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Fashola: Local govt autonomy unattainable under current constitution

By Damilola Olufemi

Amid intensifying calls for local government autonomy in Nigeria, former Lagos State governor and ex-Minister of Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola, has argued that true autonomy for local councils is currently unattainable under the country's constitutional framework.

Speaking on Channels Television's **Sunrise** programme on Saturday, Fashola emphasized that local governments remain significantly constrained by the influence of state governments and their legislative assemblies, which, according to him, undermines the concept of autonomy.

"I think that the debate we must have, debate we must have, is whether we really want autonomous local governments. It's a debate that must be had," Fashola said. "As it stands today, it is unrealistic to expect autonomy for local governments created by the Constitution."

Fashola, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, explained that local governments are subject to laws enacted by state Houses of Assembly, which contradicts the core idea of autonomy. He noted, "If you look at the legal and ordinary meaning of the word, autonomy, it suggests that you are acting independently without any outside influence and authority. And to that extent, a state House of Assembly making laws for what and how a local government can function is in itself an external influence."

He further highlighted the control of land—a key resource required by local councils to fulfill their duties—as another major limitation. "Land is essential for responsibilities such as operating slaughterhouses, cemeteries, constructing roads, running primary schools and healthcare centres. Yet, land is controlled by state governments," he said. "I didn't think that autonomy was intended."

According to him, the Constitution's Fourth Schedule outlines responsibilities for local governments, but those duties are deeply tied to access to land, which remains under



state control. "So if we decide that we want autonomous local governments, those are some of the things we have to free up," he added.

Fashola contended that the constitutional setup leans more toward oversight and collaboration than full independence. "What I think was intended was some sort of collaboration, some sort of supervision, some sort of an oversight of the state over the local government," he said. "That is inherent in what you will find in Section 162, which deals with the state's joint local government account."

Fashola recalls practice before 1999

Reflecting on past governance, Fashola recalled that prior to 1999, local governments directly received allocations from the Federation Account through a system referred to as the Joint Account and Allocation Committee (JAAC). However, after the return to democracy in 1999, it became apparent that many councils were failing in their primary responsibilities, including paying salaries and pensions of local government staff, such as teachers and health workers.

He said, "In the advent of the democratic era, it was found out that there were so many of them, or not a few of them, who had defaulted in the

very basic obligation of paying staff salaries, primary healthcare workers, primary school teachers, salaries and pensions. And there was a backlog of debt, and I met some of that debt when I became Governor."

He attributed this situation as a factor behind the establishment of the joint state-local government account system, which was intended to provide oversight. "Whether the supervisors have now become as culpable as those they were supervising is another narrative entirely," he remarked.

Commenting on the Supreme Court's July 2024 judgment, which barred state governors from dissolving elected local government councils and granted them financial autonomy, Fashola expressed mixed feelings. While acknowledging the poor state of local governance, he noted that some legal experts are uncertain about whether the ruling aligns with the Constitution.

"No patriot would say that all was well with the state of local governments in Nigeria," he said, adding that the recent conduct of council elections is a positive development in the push for greater independence at the grassroots level.

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APC slams ADC for 'insensitive' criticism of Buhari's state burial

By Friday Omosola



The All Progressives Congress (APC) has condemned the African Democratic Congress (ADC) for its recent statement accusing the Bola Tinubu administration of exploiting the death of former President Muhammadu Buhari for political gain.

The APC, in a statement on Saturday, signed by its National Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka, labelled the ADC's criticism of the dignified state burial as 'insensible' and 'unacceptable.'

The party reacted to a statement made by ADC alleging that the president was exploiting Buhari's death for political publicity.

Morka stated that the ADC's reaction to the solemn state funeral and the outpouring of support for Buhari's family demonstrates a profound lack of understanding of customary state practice, empathy, and basic human decency.

Morka described the ADC as a 'dump of Nigeria's internally displaced politicians', ready to resort to any

means for attention, yet only sinking deeper into disrepute.

"That the ADC is blowing up over the state burial of the late President only reflects the party's duplicity and insensitivity," Morka said.

He questioned what the ADC would have preferred Tinubu to do: "Deny the late Buhari the honour of a befitting state burial?"

"Withhold empathy and support for the bereaved former first family? As a party that can begrudge the dead, the ADC must surely disdain the living."

He lambasted the ADC for politicising a moment of national mourning, particularly as their statement was released during the designated week of mourning for the former president.

Morka called the ADC's characterisation of the government's gestures as 'exploitation' as 'beyond the pale', arguing it falls far outside the bounds of legitimate opposition politics.

He suggested that the ADC's desperation for power has 'corroded' its humanity.

Morka reminded Nigerians of the late Buhari's distinguished life of service as a soldier, military Head of State, and a two-term democratically elected president.

He also highlighted Buhari's personal role as a father, survived by a grieving family deserving of collective empathy and support.

He emphasised that Tinubu demonstrated compassion and patriotism by personally overseeing and participating in the ceremonies to honour his friend, close political associate, and predecessor, who dedicated so much to the nation.

Morka urged Nigerians to be wary of the ADC, characterising them as 'political marauders prowling for power' with nothing to offer but 'falsehood and vilifying a President who is hard at work for the transformation and progress of our nation.'

'I will be there': Senator Natasha vows to resume at Senate on Tuesday

By Oluwatosin Ologun



In a dramatic turn and bold statement, the Senator representing Kogi Central district, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, is insisting she will resume plenary at the Senate on Tuesday, 22nd of July 2025, in line with the judgement of the court, despite the appeal by the president of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio.

The New Daily Prime reported that Senate President Godswill Akpabio has filed an appeal challenging a recent judgment by the Federal High Court that ordered the Senate to reverse the suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, who represents Kogi Central.

In an interview while in her constituency for a training programme on Saturday, Akpoti-Uduaghan confirmed she had written to the Senate to formally announce her intention to return.

"I have pretty much two months more before the six months expire. However, I have written to the Senate again telling them that I'm resuming on the 22nd,

which is on Tuesday, by the special grace of God," she said in her Ihima hometown of Kogi on Saturday.

"I will be there, because the court did make the decision on that. Now, they argue that it's an order — it's not an order, but it is a decision."

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan, who is in her constituency for a training programme to empower her constituents, says that though her suspension did not stop her from working for her constituency, it hampered a major part of her responsibilities — which is to sponsor bills and motions on the floor of the Senate.

She said, "I did mention that every senator has three major functions. Legislative — which is the creation of laws and review of treaties. Then we have oversight — which is to oversee ministers and agencies. And then the third is representation — which I'm doing.

"Whereby I identify the problems and

the challenges of my community, and I make sure I present them and have them captured in the federal budget. And I have done pretty well with that. Of course, I do miss putting up my bills there, but it didn't stop me from working."

The lawmaker said she has communicated her intentions to resume on Tuesday in a letter to the Senate.

On March 6, the Senate suspended Akpoti-Uduaghan for six months for breaching its rules.

The suspension came amid her allegation of sexual harassment against Senator Akpabio. The Kogi lawmaker, however, took the matter to court, challenging her suspension.

In July, the Federal High Court, Abuja, asked the Senate to recall her from the suspension. The Senate president, however, is appealing the matter and has taken it to the Court of Appeal in Abuja.

FG, states, LGs share N1.8bn allocation in June 2025

By Damilola Olufemi



The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) has shared a total of ₦1.818 trillion among the federal, state, and local governments as revenue accrued in June 2025.

This was revealed in a statement released on Saturday by the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation, signed by the Director of Press and Public Relations, Bawa Mokwa. The revenue distribution followed the FAAC's meeting in July 2025, held in Abuja.

