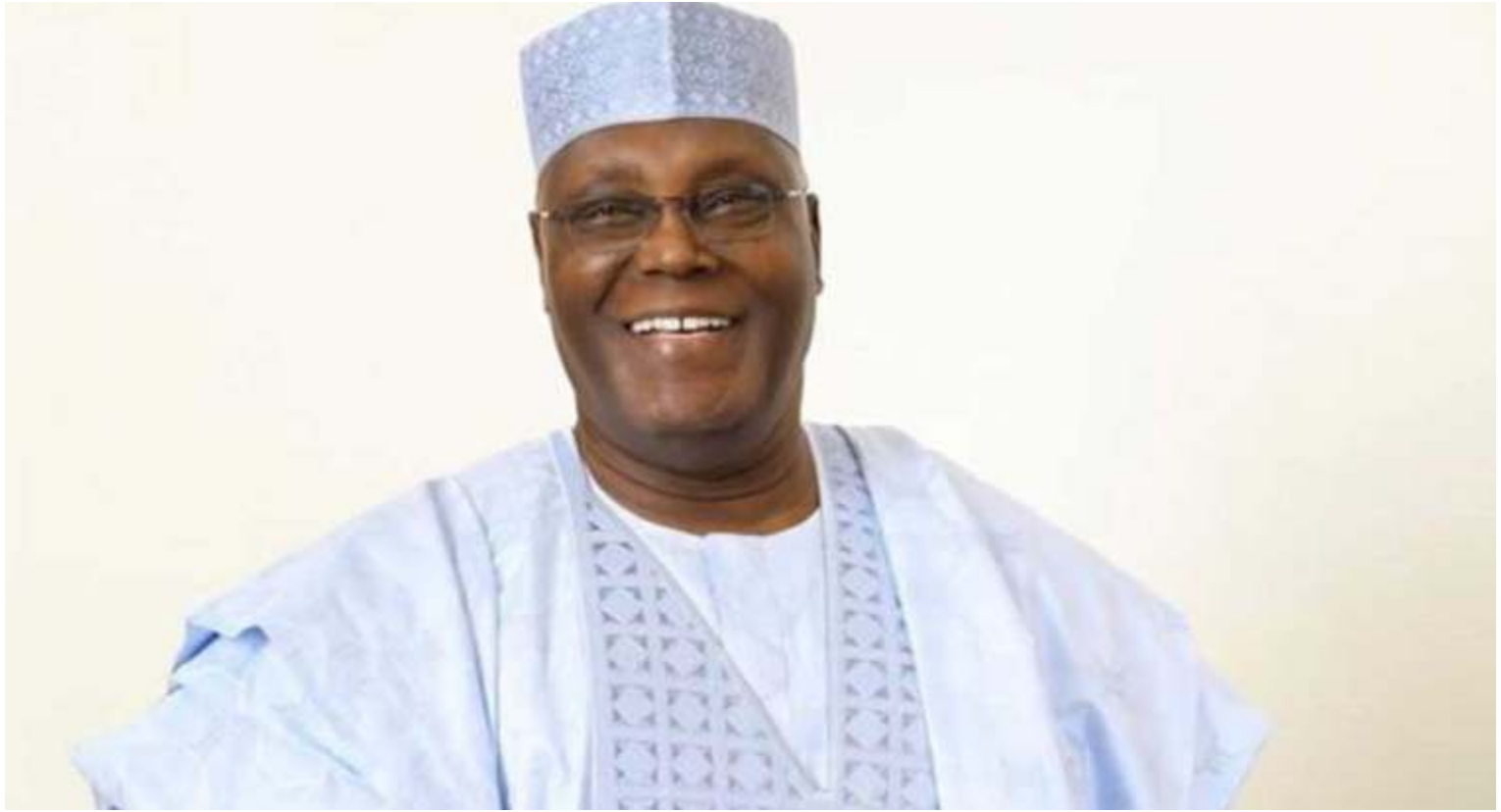
He stressed that corruption remained a major obstacle to national development, urging participants to view every act of integrity as a step toward building a more transparent society.

The programme featured presentations on Understanding the ACTU Standing Order 2023 and Preventive Strategies in Combating Corruption in Public Institutions, which underscored the importance of preventive reforms in curbing misconduct.

By reaffirming its alliance with the ICPC, the Customs Service said it would continue to strengthen anti-corruption measures while embedding transparency and accountability into its modernisation agenda.

Atiku: I want presidency to fix Nigeria, not to serve myself

By Friday Omosola



Former Vice President and 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has stated that his primary goal is to see a better Nigeria, not to become president at all costs.

Speaking at a ceremony in Lagos on Saturday where several prominent politicians, including former members of the PDP and Labour Party (LP), joined the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Atiku emphasised that his political movement is focused on national improvement rather than personal ambition.

Represented by Prof. Ola Olateju of Achievers University, Owo, he described the ADC not merely as a political party but as “a movement of Nigerians for a better Nigeria.”

He articulated that his interest lies in the emergence of a “good government that will be able to

deliver for Nigerians,” and that this desire supersedes any personal quest for the presidency.

“It’s not about Atiku having to be president at all costs,” Olateju relayed on his behalf. “It is not a matter of must. The must is for him to see Nigeria deliver as wished by all.”

The former PDP candidate highlighted the current economic hardships faced by Nigerians, including the impact of fuel subsidy removal and rising inflation.

He stated that a “better Nigeria is possible with good leadership” and expressed confidence that the new coalition within the ADC could be instrumental in bringing about positive change.

On the question of who might represent the ADC as its presidential candidate in the 2027

elections, Atiku said the process would be determined by party members through a free and fair contest.

He added that there would be no imposition of any candidate.

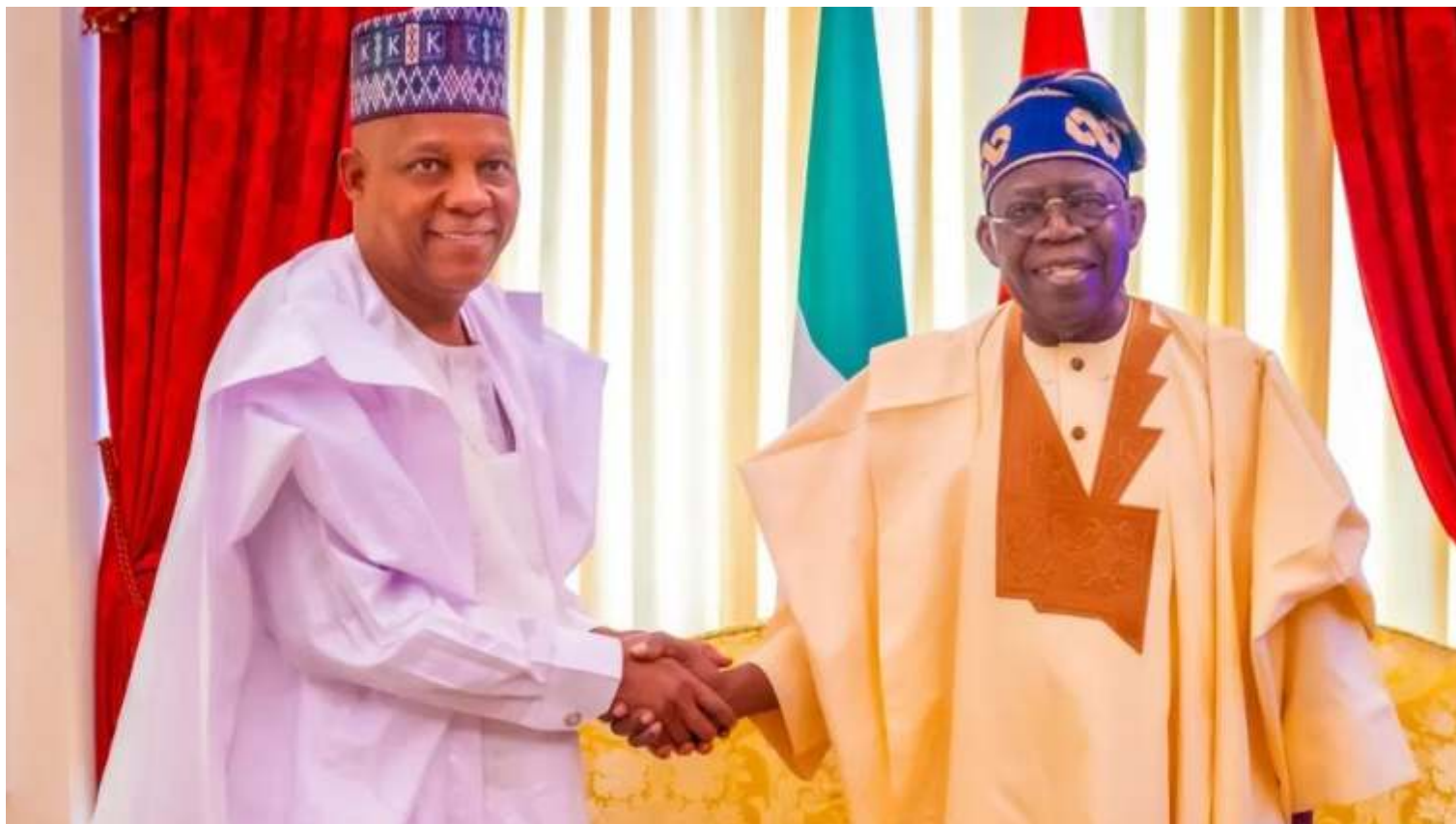
“Whoever picks the ticket shall be the representative of the Nigerian people and will represent the collective voice and aspiration of Nigeria,” he stated.

Among the notable figures who defected to the ADC were PDP Board of Trustees member Dr Abimbola Ogunkelu, and former Lagos PDP chairmen Chief Muritala Ashorobi and Capt. Tunji Shelle (retd.).

They were welcomed by national and state ADC leaders, including National Secretary Rauf Aregbesola.

2027: APC forum warns Tinubu against replacing Shettima

By Ismaeel Aleem



The North-Central All Progressives Congress (APC) Forum has issued a stern warning to President Bola Tinubu against replacing Vice President Kashim Shettima as his running mate for the 2027 presidential election, cautioning that such a move could cost him up to 80% of northern Muslim votes.

In a statement released by the Forum's Chairman, Alhaji Saleh Zazzaga, in Abuja on Saturday, it comes amid growing pressure from various groups urging Tinubu to reconsider the Muslim-Muslim ticket that secured his victory in 2023.

The Forum's warning follows calls from the Northern Ethnic Nationality Forum (NENF), led by Dominic Alancha, which argued that the Muslim-Muslim ticket alienated Christian voters in the North, costing the APC states like

Nasarawa, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory in 2023. Alancha warned that repeating the ticket could further weaken Tinubu's support in the Middle Belt, a region with significant Christian influence. However, the North-Central APC Forum dismissed these claims, asserting that the ticket was a strategic electoral choice, not an act of marginalization against Christians.

APC forum speaks further

Zazzaga emphasized that prominent Middle Belt Christians, such as APC National Chairman Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda and Secretary to the Government of the Federation George Akume, hold key positions in the administration, ensuring adequate representation. "The Muslim-Muslim ticket will not affect Tinubu's chances in the Middle Belt. We can guarantee 90% of North-Central votes due to

his achievements and Christian representation," Zazzaga stated.

The Forum accused those advocating for Shettima's removal of being opposition supporters, noting that many of their communities voted for Labour Party's Peter Obi in 2023. "If Obi runs again in 2027, there's no guarantee they'll vote for Tinubu, even with a Christian running mate," Zazzaga argued, labeling the calls as "mischief" aimed at undermining Tinubu's re-election bid.

The APC Forum urged Tinubu to maintain the "winning formula" of the Tinubu-Shettima ticket, warning that changing it could alienate northern Muslim voters without gaining new support. As the 2027 election debate intensifies, Tinubu faces a delicate balancing act between religious inclusivity and political strategy.