According to a communiqué issued after the meeting, the total disbursement included ₦1.018 trillion in statutory revenue, ₦631.507 billion from Value Added Tax (VAT), ₦29.165 billion from the Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL), ₦38.849 billion in exchange rate gains, and ₦100 billion as augmentation from non-mineral sources.

The document also noted that June's gross revenue reached ₦4.232 trillion. From that amount, ₦162.786 billion was deducted for collection costs, while ₦2.251 trillion was earmarked for transfers, refunds, interventions, and savings.

Statutory revenue alone climbed to ₦3.485 trillion in June, marking a significant rise of ₦1.390 trillion compared to ₦2.094 trillion recorded in May. Meanwhile, VAT revenue declined by ₦64.655 billion, falling to ₦678.165 billion in June from ₦742.820 billion in the previous month.

Allocation analysis

In terms of allocation, the Federal Government received ₦645.383 billion, while the states received ₦607.417 billion and local government councils received ₦444.853 billion. Additionally, ₦120.759 billion, representing 13% of mineral revenue, was allocated to oil-producing states as derivation.

From the statutory revenue portion of ₦1.018 trillion, the federal government received ₦474.455 billion, states got ₦240.650 billion, and ₦185.531 billion went to local governments. Oil-producing states also got ₦118.256 billion as derivation.

Out of the ₦631.507 billion VAT collection, ₦94.726 billion was allocated

to the federal government, ₦315.754 billion to states, and ₦221.027 billion to local governments.

For the EMTL proceeds of ₦29.165 billion, ₦4.375 billion went to the federal government, ₦14.582 billion to states, and ₦10.208 billion to local government councils.

Exchange rate gains amounting to ₦38.849 billion were also shared, with the federal government getting ₦19.147 billion, states ₦9.712 billion, and local councils ₦7.487 billion. An additional ₦2.503 billion was allocated to oil-producing states as derivation.

The ₦100 billion non-mineral revenue augmentation was split as follows: ₦52.680 billion to the federal government, ₦26.7 billion to states, and ₦20.6 billion to local governments.

The communiqué highlighted improved earnings from Companies Income Tax (CIT), Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT), and the EMTL in June, but noted lower receipts from Oil and Gas Royalties, VAT, Import and Excise Duties, and Common External Tariff (CET) levies.

North cannot be deceived by token appointments, ADC criticises Tinubu

By Oluwatosin Ologunn



The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has criticised President Bola Tinubu's recent appointments, describing them as an attempt to regain the trust of Northern Nigerians after over years of "neglect."

In a statement issued on Friday and signed by its National Publicity Secretary, Bolaji Abdullahi, the party said the move amounted to "political panic management," rather than sincere efforts at national inclusion.

"You cannot marginalise a region for over twenty-five months and expect applause because you suddenly remembered on the twenty-sixth month that Nigeria is bigger than Lagos State," the statement read.

The ADC accused the administration of calculated neglect, saying the North had been systematically sidelined from critical decision-making since the inception of the Tinubu presidency.

"For over a year, this government turned a blind eye as bandits terrorised villages in the North, as our farmers abandoned their land, and as rural economies crumbled under the weight of poorly thought-out fuel subsidy removal.

"Now, under the rising heat of public discontent, and with the emergence of a formidable opposition coalition gaining traction in the North and across the country, President Tinubu suddenly remembers that there are Nigerians to appoint into positions outside his Lagos," Abdullahi stated.

The ADC argued that every major policy and appointment under the current administration had occurred with minimal Northern representation, stressing that recent gestures were nothing more than "consolation prizes."

"But Northerners, as co-owners of our great federal republic, know better than to be deceived by these token appointments. They see through President Tinubu's actions — and can sense that this is not genuine. Tokenism is not inclusion, and symbolism is not governance," the ADC national publicity secretary said.

The party also called on the President to abandon what it termed "Bourdillon-style appeasement politics," and instead pursue genuine national unity through broad-based consultation, policy fairness, and adherence to the principles of federal character.

"You cannot patch a broken roof with

press releases and photo-ops. And you certainly cannot restore the trust that you have lost with the public by pretending that titles are a substitute for genuine commitment to nation-building," the statement read.

'Insensitive and Unacceptable'

Meanwhile, the All Progressives Congress (APC) has responded to comments made by the ADC concerning the state burial of former President Muhammadu Buhari, describing the opposition party's remarks as "insensitive and unacceptable."

In a statement shared on X by the President's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, and signed by the APC National Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka, on Friday, the ruling party accused the ADC of politicising a period of national mourning for political gain.

"The party's criticism of the dignified state burial accorded to the late President is as spooky as it is unconscionable. Again, the ADC has showcased itself to be without any understanding of customary state practice and lacking empathy and essential humanity," Morka said.

Kaduna police halt Peter Obi birthday rally over 'security concerns'

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The Kaduna State Police Command has halted a planned rally by supporters of Labour Party's 2023 presidential candidate, Peter Obi, which was intended to mark his birthday.

In a statement issued by the Command's spokesperson, DSP Mansir Hassan, the police explained that the decision was based on intelligence reports suggesting that certain criminal elements intended to infiltrate the event. These elements allegedly planned to exploit the rally to incite unrest, disrupt public order, and potentially trigger violence.

"The Command has credible information indicating that the proposed gathering could be hijacked by miscreants, posing a threat to peace and security," the statement read.

It further emphasised that all political rallies and similar public gatherings are currently prohibited in Kaduna State until INEC officially declares the commencement of political activities.

The statement added that the rally's scheduled date coincided with party



primary elections for an upcoming bye-election in the state, which have already been communicated to the police by various political parties. "The planned rally is expected to interfere with several areas designated for these primaries, raising the likelihood of tension, clashes, and a breakdown of law and order," the Command said.

Police call for postponement

While acknowledging the right of citizens to assemble and celebrate political figures, the police reiterated that

political events remain suspended for now.

Organisers of the Obi rally were urged to postpone any planned gatherings to avoid unintended consequences and ensure public safety.

"The Command remains resolute in its commitment to protecting lives and property and will take appropriate legal action against anyone who disregards this directive," Hassan warned.

Court jails nine Chinese nationals for cyberterrorism, internet fraud

By **Friday Omosola**

Two Federal High Courts sitting in Ikoyi, Lagos have convicted and sentenced nine Chinese nationals to prison for cyberterrorism and internet fraud.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Lagos Zonal Directorate 1, secured the convictions before Justices Chukwuemeka Aneke and Dehinde Dipeolu.

The convicts are Deng Wen Quang, Lin Jin, Shi Yang Xiong, Lu Yong Yao, Yang Chen Cheng, Feng Li Cai, Li Niue, Li Kuang Kuang, and Dan Jia, also known as Bu Fan.

They were arraigned on separate charges relating to cyberterrorism and internet fraud.



One of the charges revealed that the group, through the use of Nigerian youths, engaged in identity theft schemes and posed as foreign nationals to undermine Nigeria's economic and social structures.

These actions were described as being intended to seriously destabilise the country.

The suspects pleaded guilty to all charges when they were read in court.

Following their pleas, EFCC prosecutors M.K. Bashir, Babatunde Sonoiki, and B.M. Isha urged the court to convict the defendants and order the forfeiture of all items recovered from them.

Both judges found the accused guilty and sentenced each to one year in prison, with an option of a ₦1 million fine.

The court also directed that all recovered items be forfeited to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Additionally, the Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Immigration Service was ordered to ensure their deportation within seven days of completing their sentences.

Enugu police rescue six children, arrest 10 suspects for alleged child trafficking

By Helen Okechukwu

The Enugu State Police Command has rescued six trafficked children and arrested 10 suspects in a series of anti-trafficking operations conducted between 30 June and 16 July 2025.

This was made known on Saturday through the Command spokesperson, Daniel Ndukwe, who recounted that on 15 July, police operatives and Neighbourhood Watch members arrested Chiaha Josephine, 64, and Ozomma Ubanagum, 67, in Ezeagu Local Government Area (LGA) in connection with the crime.

“On July 15, 2025, at about 9:30 p.m., operatives from the Anti-Cultism Tactical Squad of the Command, working with Neighbourhood Watch members, arrested one Chiaha Josephine (female, aged 64) and Ozomma Christopher Ubanagum (male, 67) in Ezeagu LGA. Two trafficked children were rescued: Loveth Mfonobong (female, aged 16), whose name had been changed to Chiaha Ifunanya, and Benjamin Alex Okon (male, aged 12), renamed Chiaha Udochukwu.

“Josephine confessed to buying Loveth in 2021 for ₦900,000 and Benjamin in 2024 for ₦1,400,000. Mfonobong could only give her place of origin as Affi (State or LGA unknown), while Benjamin gave his as Oron in Akwa Ibom State. On July 16, 2025, one Ilo Caroline (55) was also arrested for her involvement.”

Two trafficked children were rescued—Loveth Mfonobong, 16, and Benjamin Okon, 12—both of whom had been renamed by their captors.

The Command spokesperson said Josephine confessed to buying Loveth for ₦900,000 in 2021 and Benjamin for ₦1.4 million in 2024. Another suspect, Ilo Caroline, 55, was also arrested the



following day.

On 13 July, officers from the Awkunanaw Division rescued a one-year-seven-month-old boy stolen from a market and arrested 28-year-old Chiemerie Onwe. The child was reunited with his mother, and the suspect has been arraigned.

In a transnational case, police arrested 21-year-old Mirabel Oluebube on 4 July for trafficking a 14-year-old girl to Ghana. Her accomplice, Udenze Ifeanyi, 32, was also arrested. The victim was rescued and reunited with her family.

In another rescue mission on 3 July, Ogui Division operatives arrested Chinenye Ozoagu, 16, her mother Ogochukwu, 31, and Chidinma Ukpai, 40, for selling Chinenye's newborn for ₦1.4 million. The baby was recovered in Nsukka, though the buyer escaped.

That same day, 36-year-old Ogbuzuru Ifebuche was caught attempting to steal an 11-month-old baby from a salon. The mother raised an alarm, and the suspect was arrested after a mob intervened.

Ndukwe revealed that investigations

are ongoing, and the remaining suspects will be charged soon.

Commissioner of Police (CP) Mamman Giwa praised the operatives' swift actions and warned parents to remain alert and avoid trafficking schemes disguised as financial help. He reaffirmed the Command's commitment to protecting children.

“The remaining arrested suspects will be arraigned in court once investigations are concluded. Moreover, investigative efforts are underway to arrest members of the syndicates at large.

“The Commissioner of Police, CP Mamman Bitrus Giwa, psc, has commended the operatives' professionalism and swift responses. Cautions parents and guardians to be watchful, protect their children, and resist involvement in human trafficking under the guise of economic difficulties. The Commissioner further reaffirms the Command's commitment to fighting crimes against children and urges the public to provide timely and credible information.”

'70% Nigerians spend highly on healthcare services'

By Helen Okechukwu



Nigerian health experts have called on the Federal Government to overhaul Nigeria's healthcare financing by reducing out-of-pocket (OOP) spending and strengthening health insurance coverage to ease the financial burden on citizens.

According to the shared statement on Friday, the call was made during a four-day workshop organised by the Ondo State Ministry of Health in partnership with the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and supported by Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

The event focused on improving human resources and health financing in the state.

Professor Demilade Ibirongbe of the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, revealed that about 70% of Nigerians pay for healthcare directly, often leading to poverty and poor health outcomes. He said the solution lies in accessible health insurance for all.

Read Also: WHO targets 50% health tax hike on tobacco, alcohol, sugary drinks by 2035

"Many Nigerians defer or entirely forgo necessary medical treatment because they simply can't afford it," he said. "Implementing a robust and widely accessible health insurance scheme would fundamentally transform this dynamic, pool resources, spread risks across a larger population, and ensure that individuals can access medical attention."

Prof Ibirongbe stressed the need to invest in both health financing and workforce development.

"Quality care depends on skilled personnel—and retaining them requires proper funding. You can't have quality care without skilled professionals, and you can't retain them without proper health financing," he added.

Permanent Secretary of the Ondo State Ministry of Health, Dr Adeniran

Ikuomola, highlighted recent efforts to bridge the human resource gap through new recruitment. He urged proper workforce deployment and record-keeping to avoid waste.

"It becomes our responsibility to deploy the limited number of human resources that we have appropriately and ensure will keep records of what we have so that when people move out, we will have our records. Our nominal roll and disposition list should be kept appropriately," he said.

GAC Consultant, Mrs Olubukola Oyeneyin, said the training aimed to boost the performance of technical working groups and push for universal health coverage. She also stressed the need for gender equity in workforce planning.

Participants urged the government to run public campaigns on the benefits of health insurance and advised donors to work through official channels to improve transparency and resource tracking.

Actress Opeyemi Aiyeola gives reason for distancing from industry colleagues

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Veteran Nollywood actress, Opeyemi Aiyeola, has opened up about the real reason she distanced herself from her industry colleagues after getting married.

The actress made the revelation during a recent interview on Oyinmomo TV, where she spoke candidly about the decisions she made to protect her marriage and family.

The actress rose to stardom in the early 2000s, shocking many fans when she suddenly disappeared from the film scene. Now, after more than a decade, she is shedding light on what happened.

According to her, she made a conscious decision to step away from Nollywood shortly after marrying her husband, Olayiwola Abdulwakilu. She relocated to the United States and intentionally cut ties with everyone in the industry, not out of pride or resentment, but out of fear that her marriage might not survive the pressures that come with being a public figure in the entertainment world.

“I was off the scene for more than ten years, and I apologise to my fans,” she said during the interview. “I held my marriage in high esteem, so I blocked everybody’s contact in the industry.”

Aiyeola’s confession struck a chord with many who are aware of the challenges entertainers face in maintaining stable

homes. She explained that she wanted to avoid the fate of many of her colleagues whose relationships suffered under public scrutiny and the demands of fame.

“Let’s appreciate our partners,” she added. “They are often the reason things go the way they do. Some people say actors and actresses don’t have stable homes, but they don’t know what goes on behind closed doors. I didn’t want my marriage to end up like that, so I blocked everyone from Nollywood for ten years.”

During this period of silence, she focused on her role as a wife and mother. She described herself as fully committed to building a peaceful home and raising her children without distractions. According to her, stepping away from the limelight was a major sacrifice, but one she made gladly for the sake of her family.

Aiyeola back to acting

Now a proud mother of two boys, Aiyeola believes the time has come to return to her first love, acting.

She has already resumed her career and is gradually reestablishing herself in the industry. She says she has since reconnected with her former colleagues and is open to new opportunities in the film world.

“I unblocked everybody when I finally

returned to focus on my career,” she revealed. “I have two boys, and I have sacrificed everything for them. It’s time for me to also chase my dreams and build my career again.”

Her story reflects a familiar struggle faced by many women who must choose between family life and professional growth. While her decision to walk away from Nollywood may have cost her years of progress in her acting journey, she says she has no regrets.

Aiyeola’s return has been met with excitement from fans who missed her presence on screen. Many have praised her for choosing her family first, and now admire her strength in picking up where she left off.

As she settles back into the film world, Aiyeola says she is not in a hurry. She plans to take on roles that align with her values and support the kind of stories she wants to tell.

With years of experience behind her and a fresh perspective ahead, she hopes to use her journey to inspire other women facing similar crossroads.

“This is a new chapter for me,” she said. “I’m grateful for everything I’ve learned and ready to grow from here.”