ADC welcomes top defectors from PDP, LP in Lagos

By Ismaeel Aleem



The African Democratic Congress (ADC) on Saturday welcomed a wave of defectors from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and the Labour Party (LP) in Lagos.

Among the defectors were prominent figures including former Lagos PDP Chairman, Chief Muritala Ashorobi; Captain Tunji Shelle; PDP Vice Chairman (Lagos Central), Tai Benedict; and former Lagos PDP Youth Leader, Chief Niyi Adams.

They were joined by Senator Kolawole Ogunwale and Lagos ADC Chairman, George Ashiru, before a vibrant crowd of supporters.

Speaking at the event, the party's Interim National Secretary, Rauf Aregbesola, invoked the timeless wisdom of the late Obafemi Awolowo to highlight the ADC's mission of rescuing Nigeria from collapse.

He recalled Awolowo's 1983 Unity

Party of Nigeria (UPN) address, which drew on Hegelian dialectics to predict the inevitable clash between a failing political order (the thesis) and its challenger (the antithesis), leading ultimately to a new synthesis.

Aregbesola stated that Nigeria's current leadership, marked by rising insecurity, unaffordable healthcare, and a soaring cost of living, is pushing citizens to the brink.

"The people are the heart of governance. Any government that neglects its welfare will lose relevance and collapse," he declared, echoing Awolowo's foresight.

Aregbesola underscored the ADC's commitment to empowering young people and women.

He stressed that the party's constitution guarantees 35% representation for each group, thereby ensuring a minimum of 50% combined representation.

"This is not tokenism but a recognition

that Nigeria's future lies in the underrepresented," he said, positioning the ADC as a vehicle for inclusive political power.

He urged members to concentrate on grassroots mobilisation and to resist distractions from what he described as "agents of the dying order."

Aregbesola stressed the urgency of the ADC's mission to confront rampant insecurity, soaring medical costs, and widespread poverty, cautioning that "there is a limit to how much the people can be squeezed before something gives."

The surge of enthusiastic defectors highlights the ADC's growing influence as it positions itself to challenge the status quo in the 2027 elections.

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, represented by Prof. Ola Olateju, praised the ADC as a movement for a better Nigeria and voiced confidence in its expanding momentum.

PDP youth leaders demand congress completion, unity before convention

By Gbenga Olaleye



The Forum of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Youth Leaders has called on the party's National Working Committee (NWC) to ensure that all zonal congresses are concluded ahead of the forthcoming national convention, stressing the need for unity and total reconciliation within the party.

In a communique issued on Saturday and signed by the South West Zonal PDP Youth Leader, Seyi Bamidele, the group emphasised that a hitch-free convention would only be possible if all party organs across the zones are properly harmonised and inclusive.

"We appeal that the NWC should ensure that all zones have conclusive congresses to enable us have a hitch-free convention," the statement read.

The Forum also urged the NWC to fully involve youth leaders from across the country in both the northern and southern agenda of the party. It called for equal representation and an end to marginalisation of any group within the PDP.

"Everybody should be carried along and nobody should be marginalised," the statement reiterated.

In addition to calls for inclusion, the Youth Forum made a passionate plea for "total reconciliation of all warring factions within the party," advocating for unity and harmonisation from the grassroots level through to the national stage.

"We call on all the PDP Governors and party leaders to work together to ensure the PDP stays united," the communiqué added, noting that

unity remains key to the success of the upcoming national convention.

The Forum also stressed the importance of early engagement with youth stakeholders, including discussions around the date and venue of the convention. It said PDP youth leaders across all states should remain calm and focused on voter register mobilisation ahead of the polls.

It further confirmed that a post-NEC meeting will provide a platform for "robust discussion with the National Youth Leader to enable them champion a new pathway for the party."

Ending on an optimistic note, the group called on Nigerian youth to maintain faith in the PDP, stating it remains "the major opposition political party that can rescue the nation."

“Speak directly if you’re brave” – Wike’s Aide claps back at Makinde

By Gbenga Olaleye



The Senior Special Assistant on Public Communications and Social Media to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has issued a scathing response to recent remarks made by Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, regarding the ongoing zoning debate within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Governor Makinde, while addressing reporters after the Southwest PDP zoning consultative summit held in Lagos, dismissed the Minister’s position on the issue, stating: “Personally, when people go low, or they go into the gutters, I don’t go with them.” He was responding to Wike’s opposition to the potential removal of South-South Zonal Chairman, Dan Orbih.

Makinde maintained that the PDP remains active and relevant, insisting that crucial decisions, including zoning arrangements, will be made by the party’s National Executive Committee (NEC) at its upcoming meeting on Monday.

However, in a sharp counter via a post on X (formerly Twitter), Wike’s aide, Mr. Olayinka, accused Makinde of lacking the courage to address Wike directly.

“The brave must never give his ears to the murmuring of the coward until he grows enough balls to be able to speak directly,” Olayinka wrote.

The comment has further intensified the internal wrangling within the PDP, particularly between factions aligned with

Governor Makinde and those loyal to Minister Wike.

Meanwhile, the recommendations from the Southern PDP Leaders’ Zoning Consultative Summit are reportedly facing rejection by Wike-aligned party members. The summit’s outcome has become a fresh flashpoint as the party approaches its critical 102nd NEC meeting.

The zoning committee, chaired by Bayelsa State Governor Douye Diri, is expected to propose a new formula for sharing the 19 National Working Committee (NWC) positions between the North and South. A final decision on the recommendations is anticipated during the NEC meeting next week.

Lagos govt eyes 10,000 jobs with newly commissioned leather hub

By Friday Omosola



Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has announced the commissioning of a leather processing and manufacturing hub, named after Nigeria's First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu in the Mushin area of Lagos today.

Sanwo-Olu, in a statement on his X page on Saturday, said the facility, a public-private initiative, aims to transform the state's leather industry by enabling large-scale production, creating jobs, and boosting export earnings.

According to him, the hub is expected to create 10,000 direct jobs and benefit over 150,000 artisans across the state.

He added that in a move to empower local communities and align with the First Lady's advocacy, 70% of the jobs at the facility are reserved for women and young people.

Sanwo-Olu said the hub is designed to produce a wide range of leather goods, including shoes, bags, belts, and other accessories, at a scale that was previously unattainable for small businesses.

This integrated approach will allow for hides and skins, which were often exported raw, to now be processed and manufactured into finished products within Nigeria.

Sanwo-Olu expressed his vision for the facility, stating that its success would be measured not just by economic output but by the positive impact on individual artisans and designers.

He highlighted the potential for increased earnings for local cobblers, steady work for tanners, and new opportunities for young designers to expand their brands globally.

He projected that the hub will generate over \$250 million in annual export earnings, contributing significantly to both the Lagos and Nigerian economies.

The products manufactured at the facility will carry the stamp "Made in Lagos, Made in Nigeria", promoting national pride and quality craftsmanship on the international stage.

He said the state industrial leather hub project was first conceived in 2020, and construction commenced the following year at the Matori Industrial Estate in Mushin.

"Today, we are proud to witness its fruition. The hub comprises two principal sections. The first is the production area, equipped with ultra-modern industrial leatherwork machinery capable of mass-producing shoes, bags, belts, and other high-quality leather products.

"The second is a commercial and business development area. This section houses shops, showrooms, training rooms, workstations, and offices thoughtfully designed to inspire creativity, foster enterprise, and support the growth of our artisans and entrepreneurs.

"The Lagos State Industrial Leather Hub is a testament to our shared belief in the potential of Lagosians and our commitment to building industries that generate employment, stimulate innovation, and strengthen the economy of our state", Sanwo-Olu added.

Aiyedatiwa commissions new mental health, drug rehabilitation centre in Ondo

By Friday Omosola



Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State has commissioned the Minds Medical Specialist Hospital and Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Ondo City.

In a statement, Aiyedatiwa's Chief Priest Secretary, Ebenezer Adeniyi, said the new facility, founded by Dr Jibayo Adeyeye, is aimed at providing specialised care for mental health and substance addiction.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, Aiyedatiwa lauded the initiative as a "significant milestone" in the state's efforts to enhance healthcare services.

He praised Adeyeye for his vision and dedication, stating that the new hospital is poised to redefine mental healthcare and drug addiction rehabilitation in the region.

"The establishment of Minds Medica is a testament to the vision and dedication of its founder, Dr.

Jibayo Adeyeye," he said.

The governor added that the centre's mission to offer accessible, affordable, and high-quality mental health services demonstrates a strong commitment to the well-being of the people of Ondo State.

Aiyedatiwa emphasised that the opening of the facility was more than just a new building; it was a powerful statement about the importance of mental health.

He urged residents to utilise the services and help combat the stigma associated with mental illness and drug addiction.

"We are saying that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness," he declared.

The governor also assured continued government support and collaboration for investors in the health sector.

However, Adeyeye, the founder of

Minds Medica, shared the personal story that inspired the creation of the facility.

He recounted an encounter with a woman who had suffered from mental illness on the streets for over a decade.

After providing her with medical care and witnessing her full recovery, he was motivated to establish a dedicated centre for mental health and drug rehabilitation.

The founder noted that the hospital is equipped with advanced infrastructure and staffed by local and international specialists to ensure exceptional healthcare.

The Osemawe of Ondo Kingdom, Oba Dr Victor Adesimbo Kiladejo, commended Aiyedatiwa for his administration's developmental projects and Adeyeye for his beneficial initiative.

“APC has changed Abuja” - Isaac Fayose applauds Wike’s infrastructure drive

By Gbenga Olaleye



Isaac Fayose, the brother of former Ekiti State Governor Ayo Fayose, has commended the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led federal government for what he described as significant infrastructural improvements in the Federal Capital Territory, particularly in water supply and sewage system development.

Speaking in a video posted recently on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), Fayose highlighted ongoing federal efforts to enhance public utilities, praising Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, for his role in driving the upgrades.

“Wow, Minister Wike is performing again,” Fayose said in the video. “Bwari people have been waiting for water for years, and now Minister Wike is delivering.”

Fayose specifically referenced the federal government’s current project to lay a 198-kilometre water pipeline

to the Bwari area, aimed at improving water accessibility for residents.

“He is laying a 198-kilometre pipeline to the Bwari area. You can see major projects taking shape. Let’s be honest, the APC government has changed Abuja,” he added.

The outspoken political commentator, known for his candid takes on national issues, continued his praise by acknowledging the visible progress made in Abuja’s infrastructure.

“They’ve put a smile on so many people’s faces in Abuja, let’s not lie. We can point out when they mess up, but in Abuja, APC might win because of the way they are working,” he said.

Fayose also made note of the improvements in the capital’s sanitation systems.

“Apart from the cho-cho-cho of the minister, the guy is performing. With a 198-kilometre water line, people will now get water when they open their taps. Our sewage system is also being overhauled. Abuja is beginning to look like a foreign city,” he remarked.

In a somewhat humorous aside, he drew a comparison with Lagos, suggesting the coastal nature of Nigeria’s commercial capital poses challenges for water infrastructure development.

“You can’t get this kind of water in Lagos because of the ocean, but come on, give it to Wike. Well done,” he concluded.

Fayose’s remarks come amid continued debates around infrastructural equity between Abuja and other regions of the country, with many observers keenly watching how public perceptions may shape political outcomes in future elections.

Lagos cultural mission secures international support from China, India

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Cultural Mission has received a boost with new international partnerships from the Chinese and Indian diplomatic missions in Lagos.

This comes after a recent meeting between the Special Adviser to the state governor on Tourism, Arts and Culture, Idris Aregbe, and the Consuls General of China and India.

The initiative, led by Aregbe, aims to foster global collaboration and promote the state's rich cultural heritage.

During discussions with China's Consul General, Yan Yuqing, and India's Consul General, Chandramouli Kern, Aregbe described the Lagos Cultural Mission as "a legacy in motion" focused on preserving the state's identity and projecting its unique values.