Ayra Starr earns RIAA's Latin Diamond certification

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Nigerian music star Ayra Starr has made history by becoming the first African artist to earn a Latin Diamond certification from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

The milestone comes through her global hit “Santa”, a vibrant collaboration with Jamaican producer Rvssian and Puerto Rican singer Rauw Alejandro. The track, which combines Afrobeats and reggaeton elements, crossed 35 million streams in the U.S., qualifying it for the prestigious Latin Diamond award.

This achievement marks a breakthrough for both Ayra Starr and the African music industry. It highlights how Afrobeats continues to gain traction across international markets, especially in Latin America, where rhythmic and cultural similarities have

helped African sounds flourish.

With this certification, Ayra Starr joins fellow Nigerian artist Rema as the only two African acts with RIAA Latin certifications. Rema’s hit “Bubalu”, a collaboration with Shakira and Manuel Turizo, earned a Latin Platinum certification earlier this year.

While Rema’s track enjoyed success, Ayra Starr’s “Santa” has reached even greater heights, proving her growing influence on the global stage.

“Santa” has been a hit far beyond the United States. The track topped the Spanish singles chart and earned multiple Platinum certifications in both Spain and Mexico. It also peaked at No. 2 in Colombia, Ecuador, and Central America, showing its wide appeal across Latin American markets.

The song’s success underscores the global appetite for genre-blending music and cross-cultural collaborations.

Ayra Starr, signed to Mavin Records, has quickly risen from a Nigerian breakout act to a global sensation. Known for songs like “Rush” and “Bloody Samaritan”, she has built a strong international fan base with her unique sound and magnetic presence.

Her success with “Santa” confirms her growing status as a global pop force and sets a new standard for African artists aiming to cross into new music markets.

This Latin Diamond milestone is not just a personal win; it is a landmark moment for Afrobeats and a sign of even bigger things to come for African music.

'My wife will kill me', Davido says after fan asked for Instagram follow

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian music icon Davido stirred laughter and cheers from fans during a recent stop on his 5ive Tour in the United States after he playfully turned down a request from a female fan who asked him to follow her on Instagram.

The encounter, which has since gone viral on social media, captured the moment the Afrobeat star humorously cited his wife, Chioma, as the reason for his refusal.

In the trending clip, the fan dressed in a revealing outfit called out to the singer and asked if he could follow her on the social media platform. Without hesitation, Davido smiled and responded, "No, my wife will kill me. I can't follow anyone, I only follow my wife."

The response instantly drew loud laughter and applause from the crowd, many of whom appreciated the singer's loyalty and wit. Davido's comment has been widely shared across platforms like X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Instagram, with fans praising him for his commitment to his marriage.

Shortly after the video went viral, thousands of fans reacted online. Many admired Davido's humorous but respectful response. Others noted that his loyalty to Chioma has become more visible since their wedding earlier this year.

"It's how he said it with a straight face for me," one user commented. "Chioma is winning!"

Another wrote, "That's a husband material 100%! Davido really said, 'I only follow my wife.' Love that."

Davido's ties knot

In June 2024, Davido married his longtime partner, Chioma Avril Rowland, in a glamorous wedding ceremony held in Lagos, Nigeria. The



celebration was attended by several celebrities, politicians, and dignitaries. Photos and videos from the event quickly took over the internet, with fans gushing over the elegant outfits, luxurious venue, and romantic atmosphere.

The wedding was seen by many as a powerful love story come full circle. Davido and Chioma had been in an on-and-off relationship for years and share a son. Despite facing personal challenges, including the tragic loss of their son, Ifeanyi, in 2022, the couple managed to stay strong and rebuild their relationship.

The ceremony in Lagos not only marked a new beginning for the couple but also solidified Chioma's place as a central figure in Davido's life, both personally and publicly.

Since tying the knot, Davido has not held back from publicly showing love and appreciation for Chioma. From calling her his "rock" to sharing pictures of them on vacations and during private family moments, the singer has made it clear that his loyalty lies with his wife.

His social media pages reflect this dedication. While Davido previously

followed a long list of celebrities, fans, and influencers, a recent review shows that Chioma is now one of the very few people he follows consistently.

During interviews, Davido has also spoken about how marriage has changed his perspective. In a recent podcast, he said, "Marriage brings peace. It's like a reset. Chioma gives me that peace."

The interaction during his U.S. tour may have been lighthearted, but it also offered a deeper glimpse into the artist's values. In a music industry often surrounded by rumours, breakups, and controversy, Davido's humorous yet respectful rejection of the fan's request has stood out as a moment of integrity.

For many fans, it wasn't just a funny moment it was a reminder of what true commitment looks like in the spotlight.

As the 5ive Tour continues across the U.S. and other countries, fans are looking forward to more performances and more candid moments from the Afrobeat star who wears his heart on his sleeve.

'I'm proud of my husband', Carter Efe's wife declares

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Emmanuella, the wife of popular Nigerian skit maker and comedian Carter Efe, has come out in strong support of her husband's unconventional style of comedy.

She made it clear that she is not ashamed of his often dramatic and extreme stunts, which have become a signature part of his online content.

In a heartfelt moment during a recent livestream session with her husband, Emmanuella addressed critics who believe Carter Efe's behaviour in his skits might be embarrassing to her or their family.

Carter Efe's shows support

On the contrary, she said she not only approves of his comedic methods but also plays an active role in encouraging him.

Many viewers have often questioned how Emmanuella feels about Carter Efe's over-the-top and sometimes ridiculous acts, with some suggesting that his behaviour might bring shame or discomfort to his family. But Emmanuella quickly put those rumours to rest.

"I know most of you see him online doing stuff and you feel like maybe he's disgracing me," she said candidly. "To be honest, before he does it, I'm aware. So how can I be embarrassed or ashamed of someone I already know?"

Her response struck a chord with many fans, especially those who admire the couple's open communication and support for one another. She went further to reveal that in many cases, she is the one pushing her husband to be bold in his content.

"I'm actually the one who advises him to do crazy stunts," she continued. "He's not embarrassing me. I'm even the one who encourages him to do those stunts."

Beyond defending her husband, Emmanuella used the opportunity to speak directly to other women. She encouraged them to be proud of their partners, no matter what field they work in, as long as it is legal and honest.



She urged women not to feel ashamed of their spouse's work, especially when it brings joy, entertainment, or income to the household. In her words, "Don't ever be ashamed of whatever your man is doing."

Her statement was seen as a powerful message of support and unity in relationships, especially in the entertainment industry, where public perception can often be harsh or misinformed.

Carter Efe, who gained popularity for his comic skits and the viral song Machala, is known for his eccentric performances, humorous acting, and sometimes outrageous online presence. While his style may not be for everyone, his large following on social media is a testament to his ability to entertain.

Behind the scenes, Emmanuella has proven to be more than just a supportive partner; she is also part of the creative force that helps shape his brand. Her willingness to stand by him publicly highlights the strength of their relationship.

In an industry where entertainers often face online trolling, judgment, and pressure to conform, Emmanuella's public support adds a personal and human touch to Carter Efe's work. Fans praised her honesty and called the moment refreshing.

Social media users reacted positively to the livestream, with many commending Emmanuella for standing by her man. Some noted that such support is rare in today's world, where public image is often prioritised over personal loyalty.

Others praised her for being honest and not letting outside opinions influence her marriage. One fan commented, "This is how it should be support your partner no matter what. Carter Efe is lucky to have a woman like her."

Emmanuella's statement served not just as a defence of her husband but also as a reminder that behind every successful public figure is often a strong support system. Her message encourages couples to communicate, stand by each other, and take pride in their shared journey even when the world is watching.

Rapper N6 reacts to the move to create new states in Nigeria, says, 'madness'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian rapper and on-air personality, Nnamdi Nwabasili, widely known as N6, has voiced strong opposition to the recent proposals for the creation of more states in Nigeria.

His reaction comes amid growing debates over a controversial move by some lawmakers to increase the number of states across the country.

In a post shared via his X (formerly Twitter) account on Friday, N6 described the idea of creating additional states at this time as nothing short of "madness."

According to him, Nigeria is already grappling with widespread corruption, bloated governance, and economic instability, and any plan to expand the number of states would only worsen the situation.

Earlier this week, the House of Representatives confirmed that it had received requests for the creation of 31 new states.

The revelation stirred public interest and triggered a flurry of reactions on social media, especially after unverified reports claimed that the Senate had approved the formation of 12 out of the proposed states.

Although the Senate has not officially confirmed the reports, the speculations have fueled fresh concerns about Nigeria's political structure, governance costs, and the potential strain on public resources.

Reacting to the development, N6 did not hold back. In his statement, he expressed concern that the creation of more states would simply lead to more government positions and projects that may never serve the public good.

He wrote:

"Creating 12 new states in today's Nigeria is madness. 12 new governors and deputy governors. 12 new government house construction projects. 12 new white elephant airport projects. Lord, have mercy."

The rapper argued that instead of solving Nigeria's existing problems, the creation of new states would further inflate government spending and deepen



corruption. He noted that the move would most likely benefit a few political elites while the masses continue to suffer from poor infrastructure, inflation, insecurity, and rising poverty levels.

N6's post has sparked further conversations online, with many Nigerians echoing similar sentiments. Social media users questioned the rationale behind the proposed expansion, especially at a time when the country is facing economic hardship, a high unemployment rate, and the devaluation of the naira.

One user wrote, "We can't pay minimum wage, but we want more states? Who's thinking for this country?"

Another said, "The current states are not even functioning properly. What is the sense in adding more?"

Political analysts have also weighed in on the debate. Some experts argue that the demand for new states stems from long-standing complaints about marginalisation and lack of representation in certain regions. However, they warn that expanding the number of states without proper planning could create more problems than it solves.

Speaking to a local radio station, a public affairs analyst said, "State creation is not

entirely a bad idea if it's done with genuine intentions. But right now, we need to fix what's broken first. We need working schools, hospitals, roads, and electricity, not more governors and government houses."

Nigeria currently has 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Each state comes with its own set of government institutions, including a governor, deputy governor, state assembly, and civil service structure. Many critics argue that this system already puts a significant financial burden on the country.

The idea of creating more states has been a recurring issue in Nigeria's political landscape, often resurfacing before major elections or during discussions on restructuring. However, N6's blunt response reflects a growing frustration among citizens who believe the government should focus on reducing waste and improving service delivery rather than multiplying administrative units.

As of now, the National Assembly has not made any official announcements regarding the approval of new states. But the public outcry, led by voices like N6's, may continue to shape the national conversation in the days ahead.

Astronomer reacts to coldplay concert scandal

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Astronomer, a rising software startup, has broken its silence following a viral video showing its CEO, Andy Byron, appearing intimately involved with the company's chief human resources officer, Kristin Cabot, during a Coldplay concert in Boston.

The incident, caught by a Jumbotron camera and swiftly circulated online, captured Byron, who is reportedly married, embracing Cabot in the crowd. The video triggered widespread speculation and backlash, prompting calls for a response from the company, which took over 24 hours to issue a statement.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Astronomer said:

"Astronomer is committed to the values and culture that have guided us since our founding. Our leaders are expected to set the standard in both conduct and accountability. The Board of Directors has initiated a formal investigation into this matter and we will have additional details to

share very shortly."

The company also sought to quash a series of online rumours, including claims that another employee, Alyssa Stoddard, had attended the concert, and that Byron had released an apology.

"Alyssa Stoddard was not at the event and no other employees were in the video. Andy Byron has not put out any statement, reports saying otherwise are all incorrect," the company clarified.

Sources familiar with the situation told Axios that both Byron and Cabot were placed on immediate leave following the incident. Another insider revealed that the company's delayed response stemmed in part from Byron's ongoing resignation discussions and negotiations over his exit package.

Byron, who took the helm at Astronomer in 2023, had praised Cabot's hiring in 2024, describing her as instrumental to the company's

growth.

"Kristin's exceptional leadership and deep expertise in talent management, employee engagement and scaling people strategies will be critical as we continue our rapid trajectory," he said in a previous company statement.

Cabot, in the same announcement, spoke warmly of Byron and the company leadership.

"I was energised in my conversations with Andy and the Astronomer leadership team about the opportunities that exist here."

The scandal has ignited conversations around workplace ethics, executive accountability, and the impact of personal conduct on professional reputations particularly in the tech industry where startup culture often blurs formal boundaries.

As the board's investigation proceeds, Astronomer has promised to provide further updates "very shortly."

Trump rejects WHO pandemic amendments, cites U.S. sovereignty concerns

By Damilola Olufemi



The Trump administration announced Friday that it is rejecting recent amendments to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) pandemic response framework, arguing that the changes infringe on U.S. sovereignty.

Although the United States began its formal withdrawal from the WHO immediately after Donald Trump returned to office on January 20, the State Department emphasized that the language of the amended agreement—reached last year—would still have imposed obligations on the U.S.

In a joint statement, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.—a longtime vaccine critic—said the revisions “risk unwarranted interference with our national sovereign right to make health policy.”

“We will put Americans first in all our actions and we will not tolerate international policies that infringe on Americans’ speech, privacy or personal liberties,” they declared.

The U.S. officials formally rejected a series of amendments to the International

Health Regulations (IHR), a global legal framework for responding to public health threats, that had been adopted at the World Health Assembly in Geneva last year.

WHO reacts

Reacting to the U.S. move, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a post on X, “We regret the US decision to reject the amendments.” He clarified that the updates to the IHR “are clear about member states’ sovereignty” and emphasized that the WHO has no authority to enforce lockdowns or similar mandates.

One of the key elements of the revised regulations was a new commitment to “solidarity and equity,” including the formation of a group focused on addressing the specific needs of developing nations during global health emergencies.

Member countries have until Saturday to formally raise objections to the amendments. Meanwhile, opposition to the changes has also surfaced in countries like Britain and Australia, where conservative groups and vaccine skeptics

have criticized the WHO despite both nations being governed by left-leaning administrations.

The amendments emerged after member states failed to reach consensus on a broader pandemic treaty. While most nations signed on to a global health agreement this past May, the U.S. opted out, citing its exit from the WHO.

Under the Biden administration, the U.S. had participated in the May-June 2024 negotiations but ultimately withheld support, primarily due to concerns over safeguarding intellectual property rights related to vaccine innovation.

Former Secretary of State Antony Blinken had welcomed the amendments as a positive step forward. However, Rubio and Kennedy, in their statement, argued that the reforms “fail to adequately address the WHO’s susceptibility to the political influence and censorship — most notably from China — during outbreaks.”

In response, Tedros defended the organization, saying the WHO “is impartial and works with all countries to improve people’s health.”

UK granted asylum to one person along with his 22 family members after a major data breach

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The UK granted asylum to one person along with 22 family members, most of whom are in their teens, putting significant pressure on the system.

The British government is now facing mounting scrutiny after it emerged that a confidential military data breach led to the admission of thousands of Afghan nationals into the United Kingdom—many of them extended family members—under emergency asylum measures. The revelation has raised serious concerns about the strain on public resources and the potential risk to national security.

Following the leak of a classified list in 2022, which contained the names of nearly 19,000 Afghans who had applied to enter the UK after aiding British forces during the Afghanistan war, ministers scrambled to contain what has been described as one of the most damaging security lapses in British history. The applicants included members of Afghan special forces, placing them at high risk of Taliban reprisals.