According to Aregbe, the talks centred on leveraging cultural exchange to drive mutual growth and strengthen historical ties.

Aregbe highlighted the potential for joint cultural ventures to create "meaningful results" for all nations involved.

Both Consuls General expressed their



support for the Lagos Cultural Mission's vision.

Yan Yuqing of the Chinese Consulate pledged the Chinese community's backing for the initiative's goals.

Similarly, India's Consul General, Chandramouli Kern, emphasised the importance of deepening cultural ties between Nigeria and India.

The meetings ended with an agreement on the need to promote shared values through cultural initiatives, which Aregbe stated are essential for boosting tourism and economic development.

"Our shared commitment is aimed at boosting the tourism economy," he said, affirming the mission's goal to elevate the appeal of Lagos.

Fresh oil spill hits Rivers community

By Helen Okechukwu

A new crude oil spill has been recorded in Ikata community, Ahoada East Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State, sparking renewed concerns over environmental degradation in the Niger Delta.

The Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-Nigeria) confirmed the incident on the 14-inch Okordia-Rumuekpe pipeline operated by Renaissance Africa Energy Ltd.

According to the organisation, the spill was first observed on Friday, 22 August, and promptly reported through community monitors under the One Million Youth Volunteers Network of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters in the Niger Delta, alongside the Crude Oil Spill Alert System (COSAS).

In a statement issued on Saturday in Port Harcourt, YEAC-Nigeria's Executive Director, Dr Fyeface Dumnamene Fyeface, disclosed that the incident is suspected to be a result of sabotage, pending confirmation by the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA).

The Centre noted that this marks the second spill within three months on the same pipeline right of way in Ikata, following an earlier incident it documented on 5 May.

The development comes less than three weeks after an oil spill in Kpean, Khana LGA, which NOSDRA investigations traced to equipment failure.



YEAC-Nigeria has therefore urged NOSDRA to immediately conduct a Joint Investigation Visit (JIV) to Ikata in order to establish the cause of the latest spill and ensure that provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 are enforced against those found culpable.

Edo govt demolishes building used for cult activities

By Alade Adisa



Any building or facility being used for cult related activities or kidnappings will be demolished by the Edo State government, Governor Monday Okpebholo has said.

This is just as the governor reiterated the commitment of the government to rid the state of undesirable elements.

The declaration followed the demolition of a building in Egbaen Community along Upper Siluko Road in Egor Local Government Area of the state which was allegedly used as a base for cult initiation rites and ritual practices.

The operation was executed by the Edo State Special Security Squad, codenamed "Operation Flush Out Cultists and Kidnappers", working in concert with various security

agencies and community stakeholders.

Coordinator of the Security Squad, Idemudia Noah, confirmed that the building was linked to one Marvellous Adetarami, who is said to be a leader of the Maphite cult group and who allegedly converted the bungalow into a shrine and meeting point for illegal activities.

"We were here some days ago to seal up this building following allegations of cultism, ritual practices and other nefarious activities of suspected Maphite cult leader Marvellous Adetarami and his members," Idemudia said.

He disclosed that despite the earlier sealing of the premises, intelligence reports confirmed that the suspects resumed their clandestine operations under the cover of darkness.

Their continued defiance prompted the government's decision to demolish the structure.

"We got credible information that the suspected cult leader Marvellous Adetarami and his members still gather to have their meetings in this sealed bungalow, where the horrible shrine was discovered," he stated.

Residents of the area, who had lived in fear for months, applauded the government's swift action, expressing relief that a major source of insecurity in the community had finally been neutralised.

"Neighbours and community members are all joyous seeing the building pulled down, as they have lived in fear following the suspect's activities," Idemudia noted.

AY Makun denies regret over marital split, warns blogs against false claims

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Popular Nigerian comedian and actor, Ayo Makun, widely known as AY, has dismissed reports suggesting that he regrets his marriage breakup and is seeking reconciliation with his estranged wife, Mabel.

The comedian, who has built a strong reputation in Nigeria's entertainment industry, described the stories as false, misleading, and deliberately manipulative.

In a strongly worded statement posted on his Instagram page, AY said his attention was drawn to a series of social media posts claiming he is desperate to fix his marriage.

He warned that such narratives were being circulated by faceless blogs and individuals seeking traffic at the expense of his reputation.

"These publications are deliberately manipulative, calculated to mislead the public, and designed solely for traffic and engagement," AY wrote. "For clarity, I have never authorised or made any such statements."

The entertainer stressed that if he ever wanted to share his personal views on his relationship, he had the platform and credibility to do so directly.

AY warns fake news peddlers

"If I wish to communicate my personal position on any matter, I have the platform, the reach, and the credibility to do so directly, not through faceless blogs and rumor-driven platforms," he said.

AY further issued a stern warning to those spreading the rumors, declaring that legal action would be taken against anyone who continues to publish defamatory content about his private life.

"Moving forward, the appropriate legal measures will be instituted against individuals, blogs, or platforms that continue to publish, promote, or circulate these defamatory stories. Enough of the lies," he added.

The comedian and Mabel, who share two daughters, publicly confirmed their separation in April 2024 after 16 years of marriage.

At the time, Mabel revealed that she had endured long-term emotional struggles in the marriage. She hinted at mental abuse and said her decision to walk away was necessary for her peace of mind and personal safety.

AY, on his part, admitted that the marriage

was "slipping through his hands," but chose not to provide details about what went wrong. Both parties asked the public for privacy as they focused on raising their children.

Since then, the separation has continued to attract public interest, with online speculation fueling fresh stories about possible reconciliation. AY's latest post makes it clear that such stories are baseless and will not be tolerated.

The comedian's warning also highlights a broader issue within Nigeria's social media space, where personal matters of celebrities are often twisted into gossip headlines to attract attention.

By threatening legal action, AY joins a growing list of public figures demanding accountability from blogs and online platforms that spread unverified information.

For now, AY appears focused on his career and co-parenting duties, rather than rekindling his relationship with Mabel.

His statement is not only a rejection of the reconciliation rumors but also a reminder that, despite public curiosity, celebrities reserve the right to control their own personal narratives.

Hilda Baci set to cook world's largest pot of jollof rice Sept 12

By Helen Okechukwu



Celebrity chef and Guinness World Record holder Hilda Baci is gearing up for an extraordinary culinary challenge.

She is preparing a test batch in a massive custom-built pot that has recently captured attention online.

On September 12, 2025, Baci aims to cook the world's largest pot of jollof rice, an ambitious feat that promises to be a memorable event.

The cooking extravaganza will take place at Muri Okunola Park in Lagos, under the banner of the Gino World Jollof Festival. This festival is set to be a vibrant celebration of West African food, music, and culture, drawing in food enthusiasts from across the region.

Baci shared her excitement on social media, stating, "Six metres wide. Six metres tall. On September

12, we make history together. Because what is jollof without you to share it with?" Her words highlight the communal spirit that jollof rice embodies, a dish that brings people together.

The festival is open to the public at no cost, making it accessible for everyone to join in the celebration. Attendees can expect live performances, creating an atmosphere filled with music and joy. This event is not just about food; it's a cultural gathering that showcases the rich traditions of West Africa.

Baci's passion for jollof rice transcends the kitchen. She is committed to sharing the dish's cultural significance and its role in uniting communities. Jollof rice is not merely a meal; it represents heritage and connection among West African people.

With her previous Guinness World Record for the longest cooking marathon, Baci is no stranger to monumental culinary challenges. Her dedication and experience make her well-prepared to take on this ambitious project.

As the date approaches, excitement continues to build around the Gino World Jollof Festival. Hilda Baci's endeavor will not only set a new record but also celebrate the culinary arts and the vibrant culture of West Africa.

In a world where food often serves as a bridge between cultures, Baci's event promises to be a historic moment, one that food lovers and cultural enthusiasts will not want to miss. Join her on September 12 as she aims to make history with the world's largest pot of jollof rice!

Made Kuti defends marriage against ethnic critics

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeat singer Made Kuti has spoken out against criticisms surrounding his marriage to Inedoye Onyenso.

The grandson of legendary Nigerian musician Fela Kuti addressed negative comments targeting their union, which some critics described as “mixing blood.”

New Daily Prime recalls that Made and Inedoye tied the knot in November 2023 during a civil wedding ceremony in Lagos. The event was celebrated by fans and family, marking a new chapter for the young musician who continues to carry forward his family’s Afrobeat legacy.

However, their marriage has since faced backlash from a section of the public. Certain critics, hiding behind social media accounts, argued against the couple’s union because of their different ethnic backgrounds.

One recent attack came from an X user, @AdemolaOgudu, who called Made a “foolish Yoruba man” for marrying an Igbo woman. The comment quickly drew reactions online, and Made chose to respond with a firm and thoughtful message.

In his reply, the singer rejected the idea of ethnic superiority or inferiority. “Believing ethnic superiority or inferiority is justifiable is slave mentality,” he wrote. He described such thinking as harmful and outdated, adding that it has no place in modern society.

Read Also: ‘Fela died poor despite making millions’, Made Kuti claims Made urged those criticising his marriage to learn from history. He referenced the works and ideas of prominent African leaders and Pan-



Africanists, including his great-grandmother Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, his grandfather Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, and Burkina Faso’s Thomas Sankara.

According to him, their writings and struggles offer lessons on unity, freedom, and progress that remain relevant today.

For Made, the bigger picture goes beyond his personal life. He stressed that Africa stands to gain more when its people are united rather than divided along tribal or ethnic lines. By drawing from Pan-African history, he reminded critics that ethnic prejudice weakens the continent’s collective strength and slows its progress.

The singer’s response has been praised by many fans and commentators who share his vision of unity. Supporters argued that marriage should be based on love and mutual respect, not on tribal identity. Others applauded Made for handling the insult with calmness

and wisdom rather than anger.

Made Kuti, son of Afrobeat musician Femi Kuti, has long been seen as a voice for his generation. Beyond his music, which often echoes the socially conscious themes of the Kuti family, he has used his platform to speak on issues affecting young Africans. His defense of his marriage is another example of his commitment to using his voice for advocacy.

In a country where inter-ethnic relationships sometimes spark heated debate, Made’s words serve as a reminder of the importance of tolerance and unity. His insistence that “slave mentality” should be abandoned highlights the need for a new way of thinking that puts humanity above division.

For now, the Afrobeat singer continues to focus on both his music and his marriage, while reminding critics that love, not prejudice, should define human relationships.

Jemima Osunde challenges women relying on men's wealth

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nollywood actress Jemima Osunde has spoken out against the growing sense of entitlement among some women who believe they should only date or marry wealthy men.

The actress, known for her outspoken views, took to her X handle to question the mentality of women who fantasise about depending solely on a rich partner.

She described the belief as unrealistic, especially given Nigeria's current economic realities.

"Work his ass off for money. Wetin do your own ass? You don't want to work? In this economy? It's like some of you think we're still living in Bible times," Osunde wrote in a blunt post that quickly gained attention online.

She further stressed that there are simply not enough billionaires to go around. According to her, many women hold on to the dream of becoming rich housewives, but that dream does not reflect reality.

"My good sis, there's not enough billionaires in the world for all of us to be housewives. You better go and look for work," she added.

Her comments have since stirred conversations on social media, with many praising her for saying what they believe others are too afraid to admit. Supporters agreed that relying on men for wealth is a fragile strategy, especially in today's economy, where even the rich face financial pressures.

Critics, however, argued that Osunde's message overlooked cultural and social factors that sometimes make women dependent on men.

They suggested that her tone came across as dismissive rather than empathetic. Still, the wider discussion reflects a growing debate about relationships, money, and gender roles in Nigeria.



Osunde's message is part of a larger conversation around financial independence. More women, especially in younger generations, are being encouraged to seek personal achievement rather than rely solely on marriage for financial security. Her call for women to work and engage in productive ventures echoes this shift.