In response, the government established the Afghanistan Response Route in March 2023—an urgent resettlement program designed to airlift those affected by the breach to safety in the UK. However, new court documents—previously kept from public view by a government-imposed super-injunction—now reveal that the scope of the program expanded far beyond initial intentions.

According to sources in Whitehall, in at least one case, a single Afghan granted asylum was permitted to bring 22 family members, many of whom were teenagers. Others reportedly brought extended families “in the high teens,” placing unexpected pressure on accommodation and welfare systems. Defence officials were left scrambling to find housing, with one emergency proposal suggesting two military homes be merged to accommodate individual families.



The initial intention, according to defence ministers, was to limit resettlement to nuclear families. But this policy was repeatedly overruled by UK courts, citing obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. A pivotal decision by High Court judge Mrs Justice Yip in November 2023 expanded the definition of “family member,” stating that it need not be based on blood or legal ties. The ruling acknowledged cultural and contextual nuances in family structures, which significantly broadened eligibility.

Government sources say this shift dramatically altered projections. Documents show that only 10 percent of applicants’ extended family members were eligible under previous rules. Following the breach, officials now estimate that upwards of 55 percent—or approximately 12,500 individuals—could qualify, despite having been previously deemed ineligible. Only 2,200 of those family members had met the criteria before.

Compounding the issue, some insiders allege that criminal elements exploited the post-breach confusion to gain entry into the UK. Reports from Afghanistan suggest that former junior staff, including those accused of stealing from

British bases or selling arms to the Taliban, entered Britain along with large family groups, while some genuine military allies were left behind.

Adding to the controversy is the secrecy surrounding the government’s response. A super-injunction was issued in September 2023, allegedly on the orders of then-Defence Secretary Sir Grant Shapps, to block public discussion of the fallout. The order remained in place until earlier this week, even though Shapps had reportedly won an appeal in May 2024 to keep it in force. On Friday, he claimed he was “surprised” the injunction had lasted so long, prompting accusations that he was attempting to “rewrite history.”

The developments have ignited political tension within Whitehall. Some cabinet ministers reportedly warned that the broadening of eligibility could lead to a surge in bogus asylum claims and pose long-term risks to national security.

The Ministry of Defence and Sir Grant Shapps were contacted for comment but did not respond by the time of publication.

Ukraine proposes new round of peace talks with Russia next week

By New Daily Prime



Kiyiv has proposed to Moscow a new round of peace talks next week, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Saturday, after negotiations stalled in early June.

Two rounds of talks in Istanbul between Moscow and Kyiv failed to result in any progress towards a ceasefire, instead yielding large-scale prisoner exchanges and deals to return the bodies of killed soldiers.

"Security council secretary [Rustem] Umerov also reported that he had proposed the next meeting with the Russian side for next week," Zelenskyy said in his evening address to the country.

Orange lights in the night sky as Ukrainian anti-aircraft systems fire at Russian missiles and drones heading for Pavlohrad. July 2025 Ukraine

Russia launches 'hellish' aerial

attack on eastern Ukrainian city of Pavlohrad

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"The momentum of the negotiations must be stepped up," he added.

Zelenskyy reiterated his readiness to have a face-to-face meeting with the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. "A meeting at the leadership level is needed to truly ensure peace – lasting peace," he said.

Umerov, a former defence minister, was appointed last week as the head of the national security and defence council and tasked with adding more momentum to the negotiations.

Russia has been pressing a grinding offensive along the eastern front in Ukraine's Donetsk region. It has repeatedly said it is ready for a new round of talks but has not backed down from its maximalist war aims.

At talks last month, Russia outlined

a list of hardline demands, including calls for Ukraine to cede more territory and to reject all forms of western military support.

Kyiv dismissed them as unacceptable and at the time questioned the point of further negotiations if Moscow was not willing to make concessions.

The Kremlin said this month it was ready to continue talks with Ukraine after Donald Trump gave Russia 50 days to strike a peace deal or face sanctions.

The US president also pledged to supply Kyiv with new military aid, sponsored by Nato allies, as its cities suffer ever-increasing Russian aerial attacks.

Russian strikes on Ukraine claimed another three lives on Saturday.

32 killed as Israeli troops open fire on aid seekers

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

No fewer than 32 Palestinians were killed and more than 100 injured on Saturday morning when Israeli troops opened fire on crowds gathered near two humanitarian aid hubs in southern Gaza, according to witnesses and hospital officials.

The incident, which occurred in the Teina area east of Khan Younis and near another site north-west of Rafah, has been described by those on the ground as “a massacre”. Witnesses allege that Israel Defence Forces (IDF) fired indiscriminately at groups of Palestinians, mostly young men, on their way to food distribution centres operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), an entity backed by both the US and Israeli governments.

Mahmud Bassal, a spokesperson for the civil defence agency, said most of the fatalities resulted from “Israeli gunfire”. The Nasser hospital in Khan Younis confirmed receiving 25 bodies and dozens of wounded patients. An additional nine people were reportedly killed near Rafah. Many of the injured are said to be in critical condition, with children and teenagers among the casualties.

Dr Atef al-Hout, director of Nasser hospital, described the influx of casualties as “unprecedented”, adding that the facility is severely under-equipped. “We’re unable to provide adequate medical treatment as we lack equipment, medicine, and personnel,” he told Haaretz.

In a statement, GHF claimed that no violence had occurred at or near its aid distribution sites, asserting that the reported shootings happened “far from our sites and hours before they opened”. The organisation reiterated its warnings against approaching centres during overnight and early morning hours.

The Israeli military stated it had fired “warning shots” near Rafah after a group of individuals approached troops and ignored calls to stay back. It said an investigation into the reports of casualties is underway but emphasised that the events occurred while the centres were closed.

However, eyewitness accounts paint a starkly different picture.



Mahmoud Mokeimar, who was among those heading towards the hub, told Associated Press reporters that the soldiers opened fire on the crowd after issuing warning shots. “It was a massacre,” he said. “The occupation opened fire at us indiscriminately.”

Another witness, Akram Aker, said troops used machine guns mounted on tanks and drones during the incident, which he said unfolded between 5am and 6am. “They encircled us and started firing directly at us,” he recalled.

Sana’a al-Jaberi, a 55-year-old woman, said she saw “many dead and wounded” as she fled. “We shouted: ‘food, food,’ but they didn’t talk to us. They just opened fire,” she said.

Four other witnesses corroborated the account, telling AFP that tanks and Jeeps arrived and soldiers emerged firing at close range. “They started shooting at us and we lay down on the ground,” said Tamer Abu Akar, 24.

Gaza, home to over 2 million people, is teetering on the brink of famine. Food security experts have warned that the entire population is at risk. The GHF distribution efforts, meant to alleviate the crisis, have been described by aid workers as “lethal chaos”.

Only days earlier, 19 people died in a

stampede at another GHF site, with one individual fatally stabbed. GHF blamed the incident on Hamas, calling it “a calculated provocation” designed to sabotage humanitarian operations.

Dr Mohamed Saker, head of the nursing department at Nasser hospital, said most victims from Saturday’s shooting were hit in the head and chest. “The situation is difficult and tragic,” he said. “We need urgent medical supplies to cope with the daily flow of casualties.”

The incident comes amid ongoing ceasefire negotiations between Israel and Hamas. Discussions have included a proposed exchange: 10 living hostages and the bodies of 18 others held in Gaza in return for the release of Palestinian detainees.

On Friday evening, US President Donald Trump announced at a dinner event that 10 hostages would “very shortly” be released, though he did not provide specific details. Speaking to lawmakers at the White House, Trump added: “We got most of the hostages back. We’re going to have another 10 coming very shortly, and we hope to have that finished quickly.”