The actress also indirectly addressed societal expectations that often place pressure on men to be providers. By questioning why only the man's "ass" should work, she highlighted the imbalance in such relationships. To her, women must also share responsibility for their own financial stability.

Jemima Osunde, who combines her acting career with a professional background in physiotherapy, has built a reputation as someone who values hard work.

Her lifestyle and career path reflect the very message she preaches: that women can succeed on their own terms without waiting for a wealthy partner to provide everything.

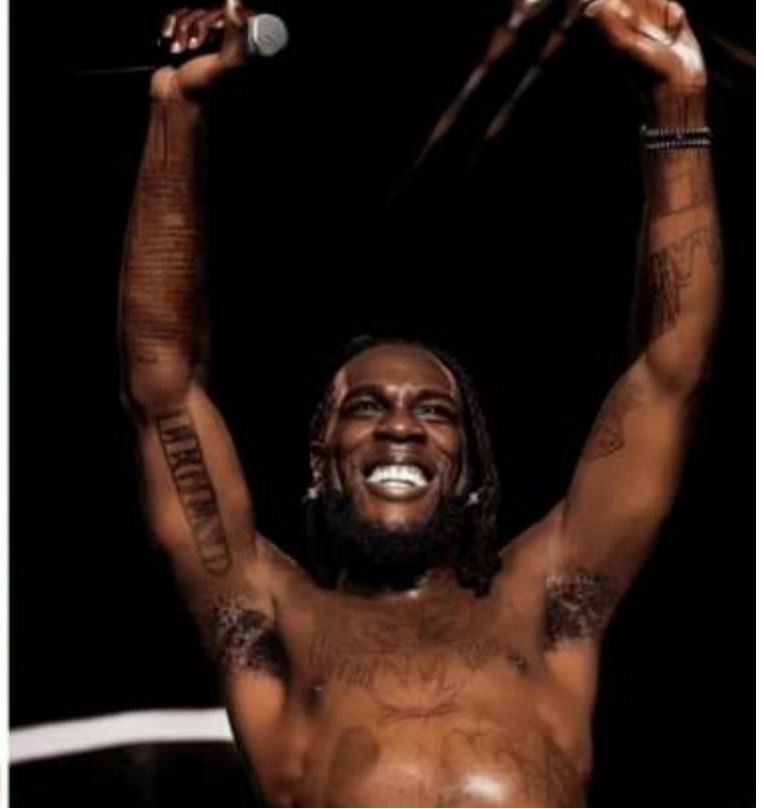
In an economy marked by rising inflation and job uncertainty, her words ring even louder. The reality is that many households now rely on dual incomes to survive.

For Osunde, the solution is not daydreaming about luxury but rolling up one's sleeves and finding ways to contribute.

Whether people agree with her tone or not, her message has sparked important conversations about gender roles, entitlement, and the value of work in today's Nigeria. For Jemima Osunde, love may be a beautiful part of life, but money, she insists, is something everyone should work for.

Burna Boy addresses armpit rumour, says no voodoo here

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Nigerian music superstar Burna Boy has cleared the air on one of the strangest rumours about him.

The Grammy-winning singer addressed claims that he avoids shaving his armpits because the source of his success lies there through voodoo.

The “City Boys” crooner has, over the years, faced several unusual theories about his lifestyle. Photos showing him with unshaved armpits have repeatedly sparked reactions, with some people suggesting a spiritual link. For many fans, it became one of those unspoken myths about his image.

But in a recent interview with Apple Music, Burna Boy finally spoke about the matter. Asked what the biggest misconception about him was, the Afrofusion star burst into laughter before giving his answer.

“One is that I don’t like to shave my armpits,” he said. “People think that it is like Samson in the Bible, that his power was in his hair. Some people claim my armpit is where my power is because I

don’t shave. In Nigeria, you hear crazy things.”

Burna Boy explained further that some fans had gone as far as linking the unshaved look to black magic. “There are people who think it’s some voodoo sht,” he continued. “Like my power is in my armpits. I don’t even know how to explain it. It’s just some dumb sht that’s going on. I even tried to find out if it’s possible.”

His response has since triggered fresh reactions online, with many amused that the singer himself finds the rumour funny. Supporters praised him for addressing it openly, while others joked that Nigerians have a habit of attaching spiritual meanings to almost anything.

For Burna Boy, this is not the first time he has brushed off odd claims about his career. Over the years, he has often faced scrutiny for his bold lifestyle, unconventional fashion choices, and outspoken interviews. Yet, he has consistently shown that he prefers to laugh off the noise rather than take it too seriously.

His ability to blend humour with honesty has helped him maintain a strong bond with his fans. Beyond his music, Burna Boy is often seen as a cultural figure who represents both the struggles and the flair of modern Nigerian youth.

The singer, whose real name is Damini Ogulu, has built a global brand around his music, winning a Grammy and selling out major arenas around the world. With such achievements, it is perhaps not surprising that unusual stories sometimes trail him. Fame, after all, often attracts myths and exaggerations.

While the “armpit power” theory may continue as an internet joke, Burna Boy’s comments show he has no problem being the subject of lighthearted conversations. In fact, his laughter at the rumour may only strengthen his image as a star who takes pride in being himself.

For fans, the takeaway is simple: Burna Boy’s success lies not in superstition, but in hard work, talent, and a confidence that continues to set him apart on the global stage.

Victor Boniface 'crashes' TikTok live, ladies fail to recognise him

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Nigeria Super Eagle striker Victor Boniface has once again given fans something to laugh about, this time off the pitch.

The Bayer Leverkusen forward, known for his playful personality online, recently joined a TikTok live session that turned into a lighthearted drama.

The live video was filled with young women, but to Boniface's surprise, none of them recognised him. Despite being one of Nigeria's most talked-about football stars at the moment, his fame did not carry over into that corner of social media.

Instead of cheering for the Super Eagles forward, the ladies on the stream began to ask him for money. According to reports, they went as far as billing him ₦50,000. What followed was an amusing situation that quickly spread online.

Clips of the encounter soon went viral, and football fans could not stop laughing. Many described the moment as both humbling and hilarious.

Some joked that Boniface had been given a reminder that, no matter how big he

becomes in Europe, not everyone will recognise him in other spaces. Others teased that the women were more interested in cash than in goals.

The episode highlights a common truth about fame: it does not always translate across every platform. On the football pitch, Boniface has grown into a rising star, helping Leverkusen maintain a strong campaign and catching attention in European football. But on TikTok, a space often driven by trends and personalities outside of sports, the striker found himself just another face on the screen.

Fans have been quick to link the incident to Boniface's reputation for humour and openness. The 23-year-old has built a strong connection with supporters through his active use of social media.

He often shares lighthearted posts, jokes, and behind-the-scenes glimpses into his life. That approach has made him one of the most relatable players in the Super Eagles squad.

Although Boniface has not yet publicly responded to the TikTok moment, many are expecting him to play along once he decides to address it.

Given his record of laughing at himself and joining in on viral jokes, fans believe it is only a matter of time before he reacts.

In the meantime, the story continues to spread across Nigerian online spaces. Memes and playful captions about the striker's "₦50,000 bill" have dominated conversations.

For supporters, it adds to the growing bond they share with a footballer who is not afraid to show his human side.

For Boniface, the incident is unlikely to be anything more than a funny footnote in what has already been an impressive year.

On the pitch, he has continued to shine in the Bundesliga and build his reputation as one of Nigeria's brightest prospects. Off it, moments like this show that even rising stars can have humbling, and entertaining, experiences.

In the end, the TikTok mix-up was not about goals or trophies, but about laughter. And for fans, it was another reason to appreciate Victor Boniface beyond the football field.

Geh Geh's 'varsity of wisdom' vs SaidaBoj: Two sides of Nigeria's relationship debate

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

In today's Nigeria, social media has become a powerful classroom where ideas about money, love, and relationships are tested and contested before millions of young people.

Two names currently dominating these online debates are Geh Geh, founder of the so-called University of Wisdom and Understanding, and SaidaBoj, a controversial influencer known for her unapologetic views on transactional intimacy. Both have built massive audiences, but their messages could not be more different.

GehGeh: The "University of wisdom and understanding"

Born Emmanuel Obruste, Geh Geh rose from obscurity on TikTok to become one of the most talked-about digital personalities in 2025. He describes his platform as the University of Wisdom and Understanding, an online space where he delivers unconventional lessons on relationships and money.

What sets Geh Geh apart is his philosophy that men should not attempt to win women over with money. He argues that using wealth to impress women is a poor investment and often leads to disappointment. Instead, he encourages men to prioritise financial responsibility and self-respect. His message has struck a chord with thousands of young Nigerians who feel trapped in the pressures of modern dating.

Read Also: Geh Geh: Nigerian women see relationships as jobs

GehGeh's popularity exploded during one TikTok live session that attracted more than 177,000 viewers. In that single broadcast, he reportedly earned gifts valued at \$30,000, proving that his message, controversial or not, was resonating with a vast audience.

But his teachings have also invited criticism. Afrobeats singer Portable, for instance, openly mocked GehGeh's philosophy by invoking the biblical King Solomon. "What did King



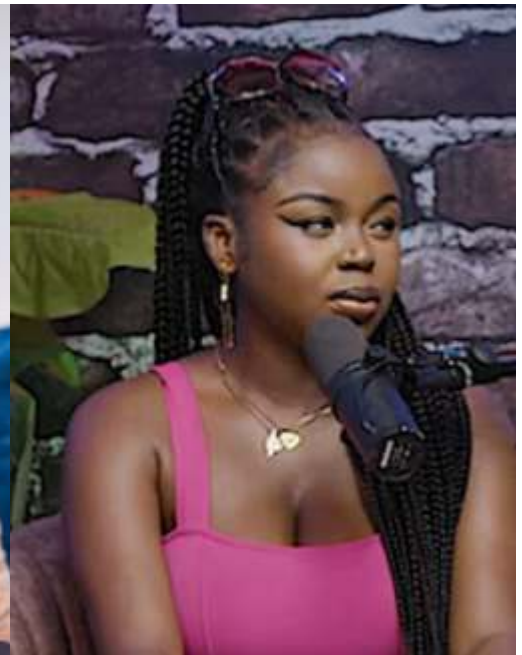
Solomon give 700 women?" Portable asked, suggesting that GehGeh's advice would only leave his followers broke, lonely, and frustrated.

Despite the pushback, Geh Geh's influence is undeniable. His "university" has become both a cultural talking point and a money-spinner, positioning him as one of the most lucrative Nigerian content creators of the moment.

SaidaBoj: Unapologetic voice of transactional love

On the other end of the spectrum is SaidaBoj, born Sarah Idaji Ojone in 2001. Hailing originally from Kogi State, she entered the social media scene with striking confidence and equally striking opinions. Her rise to fame came after she boldly declared that she would only agree to intimacy if a man spent at least ₦20 million on her in a week.

For SaidaBoj, beauty is a currency, and men should be willing to pay for it. This stance, repeated across TikTok and Instagram videos, quickly made her one of the most polarising figures online. While some admire her honesty and confidence, others accuse her of promoting materialism and exploiting men's insecurities.



Her controversies have not been without consequences. Following heated exchanges with rapper Erigga and activist VeryDarkMan, SaidaBoj's accounts were banned on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Yet, true to the resilient nature of internet fame, she has resurfaced on new platforms, continuing to court both attention and criticism.

Two philosophies, one debate

Together, GehGeh and SaidaBoj represent two extreme philosophies that speak to Nigeria's current relationship culture. GehGeh promotes a narrative of restraint and financial discipline, telling men to avoid overspending on women. SaidaBoj, meanwhile, embodies the transactional school of thought, openly declaring that women deserve to be financially compensated for their beauty and time.

The result is a cultural clash playing out in real time on Nigeria's digital stage. For young people navigating love in an era of economic uncertainty, both voices tap into existing frustrations. GehGeh appeals to men who feel exploited by financial expectations, while SaidaBoj resonates with women who see no problem in demanding compensation for their desirability.

Farage unveils radical plan for mass deportations of immigrant, ECHR exit

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigel Farage has set out radical plans to withdraw Britain from key human rights treaties and carry out the mass deportation of migrants arriving in small boats, declaring immigration to be a “national emergency” and warning that public anger over asylum has reached breaking point.

In an interview with *The Times*, the Reform UK leader outlined a programme that would see the country leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), abolish existing rights to claim asylum, and strike bilateral agreements with nations such as Afghanistan, Eritrea and other countries of origin to facilitate the large-scale removal of people arriving illegally.

Farage argued that Britain’s current asylum system is “not fit for purpose” and insisted that only an uncompromising approach would restore order. “We can be nice to people, we can be nice to other countries, or we can be very tough to other countries. Trump has proved this point quite comprehensively,” he said, invoking the former US president as a model for his proposed policy.

When asked whether deporting asylum seekers to countries with poor human rights records risked exposing them to torture or death, Farage said his primary responsibility lay with British citizens. “I can’t be responsible for despotic regimes all over the world. But I can be responsible for the safety of women and girls on our streets,” he said.

The remarks come as small-scale but regular protests have erupted outside hotels across England where asylum seekers are being housed. In some cases, the demonstrations have been fuelled by allegations of sexual assaults involving migrants, intensifying pressure on the government and amplifying the rhetoric of anti-immigration campaigners.

Polls suggest that immigration and asylum now rank as the public’s top concern, narrowly ahead of the economy. Reform UK, which won five seats in last



year’s general election, has since surged in popularity and in recent weeks has topped national voting intention surveys, positioning Farage as a central figure in Britain’s political debate once again.

Figures underline the scale of the issue. In 2024, more than 37,000 people crossed the Channel from France to Britain in small boats — a 25% increase on the previous year. The arrivals, predominantly from Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Vietnam and Eritrea, represented around 9% of net migration. Yet despite the heated political discussion, data analysed by the University of Oxford shows that about two-thirds of those who claim asylum after arriving by small boat are successful, while just 3% have so far been deported.

Farage said such figures demonstrated the need for a dramatic overhaul. He pledged to end the right to challenge deportations in the courts, to replace domestic human rights legislation, and to pull Britain out of long-standing international refugee conventions. “The aim of this legislation is mass deportations,” he said, describing a “massive crisis” caused by uncontrolled migration.

The *Times* reported that Farage’s

blueprint involves establishing secure holding facilities capable of detaining up to 24,000 people on disused Royal Air Force bases, at an estimated cost of £2.5 billion. He also proposed operating five dedicated deportation flights every day, with the eventual goal of removing “hundreds of thousands” of people from Britain.

Should those measures fail, Farage suggested asylum seekers could be sent to Ascension Island, a remote British territory in the South Atlantic, in order to send what he called a “symbolic message” of deterrence.

His proposals mark one of the most hardline stances on immigration advanced by a mainstream UK political leader in recent decades. They would place Britain at odds with international human rights law and could provoke legal and diplomatic clashes with European allies, many of whom remain committed to the ECHR and the United Nations refugee framework.

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Critics have argued that mass deportations on the scale Farage proposes would not only be

prohibitively expensive but also logistically unworkable and legally contentious. Human rights groups warn that the policies would put vulnerable people at risk, potentially breaching Britain's obligations under international law.

Nonetheless, the growing salience of immigration as an issue, combined with Reform UK's rising poll numbers, means Farage's proposals are likely to shape the national conversation in the months ahead. For his supporters, they represent a clear

answer to what they see as a failure of successive governments to control the UK's borders. For opponents, they amount to an extreme and dangerous attempt to exploit public fears for political gain.

Either way, Farage's intervention signals that immigration and asylum will remain at the heart of Britain's political debate, setting the stage for a divisive and high-stakes battle over the country's future direction.

Sri Lanka ex-president hospitalised after corruption charges

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Sri Lanka's former president Ranil Wickremesinghe was admitted to hospital on Saturday, a day after he was charged with misusing public funds to pay for private international travel.

The 76-year-old, who was remanded in custody on Friday, is accused of using state money to cover expenses for a two-day trip to the United Kingdom in September 2023. The visit was to attend a ceremony at the University of Wolverhampton, where his wife was awarded an honorary professorship.

Wickremesinghe has denied any wrongdoing, insisting that his wife bore her own travel costs. The visit took place after his return from the G77 summit in Havana and the United Nations general assembly in New York.

If convicted, he faces up to 20 years in prison and a fine of 16.6m rupees (£41,000).

Hospital officials said Wickremesinghe was in a stable condition after being brought to Colombo National Hospital. Rukshan Bellana, the hospital's deputy head, told AFP that he was suffering from acute dehydration. "He was a severe diabetic with high blood pressure



when he was brought in," Bellana said.

Wickremesinghe assumed the presidency in July 2022, following the resignation of Gotabaya Rajapaksa after mass protests over Sri Lanka's worst economic crisis since independence. Long viewed as a political ally of the Rajapaksa family, he was deeply unpopular with demonstrators at the time.

A veteran of Sri Lankan politics, Wickremesinghe had served as prime minister six times since 1977 but

never completed a term. He was defeated in last September's presidential election by Anura Kumara Dissanayake, leader of the leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party.

Dissanayake, whose party is attempting to shed its reputation for past violence, campaigned on promises to root out corruption and curb abuses of power, marking a significant shift in the country's political landscape.

US plans to deport Kilmar Ábrego García to Uganda

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



US immigration authorities have said they intend to deport Kilmar Ábrego García to Uganda, after the Salvadorian national declined an offer to be sent to Costa Rica in exchange for pleading guilty to human smuggling charges and remaining in jail.

The proposal was made late on Thursday, shortly before Ábrego's release from a Tennessee jail the following day. He refused the deal and was freed on Friday to await trial in Maryland with his family. Later that day, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) informed his lawyers that he would be deported to Uganda and must report to immigration authorities on Monday.

According to official documents, DHS told his attorneys that Ábrego "may be removed ... to Uganda no earlier than 72 hours from now (absent weekends)". Immigration and Customs Enforcement also ordered him to report to its Baltimore office.

Ábrego, 30, entered the US without permission in 2011 as a teenager,

fleeing gang violence in El Salvador. He was granted federal protection against deportation to his home country. In March, however, he was deported to El Salvador in what the Trump administration later admitted was an "administrative error".

During his detention at El Salvador's maximum-security Terrorism Confinement Centre (Cecot), he was allegedly subjected to physical and psychological torture, according to filings submitted by his lawyers. The wrongful deportation prompted criticism and pressure on Washington to return him, including a supreme court order directing federal officials to facilitate his return.

He was brought back to the US in June, but was then charged with human smuggling offences, allegations his lawyers have described as "preposterous". His trial is scheduled for January.

Ábrego, who had lived in Maryland for more than a decade working in construction and is married to an American citizen, was deemed

eligible for pretrial release but remained in custody at his lawyers' request. They feared he would be deported again immediately if freed, though a recent ruling in Maryland provided him with some protection to mount a defence.

Separately, Uganda confirmed this week that it had agreed to a temporary arrangement with the US to accept certain asylum seekers.

Bagiire Vincent Waiswa, permanent secretary at Uganda's foreign ministry, said: "The agreement is in respect of third country nationals who may not be granted asylum in the United States but are reluctant to or may have concerns about returning to their countries of origin."

He added that individuals with criminal records and unaccompanied minors would not be accepted, and that Uganda preferred transfers of nationals from African countries. Detailed modalities of the deal are still under discussion.

Judge blocks Trump move to cut funds to sanctuary cities

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A federal judge has barred the Trump administration from withholding funds from 34 “sanctuary cities” and counties that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities, in a ruling that widens an earlier order.

The decision, issued on Friday by Judge William Orrick in San Francisco, extends protections to major cities including Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, Denver and Albuquerque. Orrick, an appointee of Barack Obama, had previously ruled it unconstitutional for the administration to freeze funding for jurisdictions with sanctuary policies, siding with cities such as San Francisco, Sacramento, Minneapolis and Seattle that had challenged President Trump’s executive orders.

Those cities argued that the orders, signed in January and February, amounted to an unlawful use of executive power and violated constitutional protections. The administration maintains that the federal government should not be compelled to subsidise local policies that obstruct

immigration enforcement.

The confrontation has intensified in recent weeks. The administration has already deployed national guard troops to Los Angeles and Washington DC under a law-and-order directive. On Friday, Trump said Chicago was likely to be the next target, adding that New York would also come under increased scrutiny.

“I think Chicago will be our next,” the president told reporters at the White House. “And then we’ll help with New York.”

Figures published on Saturday by Axios show that the number of people in immigration detention has risen by more than 50% since Trump’s inauguration, reaching a record 60,000, around 21,000 more than at the end of the Biden administration.

Separately, the attorney general, Pam Bondi, issued letters last week to 30 Democrat-led states and cities threatening further action if they did not abandon their sanctuary policies. Governors of California, Illinois and

Minnesota, along with the mayors of New York, Denver and Boston, were among those warned that their jurisdictions were obstructing federal immigration enforcement.

“This ends now,” Bondi wrote.

Democratic leaders dismissed the threats. Minnesota’s governor, Tim Walz, described Bondi’s actions as “some kind of misguided political agenda” that was “fundamentally inconsistent with our founding principles as a nation”.

The Pentagon has meanwhile ordered 2,000 national guard troops in Washington to be armed. Officials told NBC News that defence secretary Pete Hegseth had authorised guardsmen assisting local law enforcement to carry weapons, though those engaged in non-enforcement roles would not.

“The mission to lower the crime rate in our nation’s capital will soon see troops deployed with their service weapons, consistent with their mission and training,” one official said.

Reeves under pressure to extend tax threshold freeze amid £50bn deficit

By Fatimah Idera

Chancellor Rachel Reeves is considering extending the freeze on income tax thresholds as part of efforts to close a looming gap in the public finances, raising the prospect of higher tax bills for millions of workers.

Treasury sources said the measure is among the leading options for Reeves's second budget this autumn. The freeze, first introduced by the Conservatives in 2021 and due to end in 2028, means thresholds rise more slowly than wages and inflation. This so-called fiscal drag has already drawn tens of billions of pounds into Treasury coffers as pay growth pushes more people into higher tax brackets.

Extending the policy until the end of the decade could raise around £7bn a year, though it would be politically sensitive. Labour has pledged not to raise income tax rates and to avoid new burdens on working people. Reeves previously ruled out the measure last year, warning it would hurt working people, but advisers now say options are narrowing as borrowing costs rise and the fiscal outlook worsens.

Economists warn Reeves may need to raise around £20bn to meet her fiscal rules, with some estimates suggesting a deficit of up to £50bn. A freeze on the top tax threshold where earnings above £125,140 are taxed at 45p – has also been floated. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner argued in a March memo that such a move would be “consistent with the manifesto”.

The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates fiscal drag could add £51bn a year to treasury revenues by the end of the decade, with 4.1m more people pushed into higher tax bands by 2027–28.



Alongside tax thresholds, the Treasury is also preparing changes to gambling duties despite lobbying from the industry and warnings of damage to horse racing. Reeves is expected to press ahead with reforms to harmonise the current mix of betting and gaming duties, which critics describe as outdated and inconsistent.

Most gambling revenue comes from online gaming, currently taxed at 21%. In comparison, high street betting and online racing wagers are charged at 15%. Raising all rates to 21% could generate an additional £200m–£300m a year, according to Treasury estimates.

Former prime minister Gordon Brown has urged Reeves to act, arguing that higher levies could raise as much as £3bn, though industry groups dispute this. The Betting and Gaming Council has warned that steep tax hikes could cost 6,000 jobs and drive more people to the black market.