As the humanitarian catastrophe deepens, pressure continues to mount on both Israel and international actors to address the worsening conditions in Gaza and the ever-growing toll of civilian life.

Saudi Arabia's 'Sleeping Prince' dies after 20 years in coma

By New Daily Prime



Prince Al-Waleed bin Khaled bin Talal Al Saud, popularly known as Saudi Arabia's "Sleeping Prince," has died at the age of 36, two decades after he fell into a coma following a car accident in London.

According to TheSunUK, the royal, who suffered a brain haemorrhage in 2005 while studying at a military college in the UK, passed away on Saturday, according to an announcement by his father, Prince Khaled bin Talal bin Abdulaziz.

"With hearts believing in Allah's will and decree, and with deep sorrow and sadness, we mourn our beloved son: Prince Al-Waleed bin Khaled bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, may Allah have mercy on him, who passed away today," the grieving father wrote on X.

Following the accident two decades ago, Prince Al-Waleed was transferred to King Abdulaziz Medical City in Riyadh, where he remained in a coma for 20 years under continuous medical supervision and ventilator support.

several specialists from around the world and moments of minor physical response that offered hope, he never regained consciousness.

Throughout the two decades, Prince Khaled remained devoted to his son's care and consistently resisted calls to withdraw life support.

The Prince's prolonged condition had drawn public attention in the kingdom and beyond, with many Saudis following his rare movements and responses with hope.

Despite consultations with

30 injured after car ploughs into crowd in Los Angeles

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



At least 30 people were injured, three of them critically, after a vehicle drove into a crowd of nightclubgoers on Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles, in the early hours of Saturday morning.

The crowd, made up mostly of women, had been queuing outside a popular nightclub when the vehicle, a Nissan Versa, struck them, also crashing into a taco truck and a nearby valet stand, according to the Los Angeles Fire Department.

Cpt Adam VanGerpen, a spokesperson for the department, confirmed that the scene was chaotic, with paramedics rushing victims to local hospitals and trauma centres. Among those treated at the scene, one was

discovered to have a gunshot wound, though it remains unclear if the injury was connected to the vehicle incident.

Images circulating on social media and from photojournalists at the scene show scattered debris, including shoes and food containers, littering the road. The immediate area was cordoned off as emergency services flooded the scene.

“This is under police investigation,” said VanGerpen. “It will be a large investigation with the LAPD.”

Partygoers who had been inside the nightclub reportedly rushed outside to assist the injured before first responders arrived. “They were all

standing in line going into a nightclub. There was a taco cart out there, so they were getting some food, waiting to go in,” VanGerpen said. “The valet podium was taken out, the taco truck was taken out, and then a large number of people were impacted by the vehicle.”

As of Saturday morning, authorities had not confirmed whether the incident was intentional or accidental. The identity of the driver and the motive remain unknown.

The Los Angeles Police Department has taken over the investigation, while trauma teams continue to care for the injured. Further updates are expected as the situation develops.

Usyk knocks out Dubois to become undisputed heavyweight champion

By Oluwatosin Ologun



Oleksandr Usyk has become boxing's undisputed heavyweight champion for a second time after beating Britain's Daniel Dubois at a packed Wembley Stadium.

The Ukrainian, 38, knocked Dubois down with a stunning right hook midway through round five, before finishing the job moments later with a devastating left hook to the chin of the 27-year-old.

Dubois was bidding to avenge his previous loss to Usyk and become the UK's first undisputed heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis in 1999.

However, the 27-year-old now joins Tyson Fury and Anthony

Joshua with two losses apiece to the undefeated Ukrainian.

Commenting on the victory, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on his X handle said: "He's done it again. An undisputed champion. A legend. One of our own.

"Thank you for the strength and inspiration you give to the whole country with every victory. Thank you for stepping into each fight with Ukraine in your heart.

"Congratulations on the win – to you, to our country, and to everyone who cheered you on."

Usyk – who brought a group of Ukrainian war veterans to the fight

– came in with the WBO, WBC and WBA belts, and Dubois the IBF.

The 38-year-old previously had all four versions but gave up the IBF last year, with Dubois claiming the vacant belt with a devastating win over Anthony Joshua in September.

In their previous fight, Usyk showed his class in Poland's Krakow in 2023, where Dubois was adjudged to have landed an illegal low blow in the fifth round.

But the Ukrainian had been warned throughout fight week that he would face a "different" boxer on this occasion.

AbdulRazaq rewards Kwara's national festival medalists, clears 16-year debt for Kwara United

By Friday Omosola



Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara State has honoured the athletes who participated in the 2024 National Sports Festival in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

He rewarded them with cash prizes and certificates in recognition of their performance.

At a reception held at the state banquet hall in Ilorin, AbdulRazaq described the athletes as 'heroes and heroines', noting that their achievements had brought pride and honour to Kwara.

The state won six gold, 11 silver, and 12 bronze medals at the festival.

Gold medallists received ₦1 million each, while silver and bronze winners were given ₦500,000 and ₦300,000 respectively.

Members of the coaching team also received monetary rewards.

"This event is a celebration of your commitment, patriotism, and excellence," AbdulRazaq said.

"Nothing can fully compensate for your efforts, but history will remember how

you deployed your talents to elevate Kwara."

The governor also used the occasion to announce the settlement of a ₦201 million sign-on fee debt owed to coaches and players of Kwara United Football Club.

The backlog, which had remained unpaid for 16 years, was cleared to underscore his administration's commitment to sports development and athlete welfare.

"We have not only invested in infrastructure, but also in people," he said.

"This payment reaffirms our dedication to the welfare of our athletes, officials, and all sports stakeholders."

AbdulRazaq highlighted recent investments in sports infrastructure across the state.

These include the construction and renovation of facilities such as an Olympic-size swimming pool, indoor sports hall, squash courts, and a new table tennis complex—many of which are unique in Nigeria and across Africa.

He stressed that these projects were part of a broader vision to position Kwara as a leading hub for sports talent development and national contribution.

Top government officials and sports stakeholders attended the event, including the Chairman of the Kwara State Sports Commission, Coach Bola Magaji; former Commissioner for Sports and Olympian, Hameed Adio; SWAN Chairman, Ismail Ayodeji; and Director of Sports, Ibrahim Bako.

Magaji credited the governor's support as key to the recent sporting successes.

"Before now, many athletes had no opportunities," he said.

"Now, there's hardly a month without one of our associations being represented within or outside Nigeria."

Adio praised the administration's focus on combining sports and education as a strategy to raise future stars, while Ayodeji called for Kwara United to play their African Confederation Cup home matches in Ilorin to boost local support and the economy.

Arsenal sign Noni Madueke from Chelsea in £48.5m deal

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Arsenal have completed the signing of England international Noni Madueke from Chelsea for an initial fee of £48.5 million, with potential add-ons pushing the final amount past £50 million.

The 23-year-old winger has signed a five-year contract with the Gunners, becoming the fourth arrival of a busy summer transfer window at the Emirates Stadium. Madueke left Chelsea's Club World Cup camp in the United States ahead of their final against Paris Saint-Germain to finalise the deal.

"Humbled and blessed to be here," Madueke posted on Instagram. "Thank you to everyone that made this possible. I can't wait to get on the pitch and start to repay the faith shown in me. It's going to be so special."

Madueke made 92 appearances for Chelsea after joining from PSV Eindhoven for £30 million in January 2023. He scored 20 goals in all competitions for the Blues, including a key role in their UEFA Conference League triumph last season.

His Premier League performances and recent breakthrough into the England national team have caught the eye. Since making his international debut in August 2024, he has earned seven caps. He recently provided the assist for Harry Kane's winner in a 1-0 victory over Andorra in World Cup qualifying.