The horse racing sector, which benefits from a separate levy on betting profits, has threatened strike

action if it is targeted.

Sources suggested ministers are still considering whether to grant the industry partial relief.

A Treasury spokesperson said: “We are consulting to level the playing field, so all online gambling pays the same rate, working closely with the horse racing sector. We have no plans to change the way racecourse bets are taxed.”

Budget timing of Reeves

The date of Reeves's second major fiscal event has not yet been confirmed, though legal requirements for the Office for Budget Responsibility to prepare a forecast mean mid-November is the earliest possible date.

The spokesman added: “We are committed to keeping taxes for working people as low as possible, which is why at last autumn's Budget, we protected payslips and kept our promise not to raise the basic, higher or additional rates of income tax, employee National Insurance, or VAT.”

Anti-migrant protests erupt across UK over asylum hotels

By **Fatimah Idera**



Dozens of demonstrations or protests are expected this weekend outside hotels being used to house asylum seekers, as political and legal battles intensify over the government's approach.

The latest figures show that more than 32,000 asylum seekers are currently accommodated in hotels an 8% increase since Labour came to power, though still below the 2023 peak under the Conservatives.

Anti-migrant rallies, alongside counter-protests organised by Stand Up to Racism, are due to take place in towns and cities, including Bournemouth, Cardiff, Leeds, Perth and Aberdeen. Two weeks ago, 3,000 riot police were placed on standby ahead of similar protests, but the National Police Chiefs' Council said no additional mobilisation was planned for this weekend, while stressing that contingency arrangements remain in place.

Meanwhile, local councils led by Labour, Conservatives, and Reform UK are exploring whether to launch legal challenges against asylum hotels. This

follows a temporary injunction secured on Tuesday by Epping Forest council, blocking the use of the Bell Hotel in Essex. Broxbourne council is considering a similar move.

In a letter to the home secretary, Broxbourne MP Lewis Cocking warned that residents were understandably concerned about the impact of housing "unvetted men from barbaric cultures" on local safety.

He also urged reassurance that asylum seekers from Epping would not be transferred to another hotel in his constituency.

Home secretary Yvette Cooper said the government was committed to closing asylum hotels as swiftly as possible in a managed way that avoided shifting problems onto other communities. Labour has pledged to end the use of hotels for asylum accommodation by 2029.

Cooper argued progress had already been made through cutting the asylum backlog, reducing costs, and increasing returns of unsuccessful applicants.

Shadow home secretary Chris Philp said residents had "every right" to protest over asylum accommodation in their areas.

Government data published on Thursday shows overall spending on the asylum system has fallen 12% over the past year. The backlog of initial asylum decisions has also dropped below 100,000 for the first time in four years.

Hotels and large sites, such as former military bases, are used as contingency accommodation when longer-term housing is unavailable. The Home Office has a legal duty to provide shelter to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute.

However, refugee support groups report growing hostility, with many facing threats, relocating offices, or even closing services in response to far-right intimidation. Half of NGOs assisting asylum seekers have experienced safety concerns since the riots of 2024, according to research.

Dutch foreign minister Veldkamp resigns over Israel sanctions dispute

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Caspar VeldkampThe Dutch foreign minister, Caspar Veldkamp, has resigned after the caretaker government failed to agree on tougher sanctions against Israel, deepening the political instability in The Hague.

Veldkamp, a former ambassador to Israel, announced his departure on Friday evening following a tense cabinet meeting which ended in deadlock. His party, the centrist New Social Contract (NSC), also withdrew from government discussions in protest.

“The coalition partners refuse to acknowledge the alarming situation in Gaza and take necessary action,” the NSC said in a statement, referring to the centre-right People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the populist Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB).

The split emerged after the Netherlands joined 20 other countries on Thursday in signing a joint declaration condemning Israel’s plans to build 3,400 new homes in an illegal settlement in the occupied West Bank. Critics say the construction would effectively divide the territory in two.

The Netherlands had already barred two far-right Israeli ministers, Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, from entering the country in July. But efforts to



introduce wider sanctions faltered, prompting Veldkamp to say he was “insufficiently able to take meaningful additional measures”.

“We are living in a time of unprecedented geopolitical tension, where diplomacy matters more than ever,” he told the Dutch news agency ANP.

Public pressure has been mounting on the government, with between 100,000 and 150,000 people joining a march in The Hague in June to demand tougher

action over Israel’s war in Gaza. The demonstration was the largest in the Netherlands in two decades.

Veldkamp exit

Veldkamp’s resignation came the same day UN-backed experts warned that Gaza City and surrounding areas were in the grip of an “entirely man-made” famine. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has only declared four famines since its creation in 2004, most recently in Sudan last year.

India vows to protect economic ‘red lines’ as U.S. tariffs loom

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

India’s Foreign Minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, has reaffirmed that trade talks with Washington remain ongoing.

He stressed that New Delhi will not compromise on its core economic interests.

His remarks came just days before a new round of U.S. tariffs on Indian goods is due to take effect.

“Right now, there are issues; it’s pretty open. But it’s not like we haven’t had issues before. However, other parts of the relationship are strong,” he said.

Speaking at an Economic Times forum in New Delhi, Jaishankar added that India would remain steadfast in protecting key sectors, with a strong focus on farmers and small producers.

“We, as a government, are committed to defending the interests of our farmers and our small producers. We are very determined on that. That’s not something we can compromise on.”

Indian exports face additional levies of up to 50% due to New Delhi’s increased purchases of Russian oil.

A 25% tariff is already in force, with



another 25% scheduled for August 27.

Blunkett urges Starmer to consider temporary suspension of ECHR to speed up deportations

By **Fatimah Idera**



Former Labour home secretary Lord Blunkett has called on Sir Keir Starmer's government to consider temporarily suspending parts of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in order to accelerate the deportation of rejected asylum seekers.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4, Blunkett said a radical step may be required to address growing public anger over the use of hotels to house more than 32,000 asylum seekers.

He argued that suspending limited elements of the ECHR for a period of up to six months could help clear the mounting backlog of appeals.

More than 50,000 migrants have lodged appeals against rejected asylum claims double the number a year ago. Many cite ECHR protections, particularly Article 3 (protection against inhuman

treatment and persecution) and Article 8 (right to family life), in their legal challenges.

What Blunkett said

"We are going to have to look at not pulling out of the ECHR or the UN Refugee Convention, but perhaps temporarily suspending certain elements until we can actually get a grip. The Germans did it for three months. We may need six months to stop repeated appeals and ensure more people can be returned to their countries of origin."

The proposal goes further than measures already set out by Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, who has sought to limit judges' ability to use Articles 3 and 8 to block deportations. However, it falls short of Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch's approach, who has ordered a review into leaving the ECHR altogether and is expected to

outline plans at her party's autumn conference.

Blunkett also suggested the UK should press France to tighten laws on boat ownership through a licensing system, which would allow police to seize or block dinghies before they reached the Channel. "That way," he said, "they could be intercepted not only in warehouses but before they even hit the water."

He further backed Cooper's decision to appeal against a High Court ruling that blocked the use of a migrant hotel in Epping, Essex, describing the judgment as perverse and contrary to the Home Secretary's legal duty to house destitute asylum seekers.

Nearly 28,000 people have crossed the channel so far this year the highest total at this stage since small boat arrivals began in 2018.

Rayner moves to block Khan's Commons return

By Fatimah Idera



Angela Rayner has unveiled plans to prevent Sir Sadiq Khan from re-entering Parliament while serving as London Mayor, fuelling speculation she is seeking to sideline potential rivals for the Labour leadership.

The Deputy Prime Minister is introducing legislation that would bar anyone from holding both a mayoralty and a parliamentary seat simultaneously. The change, contained in her forthcoming English Devolution Bill, would rewrite parts of the 1999 Greater London Authority Act and apply to mayors across England.

Under the new law, “a person is disqualified from being the mayor if the person is an elected member of a legislature in the United Kingdom.”

The move would close off Khan's most direct route back to Westminster. Before becoming mayor in 2016, he was Labour MP for Tooting, and speculation has long

linked him with future leadership bids—paralleling Boris Johnson, who used his time as London mayor to launch his campaign for Conservative leader while also sitting as an MP.

Rayner's allies insist the change is about ensuring mayors “focus on serving their local populations.”

But critics accused her of political scheming. A Conservative strategist said: “Fresh out of trying to do in Wes Streeting, Angela Rayner is once again knifing potential leadership rivals. She should be focused on delivering for Britain, not petty party manoeuvres. Yet again it's party first, country last.”

Khan, now serving a third term as London mayor after his re-election last year, has repeatedly denied leadership ambitions, saying he has “no interest” in returning to the Commons. However, many observers believe he remains one of Labour's most high-profile figures

and a potential contender. His office declined to comment on the new law.

Rayner has also been accused of targeting Streeting, the Health Secretary, with separate legislative changes. She plans to scrap rules preventing organisations from registering both as campaign groups and political parties—a move that could benefit pro-Gaza candidates, such as those in Jeremy Corbyn's new party. Streeting only narrowly held onto his seat at the last election, winning by just 500 votes against a pro-Palestinian challenger.

Rumours about Rayner's own leadership ambitions have intensified in recent months, particularly after the leak of an internal tax memo.

A spokesman for her department defended the reforms, pointing out that mayors who double as police and crime commissioners are already banned from sitting in Parliament. “These changes will make the rules consistent across the board,” he said.

More than 200,000 UK workers shift to four-day week since 2019

By **Fatimah Idera**

More than 200,000 workers in the UK have moved to a four-day week since before the pandemic, signalling a significant shift in working patterns.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that between October and December 2024, nearly 1.4 million people reported working full-time across four days up by more than 100,000 from the same period in 2019, when 1.29 million did so.

Another 100,000 said they worked part-time over four days, pushing the total to 2.7 million, or 10.9% of the workforce, compared with 9.8% five years earlier.

Meanwhile the data does not clarify whether workers have compressed their hours into fewer days or accepted a pay cut in exchange for shorter weeks.

Advocates argue that a four-day schedule boosts wellbeing and productivity by reducing stress and improving staff retention. The 4 Day Week Foundation, which campaigns for a 32-hour week with no loss of pay, said more than 420 firms employing around 12,000 staff have adopted the model since the pandemic, either by joining its accreditation scheme or publicly announcing the change.

“The nine-to-five, five-day week is a century-old model that no longer reflects how we live and work,” said Sam Hunt, the foundation’s business network coordinator.

But “a four-day week with no loss of pay is about freedom and the freedom to live healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives.”

The pandemic accelerated



workplace reforms, normalising hybrid working for more than a quarter of adults in Britain.

But while many employees have fought to preserve flexible arrangements in the face of office return mandates, reducing the number of working days has proven more contentious.

South Cambridgeshire district council has become the first local authority in the UK to permanently introduce a four-day week. After a 27-month trial, it voted to allow its 700 staff to complete 100% of their duties in about 80% of their contracted hours, with no pay cut.

The council reported faster delivery of services such as planning applications and housing repairs, higher staff morale, reduced turnover and savings of almost £400,000 from cutting reliance on agency staff.

Other councils are understood to be trialling similar schemes. The

initiative had been opposed by the previous Conservative government, which argued that four-day weeks did not provide taxpayers with value for money.

That guidance was withdrawn last November by Labour, which said councils were independent employers responsible for their own workforce management.

Senior Labour figures, including deputy prime minister Angela Rayner, have expressed support for a shorter working week, although the government has not adopted the policy nationally.

In Scotland, a year-long pilot involving two public sector bodies began in early 2024, with results expected soon.

So far, marketing firms, tech companies and charities have led the way in adopting four-day weeks, but campaigners hope that momentum is building for the practice to become mainstream across the UK economy.

French park manager detained for denying Israeli children entry

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



The manager of a leisure park in southern France has been detained after allegedly refusing entry to a group of Israeli children, prosecutors said.

The incident took place on Thursday at the Tyrovol zipline adventure park in Porté-Puymorens, a village in the Pyrenees near the Spanish border. The children, aged eight to 16, were visiting from Spain and had made a prior reservation, according to the Perpignan prosecutor's office.

Prosecutors said the park manager initially told some people that the group was being turned away because of his "personal beliefs," though he gave different explanations to others. The park later posted a message on social media saying it would close Thursday due to a storm in order to carry out a "complete inspection of the facilities."

The group was ultimately denied entry and went instead to another leisure site in France without issue. The manager has denied any wrongdoing.

Jewish community leaders strongly condemned the incident. "A line was crossed. We are appalled," said Perla Danan, president of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions in the Languedoc-Roussillon region. She compared the refusal to signs from the Holocaust era that read, "no Jews or dogs allowed."

The Jewish Observatory of France also issued a statement expressing "deep outrage," saying the act targeted minors based on their nationality and origin, and "undermines the fundamental principles of the republic."

Jean-Philippe Augé, mayor of

Porté-Puymorens, which has about 100 residents, said the village was in "utter astonishment" over the incident. "The DNA of our community is based on a sense of sharing and fraternity," he said.

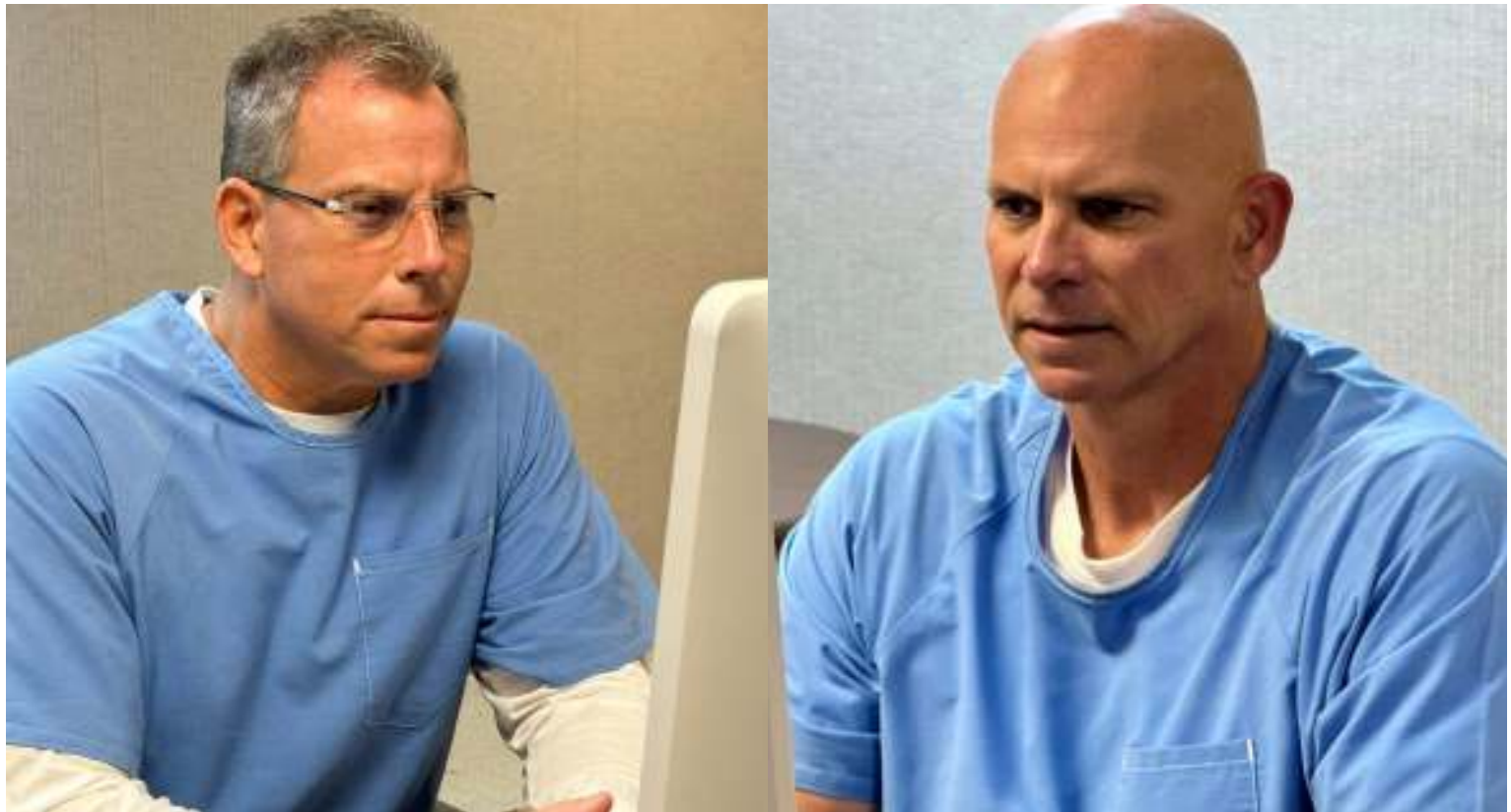
What French law say

French law punishes discrimination based on religion with up to three years in prison.

The case comes amid heightened concern over antisemitism in France. Reports of antisemitic incidents rose sharply in 2023 following the October 7 Hamas attacks in Israel and the war in Gaza. President Emmanuel Macron earlier this month vowed accountability after an olive tree planted in memory of a young French Jewish man murdered in 2006 was cut down in an act described as "antisemitic hatred."

Menendez brothers denied parole in parents' murder case

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Menendez brothers Lyle Menendez has been denied parole for his role in the 1989 killings of his parents, a day after his younger brother Erik's bid for release was also rejected.

The California parole board ruled against releasing the 57-year-old on Friday, with Governor Gavin Newsom holding the final decision on his case.

Lyle and Erik Menendez were sentenced to life in prison in 1996 for the murders of their parents, José and Kitty Menendez. The brothers, who were 21 and 18 at the time of the shootings, claimed they acted after years of sexual abuse by their father. Prosecutors argued they killed their parents in order to secure a multimillion-dollar inheritance.

The case, widely televised during the 1990s, has continued to attract public attention through documentaries and dramas revisiting the brothers' claims of abuse. Family members have long backed their allegations.

Judge reduces Menendez brothers life sentences

In May, a California judge reduced their life sentences to terms of 50 years with the possibility of parole. Former Los Angeles district attorney George Gascón had previously supported their resentencing, saying they had "paid their debt to society" and were victims of severe dysfunction and abuse at home.

However, current district attorney Nathan Hochman opposed their release, saying they had not fully

accepted responsibility.

On Thursday, Erik's parole was denied after commissioners cited his misconduct in prison, including unauthorised use of a mobile phone. Commissioner Robert Barton said: "Two things can be true. They can love and forgive you, and you can still be found unsuitable for parole."

Hochman welcomed the decision, stating that Erik's behaviour in custody showed he still posed "an unreasonable risk of danger to the community". Erik will be eligible for parole again in three years.

Friday's closed-door hearing for Lyle lasted 11 hours. Both brothers appeared by video link from the San Diego prison where they are being held.

Wildfires sweep California

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Wildfires sweep California. Multiple wildfires have erupted across California as the state endures its most intense heatwave of the year, with conditions expected to persist through the weekend.

The largest blaze, the Pickett fire, surged in size on Thursday in a remote part of Napa County and had scorched more than 3,200 acres (850 hectares) by Friday afternoon. Authorities issued evacuation orders and warnings for hundreds of residents around Calistoga, a wine-producing city in the region. Firefighters reported containment at just 5% as they battled the flames in extreme heat and rugged terrain.

“Firefighter safety will be an emphasis once again Friday, with temperatures expected to reach into the upper 90s,” California’s fire

agency, CalFire, said in an update.

Battalion chief Bob Todeschini confirmed there had been no injuries or property damage but urged residents to remain cautious. “We’d like to remind everyone to be vigilant and have a plan as we continue with suppression efforts,” he said in a video message.

The fresh outbreaks coincide with soaring fire risks across the American west. The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) warned of “hot, dry and unstable conditions” from California to Washington, with temperatures 10-25F above normal. Low humidity and possible dry thunderstorms could spark further blazes.

This year has already proved the busiest for US wildfires in over a decade, with more than 44,800

ignitions recorded. Nearly 16,500 firefighters and support staff are tackling blazes that have consumed about 912,400 acres nationwide.

Officials cautioned that even after the current heatwave passes, the danger will remain. Large areas of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Colorado and Wyoming face heightened fire risks through September and October, with vegetation described as dangerously dry and overgrown.

The extreme heat is also taking a toll on public health. The National Weather Service has issued warnings across several states, stretching from Arizona to Washington, saying the conditions could break daily temperature records and pose serious risks to those without access to cooling or hydration.

Boniface set for AC Milan switch after medicals

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Nigeria international striker Victor Boniface is on the verge of sealing a move to AC Milan, with the forward completing the final stages of his medical tests in Italy this weekend.

The 24-year-old, who currently plays for Bayer Leverkusen, arrived in Milan on Friday to undergo the first part of his medical assessment at the club's facilities and later at the offices of CONI, the Italian Olympic Committee, as is required for all new arrivals in Serie A. He continued the process on Saturday with more detailed checks at the Galeazzi Hospital in Milan, where Milan's trusted orthopaedic surgeon was recalled from holiday specifically to oversee his examination.

The extensive nature of the tests underscores Milan's cautious approach, given Boniface's history with injuries. Reports from *La Gazzetta dello Sport* confirm that the club wanted to ensure every detail was properly examined before finalising the transfer.

Injury Concerns Loom

Boniface's talent has never been in doubt, but his career has been hampered by fitness setbacks. During his two-year stint with Bayer Leverkusen, he struggled with recurring muscular problems that disrupted his progress and limited his playing time.

His most serious issues, however, were anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries, which required surgery in March 2019 and again in November 2020. For a striker whose game relies heavily on strength, pace, and quick movements, such injuries naturally raise questions about long-term durability.

Despite these setbacks, Boniface showed flashes of brilliance last season, registering 11 goals and two assists in 27 appearances across all competitions. His powerful presence up front, ability to hold off defenders, and eye for goal have made him a valuable target for Milan, who are keen to bolster their attacking options after a challenging Serie A campaign.

Milan's Transfer Strategy

AC Milan's pursuit of Boniface aligns with their broader strategy of investing in young, dynamic players who can make an



immediate impact but also develop into long-term assets. The Rossoneri, who have been rebuilding in recent years, are looking to reclaim their dominance in Italy and Europe.

The move for Boniface, however, has not been without debate. Legendary Italian manager Fabio Capello recently commented that Milan might have been better suited going for Manchester United striker Rasmus Højlund, suggesting the Danish forward would have been a more "perfect signing." Nevertheless, Milan's management believe Boniface brings a unique profile to their attack—one that blends physicality with technical ability.

Should the medicals be completed without complications, Boniface is expected to put pen to paper on a long-term deal that will officially make him a Milan player in the coming days.

Nigerian Spotlight in Serie A

Boniface's move also continues a strong Nigerian presence in European football, particularly in Italy. The success of Victor Osimhen at Napoli, who fired the club to their first Serie A title in over three decades, has raised the profile of Nigerian strikers in the Italian top flight.

For Boniface, the challenge will be to replicate such an impact while

overcoming the injury concerns that have dogged his career. His physical attributes and determination suggest he has the tools, but consistent fitness will be the key to making his mark at San Siro.

Looking Ahead

As Milan fans await official confirmation of the transfer, optimism is mixed with caution. Supporters are eager to see a new striker who can shoulder the goalscoring burden, but they are also aware of the risks attached to Boniface's medical history.

If he stays fit, Boniface could become one of Serie A's standout forwards, offering Milan both goals and a commanding presence in attack. If not, questions will linger about whether the club took too great a gamble.