Mikel Arteta, speaking to the club's official website, praised Madueke's impact and potential:

"Noni is an exciting and powerful young player, with consistently high-quality performances in recent seasons. He's one of the most talented wide forwards in the Premier League. At just 23, he brings experience from both club and international football and knows the Premier League very well.



His arrival will really improve our squad."

Despite the optimism from Arteta, the move initially caused friction among some sections of Arsenal's fanbase. A petition titled #NoToMadueke gained more than 5,000 signatures earlier this month, and murals near the Emirates were vandalised with "Arteta Out" slogans in protest of the transfer.

Nevertheless, Arsenal pushed ahead with the signing, identifying Madueke as both cover and competition for star winger Bukayo Saka. Saka has been a mainstay on the right for the Gunners but missed a chunk of last season with a hamstring injury, exposing the need for depth in attacking areas.

Madueke plays predominantly from the right but has also featured on the left. In the closing stages of last season, he started four of Chelsea's last five league matches and the Conference League final on the left flank. His versatility gives Arteta options, especially with Gabriel Martinelli and Saka expected to compete on multiple fronts next season.

Statistically, Madueke outperformed both Martinelli and Saka in several attacking metrics last season, including expected goals (9.6), total shots (80), progressive carries (242), and touches in the opposition box (199). He finished the season with a combined 10 goals and assists in the Premier League.

Madueke is Arsenal's second signing from Chelsea this summer following the arrival of goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga. He joins midfielders Christian Nørgaard from Brentford and Martín Zubimendi from Real Sociedad as part of Arsenal's summer rebuild.

The Gunners are also close to completing deals for Sporting Lisbon striker Viktor Gyökeres and Valencia defender Cristhian Mosquera, signaling serious intent to challenge for the Premier League title after falling short last season due to injuries and limited depth.

For Madueke, this move represents both a step up and a fresh start, with Arsenal betting on his explosiveness and end product to help propel them to silverware.

Plumtre: Falcons treated like underdogs vs Zambia

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Ashleigh Plumtre has voiced her thoughts on the Super Falcons' emphatic 5-0 win over Zambia in the quarter-finals of the 2024 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON), revealing that the Nigerian side were made to feel like underdogs ahead of the encounter.

Heading into Friday's clash, the Falcons faced skepticism from pundits and fans alike. Much of the attention had been on Zambia's star-studded frontline, featuring the dangerous duo of Barbara Banda and Racheal Kundananji. There were widespread concerns over whether Nigeria's defence could contain the high-flying Copper Queens, who had impressed in the group stages.

However, those doubts were decisively crushed as the nine-time African champions stormed to a dominant victory, sending a message to the rest of the continent. Goals from Osinachi Ohale, Esther Okoronkwo, Chiwendu Ihezuo, Tosin Demehin, and Folashade Ijamilusi sealed what was arguably the Falcons' best performance of the tournament so far.

Speaking to BBC Sport Nigeria shortly after the game, Plumtre admitted there was an undercurrent of doubt surrounding the Falcons before kickoff.

"I always enjoy any game that I play with this team, to be honest," said the Leicester City defender. "But I think because there was so much talk going into this one, some people thought we would struggle, and some even counted us out, making us feel like underdogs."

She continued, "I think we can allow ourselves to celebrate for a day. The girls have been dancing, but I feel really good. I'm happy with the performance. Obviously, as a defender, you like to have clean sheets, and to keep one against a team like Zambia was a big deal for us."

Clean sheets have been rare in the tournament, especially against attacking teams like Zambia. For Plumtre and her



fellow defenders, the shutout was not only a defensive achievement but a strong psychological boost.

"To also have five different goal scorers was great for us," she added. "I was very happy for Tosin [Demehin] and Osi [Ohale], maybe because defenders don't always get that credit. They're both excellent leaders in their own right."

The win marked a significant shift in Nigeria's attacking fortunes. Despite progressing from the group stage, the Falcons had struggled to find the back of the net with fluidity, raising questions about their finishing and creativity.

Plumtre, however, provided insight into the earlier challenges, attributing the goal drought to the defensive approach of their previous opponents.

"It was nice to come out with a statement win, and that'll give us a lot of confidence going into the semi-final," she said. "People will always doubt, but we have to

remember that the teams we played before this game respected us and played in a low-block, making it harder for us to get goals."

"Zambia are a bit more offensive, which allowed us to get in behind and be a bit more creative. In the end, it all helps — both the doubters and the supporters. Fans are fans."

Zambia's head coach, Bruce Mwape Häuptle, admitted after the match that his team had been thoroughly outplayed. "They were better than us," he said, conceding that the Falcons' class was too much for his young squad.

With their confidence now restored and their doubters silenced, Nigeria will look ahead to the semi-finals with renewed belief and firepower. The win over Zambia may have started with questions, but it ended with answers — emphatic ones.

Barcelona begin talks to sign Marcus Rashford on loan deal

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Barcelona have opened talks over a deal to sign Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford, with the move edging closer as the Spanish champions seek to strengthen their attacking options ahead of the 2025-26 season.

The proposed transfer would initially be a loan move with an option to buy, and discussions involving intermediaries have already taken place. Sources suggest there is optimism on both sides that a deal can be agreed upon.

Rashford, 27, has not featured for United since he was substituted during their 2-1 Europa League victory over Viktoria Plzen on 12 December. He was later dropped from the squad by head coach Ruben Amorim and has since been training away from the first team alongside four other players considered surplus to requirements.

A product of United's academy, Rashford has long dreamed of playing for Barcelona and expressed his desire for a new challenge after falling out of favour at Old Trafford. Speaking in June, Rashford said he would relish the opportunity to play alongside Barcelona's teenage sensation Lamine Yamal. "Everyone wants to play with the best. Hopefully... We'll see," he remarked in an interview with Spanish influencer Javi Ruiz.

His contract with Manchester United runs until June 2028, but he has not been assigned a squad number for the upcoming season and was left out of the squad that travelled to Sweden for pre-season preparations. Instead, he has remained at Carrington, training separately under the club's new regime.

Last season, Rashford was loaned to Aston Villa for the second half of the campaign, making 17 appearances and registering four goals and six assists across all competitions. Despite some flashes of form, his return to United was marred by continued disagreements with Amorim, culminating in his current exile from the first-team setup.



Barcelona's interest in Rashford is not new. Sporting director Deco has previously expressed his admiration for the England international, stating in May: "We like Luis [Díaz], we like Rashford, and we like other players. When we go to the market, there are names we know that can improve the team."

The Catalan giants had been heavily linked with Spain winger Nico Williams earlier in the summer, but the Athletic Bilbao star signed a new long-term deal that keeps him at the club until 2035. Rashford now appears to be their primary target to bolster the flanks.

Barcelona, fresh from winning a domestic double in Hansi Flick's debut season, are eager to continue their momentum. Rashford's pace, directness, and experience at the top level could add a new dimension to Flick's evolving squad.

For Manchester United, offloading Rashford—even on a loan

basis—would offer financial relief. With a reported weekly salary of £325,000, Rashford is the second-highest earner at the club behind Casemiro. Given United's hefty spending this summer—over £130 million on forwards Matheus Cunha and Bryan Mbeumo—outgoings are necessary to balance the books and facilitate further signings.

While Rashford's departure would end a significant chapter at Old Trafford—where he debuted under Louis van Gaal in 2016 and has scored 138 goals in 426 appearances—it could be the fresh start both parties need.

The forward's future under Amorim appears non-existent, and Barcelona could provide the perfect platform for the England star to reignite his career on one of football's grandest stages.

With negotiations progressing and the transfer window heating up, all eyes will be on Camp Nou and Old Trafford in the coming days as Rashford's long-speculated move finally takes shape.