Either way, the Nigerian's imminent arrival is another sign of Milan's intent to strengthen their squad and compete at the highest level, both in Italy and in the Champions League.

For Victor Boniface, the medicals are just the final hurdle before he embarks on a new chapter of his career—a chapter that could define not only his future but also Milan's attacking fortunes in the years to come.

Trump reveals venue, date for 2026 FIFA world cup draw

By **Eniola Amadu**



US President Donald Trump has announced that the draw for the 2026 FIFA World Cup will take place on December 5 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Trump made this known in the oval office alongside FIFA president, Gianni Infantino and vice-president JD Vance.

The tournament will commence on June 11 at Mexico City's Ateca stadium and will end on July 19 at MetLife Stadium New Jersey. The Co-hosts of the finals are the US, Canada, and Mexico

A total of 104 matches will be played across 16 host cities. Meanwhile, Washington D.C. will host the draw.

The draw is made up of 48 teams divided into 12 groups of Four, and will see the 48 teams divided into 12 groups of Four. Afterwards, the top two teams from the groups and the

eight best third – place teams will advance to the knockout stages.

When asked about the possibility of taking part in the 2026 FIFA World Cup draw, President Donald Trump described the idea as “very interesting,” but clarified that the decision lies with FIFA President Gianni Infantino, adding, “He’s the boss.”

Trump also addressed security concerns for the December 5 event, assuring the public that extensive safety measures are being put in place. These will include heightened security protocols, National Guard deployment, and federal law enforcement support to guarantee a secure environment for the ceremony at the Kennedy Center.

However, Gianni Infantino hailed the draw as a defining moment in soccer history, emphasizing the event’s unifying power and Washington’s cultural status.

“We are excited to host the most anticipated Final Draw for the FIFA World Cup in history in the cultural and entertainment heart of the United States, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. The draw is a major tournament milestone and one that will continue the remarkable build-up to the biggest sporting event ever, as we get set for many landmark FIFA events across North America throughout 2026.” he said.

FIFA opens preparation offices
In addition, FIFA has established preparation offices in Miami and Trump Tower in New York to coordinate the extensive logistical requirement.

Also, fans from each of the 16 host cities across Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. will be eligible for a special lottery offering complimentary tickets and VIP access to the event.

La Liga: Barcelona defeat Levante to win first match

By Boluwatife Kehinde

In the of Spirit Ramotada, Barcelona celebrated a dramatic comeback victory against Levante, winning 3-2 and solidifying their perfect start to the season.

The first half was dominated by Levante, who displayed impressive control and attacking prowess. Iván Romero opened the scoring early in the match, netting a well-placed shot that caught Barcelona's defense off guard. José Luis Morales soon followed suit, doubling Levante's lead with a powerful strike that left the visiting fans in disbelief. With Levante leading 2-0 at halftime, it seemed as though Barcelona had a steep hill to climb.

However, the second half saw a completely different Barcelona, as they emerged with renewed determination and intent. Within minutes of the restart, Pedri ignited the comeback with a stunning strike from outside the box, sending the ball into the top corner of the net. This goal revitalized the Barcelona squad and its fans, sparking a wave of momentum in their favor.

Shortly after, Ferran Torres continued the offensive onslaught, expertly volleying home to level the score at 2-2. The



atmosphere inside the stadium shifted dramatically as the Barcelona supporters erupted, believing their team could complete the comeback within the remaining minutes of the match.

The final twist came in the dying moments of the game. In the first minute of stoppage time, Levante's Unai Elgezabal, under pressure from Barcelona's attacking players, inadvertently headed a brilliant cross from Lamine Yamal into his own net, sealing the fate of the match. The

unexpected own goal not only secured Barcelona's victory but also demonstrated the relentless pressure they exerted throughout the second half.

Barcelona's perfect record in LaLiga

With this thrilling win, Barcelona maintains their perfect record in LaLiga, showcasing their ability to fight back under pressure and signaling their intent to compete at the highest levels this season.

Cole wasn't 100%: Maresca explains Palmer's absence against West Ham

By Gbenga Olaleye

Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca has revealed that star midfielder Cole Palmer was left out of the squad for their emphatic 5-1 victory over West Ham United on Friday night due to a groin issue.

Palmer, who has been instrumental for the Blues, was notably absent from the matchday lineup at the London Stadium as Chelsea secured their first Premier League win of the season.

Speaking after the match, Maresca explained that the 22-year-old had been struggling in the days leading up to the game.

"Cole, in the last four or five days, he was not 100 per cent," Maresca said. "Today, he tried in the warm-up but he felt

something, so we preferred to not take any risks. We will see in the next hours if it's something important or not."

Palmer's absence opened the door for 18-year-old Brazilian forward Estevão Willian to make his first Premier League start, a move that showcased the depth and promise of Chelsea's youthful squad.

Despite falling behind early to a stunning strike from Lucas Paquetá, Chelsea responded with authority. Goals from Joao Pedro, Pedro Neto, Enzo Fernandez, Moises Caicedo, and Trevoh Chalobah ensured a dominant comeback and a convincing three points for the visitors.

The result marks a strong statement from Maresca's side and will ease early pressure as they continue to find form



under the new boss. All eyes will now be on Palmer's fitness update in the coming days as Chelsea prepare for their next fixture.

Arsenal crush Leeds 5-0 as Gyökeres shines, Dowman debuts

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Arsenal delivered a statement performance at the Emirates, thrashing Leeds United 5-0 in front of 60,110 fans. New £60m signing Eberechi Eze was unveiled before kick-off, and the atmosphere carried through as Mikel Arteta's side put on a show.

Jurrien Timber opened the scoring with a header before assisting Bukayo Saka for the second just before half-time. Viktor Gyökeres, Arsenal's £64m striker, netted his first league goals, including a stoppage-time penalty won by 15-year-old debutant Max Dowman, who became the Gunners' second-youngest player in history.

The afternoon wasn't without concern, as both captain Martin Ødegaard and Saka were forced off injured, leaving Arteta with fitness worries early in the season. Leeds offered little threat apart from a



Pascal Struijk header saved by David Raya, as Daniel Farke's men were thoroughly outclassed.

With £250m invested this summer, Arsenal showed their attacking depth and intent—but injuries remain the lingering question in their title pursuit.

Ten Hag's Leverkusen fall to Hoffenheim in opener

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Bayer Leverkusen's new era under Erik ten Hag began in disappointing fashion as his side slipped to a 2-1 home defeat against Hoffenheim in their Bundesliga opener at the BayArena on Saturday.

The Dutch manager, who signed a two-year deal in May following his Manchester United exit, had hoped for a positive start, and things initially went according to plan when summer signing Jarell Quansah opened his account just six minutes into his debut.

The 21-year-old defender, a £35m arrival from Liverpool, rose highest to meet Alejandro Grimaldo's expertly delivered free-kick, directing his header beyond Hoffenheim goalkeeper Oliver Baumann and sparking early celebrations among the home crowd of 29,390.

But Leverkusen's lead lasted less than 20 minutes as Christian Ilzer's Hoffenheim found their rhythm. Fisnik Asllani capitalised on sloppy defending to smash past Mark Flekken at his near post in the 25th minute, levelling the contest and

silencing the BayArena.

The visitors completed their turnaround early in the second half. Asllani turned provider, threading a clever pass into the path of Tim Lemberle, who calmly slotted into the bottom corner in the 52nd minute to make it 2-1.

Leverkusen tried to respond, with Grimaldo going close after a deflected effort and Nathan Tella firing narrowly wide from a promising position. However, Hoffenheim's compact defensive structure frustrated Ten Hag's men, who failed to create clear chances in the closing stages.

It was a sobering afternoon for last season's Bundesliga runners-up, who had finished 13 points behind champions Bayern Munich and entered the campaign with hopes of closing the gap under their new boss.

Ten Hag admitted afterwards that his side lacked sharpness in both boxes. "We started well, but in this league, you cannot switch off. We gave away cheap goals and



didn't take our chances," he said. "This is the beginning of a process. We will improve."

For Hoffenheim, it was the perfect start under Ilzer, who masterminded an organised and disciplined display. Asllani, with a goal and an assist, was the standout performer, while Lemberle's clinical strike highlighted the squad's efficiency in front of goal.

De Bruyne, McTominay inspire Napoli to 2-0 win

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Napoli began the defence of their Serie A crown with a commanding 2-0 victory away at Sassuolo, as Scott McTominay and debutant Kevin De Bruyne found the net in an assured opening display for Antonio Conte's side.

A champion's start

The reigning champions wasted little time in stamping their authority. After just 17 minutes, Napoli took the lead through McTominay, who continued where he left off last season. The Scottish midfielder, recently shortlisted for the 2025 Ballon d'Or after a stellar campaign, rose highest to meet Matteo Politano's precise cross and powered a header past the Sassuolo goalkeeper.

It was a goal emblematic of McTominay's growing reputation in Italy: industrious, clinical, and decisive. Having scored 12 league goals in his debut Serie A season, the former Manchester United man looks set to be a central figure once again in Napoli's quest for back-to-back titles.

De Bruyne's Dream Debut

If the first goal was about continuity, the second was about new beginnings. Making his Serie A debut, Kevin De Bruyne showcased the quality that made him a legend at Manchester City. In the 57th minute, the Belgian maestro curled a free-kick from the left-hand side, bending it into the far corner with trademark precision.

The 34-year-old, who joined Napoli on a free transfer this summer, was hailed by Conte as the "final piece" of his midfield. And on this evidence, De Bruyne still has plenty to offer at the highest level. His passing range, composure, and set-piece mastery gave Napoli a creative edge that could prove decisive over the course of the campaign.

Sassuolo Struggle to Respond

For Sassuolo, the evening was one of frustration. Despite spells of neat possession, they failed to significantly trouble Napoli's back line. Their best chance came midway through the first half when Kristian Thorstvedt forced Alex Meret into a routine save, but otherwise, the hosts lacked penetration.



Matters worsened in the 79th minute when Ismael Koné, on loan from Marseille, received a second yellow card for a clumsy challenge. Reduced to ten men, Sassuolo could only hope to limit the damage as Napoli comfortably saw out the game.

McTominay's Growing Influence

McTominay's influence on this Napoli side cannot be overstated. Signed in 2024, the Scot quickly adapted to Italian football, becoming the engine of Conte's midfield. His 12 league goals last season were crucial in Napoli's title triumph, earning him the Serie A MVP award.

Now entering his second season, McTominay looks sharper and more confident. His goal against Sassuolo highlighted his aerial threat and timing, attributes that make him one of the league's most complete midfielders. With a Ballon d'Or nomination already to his name, he could be on course for an even more remarkable year.

De Bruyne Brings Experience

De Bruyne's arrival adds another dimension to Napoli's midfield. With 111 caps for Belgium and a decade of dominance in the Premier League, his pedigree is unquestionable. Some questioned whether age might slow him down, but his performance in Reggio Emilia silenced any doubts.

Not only did he score, but he dictated play with his vision and control, linking seamlessly with McTominay and Stanislav Lobotka in midfield. His set-piece expertise will also be invaluable in tight games.

Conte's Title Defence Begins Smoothly

Conte, never one to underplay the challenges of a season, was nonetheless pleased with his side's assured performance. Napoli were solid at the back, efficient in midfield, and clinical in attack. Their balance and intensity suggested little sign of complacency creeping into a team that conquered Italy last term.

With rivals Inter and Juventus strengthening over the summer, the road to another Scudetto will not be straightforward. But with McTominay in form and De Bruyne adding experience, Napoli look well-equipped to mount a strong defence.

Final Word

A debut goal for De Bruyne and a familiar strike from McTominay set Napoli off to the perfect start. Sassuolo, meanwhile, looked second best throughout and will need improvement to avoid another difficult season.

For Napoli, it was a statement of intent: the champions are ready to defend their crown, and with their blend of youthful energy and world-class experience, few will bet against them.