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WORLD NEWS

Two US Crew Members 'Rescued' After Apache Helicopter Went Down Off The Coast Of Oman

Two US crew members were "safely rescued" after a US Army Apache helicopter went down off the coast of Oman, the US military confirmed early Tuesday.

"The Soldiers were safely rescued within approximately two hours and are in stable condition. The cause of the incident is under investigation," US Central Command, the military branch responsible for operations in the Middle East, said in a post on X.

The loss of the aircraft marks the first loss of an Apache since the conflict with Iran began. It comes after hostilities in the region escalated over the weekend, with Iran and Israel exchanging their first direct strikes in months late Sunday.

The US military said the helicopter went down "while patrolling regional waters."

US President Donald Trump commented on the incident overnight, saying "the pilots are fine" after being asked by reporters about a report that a US Army helicopter went down near the Strait of Hormuz.

"The pilots are fine, nobody injured," Trump told reporters in New York after attending Monday night's NBA Finals game.



US CENTCOM spokesman Capt. Timothy Hawkins said a US Navy surface drone "found and rescued the crew from the water."

The New York Times was first to report that a US Army Apache helicopter went down near the strait on Monday, and that two crew members had to be rescued.

The helicopters have previously been used to attack Iranian small boats as part of the US blockade of Iranian ports.

Apache helicopters are primarily used for precision strikes, close air support, and air reconnaissance, according to the Central Command website.

The US military has lost dozens of aircraft — including at least five fighter jets, seven Stratotanker refueling aircraft, a search-and-rescue helicopter and more then two dozens drones — since the war with Iran began in late February, according to a Congressional Research Service report issued in May.

In early April, the US military had to launch a risky operation to rescue one of the pilots of a F-15E Strike Eagle that was shot down inside Iran. The military had to blow up two of its own special operations aircraft on the ground in Iran during the covert mission, which involved hundreds of American military and intelligence personnel, including special operations forces.

In March, a KC-135 Stratotanker refueling aircraft crashed in western Iraq, killing all six crew members onboard. And days earlier, three US F-15 fighter jets were mistakenly shot down by Kuwaiti air defenses, with all crew members ejecting safely.

A number of aircraft were damaged in Iranian strikes on a US airbase in Saudi Arabia, while other aircraft sustained damage after coming under Iranian fire while they were in the air.

Trump formally nominates his former personal lawyer Todd Blanche to serve as attorney general

President Donald Trump has formally tapped acting Attorney General Todd Blanche to take on the top law enforcement job on a more permanent basis, sending his nomination to the Senate on Monday.

Blanche – formerly one of Trump's personal lawyers – would succeed Pam Bondi, who was fired in April.

The formal nomination now tees up the Senate confirmation process. Blanche will need just a majority vote to get confirmed, though his role in handling the Jeffrey Epstein files and in the attempt to create a controversial $1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund to benefit Trump's allies could complicate the vote.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley indicated he will support Blanche and move quickly on the nomination.

"Blanche is well-qualified and has shown his dedication to restoring law and order across our country. The Senate Judiciary Committee's work to process Blanche's nomination is underway," Grassley said in a statement.

But just how quickly Blanche's nomination could advance remains in question. Asked Monday how swiftly he could move the nomination through his committee, Grassley wouldn't say.

Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the committee, indicated to CNN that he plans to ask Blanche questions about the "anti-weaponization" fund.

"I have a lot of questions, including that," Cornyn said when asked if he wanted to hear more specifically about Blanche's role in the fund.



GOP Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana – whose recent primary defeat has led him to become one of the most critical Republican voices on Trump's recent push for the DOJ fund – is signaling that he still has major issues with Blanche.

Asked repeatedly on Monday night whether he could support Blanche, the senator offered the same line: "I have to be convinced that Todd is not the president's personal attorney who happens to be attorney general – but that Todd is attorney general who used to be the president's personal attorney."

Asked by CNN about Trump's recent remarks reiterating his support for that fund - despite Blanche's own insistence that the fund is dead – Cassidy said: "Of course, that's concerning."

Cassidy said "we shall see" when asked what he could do to rein in the White House on the matter.

Active as acting AG

Serving as acting attorney general, Blanche has secured indictments against some of Trump's personal foes like former FBI Director James Comey, rolled back gun control measures and issued subpoenas to journalists for their sources. He's also announced sweeping fraud initiatives across the country, which work hand-in-hand with the White House's "war on fraud."

But critics, citing those same efforts, say that Blanche has effectuated the president's personal and political agenda to use the Justice Department as his own attack mechanism.

The nomination comes in amid pushback against Trump and Blanche over the proposed $1.776 billion "anti-weaponization" fund to compensate people who say they were wrongly prosecuted by the government. The fund was initially announced as part of a settlement between the Internal Revenue Service and the president, his adult sons and the Trump Organization.

Republicans on Capitol Hill revolted over the fund — with many especially anxious over the potential for January 6, 2021, rioters to get payouts.

Blanche essentially had to disavow the idea last week, and the Justice Department told two federal judges the plan is dead. However, several lawsuits are ongoing against the settlement.

Blanche, for his part, has vociferously stated his desire for the job and his support for the president. In a press conference just after he was appointed acting attorney general, Blanche told reporters that working for Trump is "the greatest honor of a lifetime."

"If he chooses to nominate somebody else and asks me to go do something else, I will say: 'Thank you very much, I love you, sir,'" he said.

Epstein files and Maxwell interview

Blanche will also face questions about how the Justice Department handled the Epstein files and his interview with Epstein's co-conspirator, Ghislaine Maxwell.

According to a transcript of her recent interview with the House Oversight Committee, Bondi repeatedly said that Blanche was responsible.

"He was in charge of the process and the entire release of the Epstein files," Bondi said when asked for her role in the department's compliance with the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

LOCAL NEWS

Taxes, Revenues, Licences: RTI Request Filed @ NLA and GRA For Full Lottery Sector Records In Five Years

Prosper AGBENYEGA

A private citizen has formally petitioned the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) and the National Lottery Authority (NLA) for extensive financial and operational records relating to lottery and gaming companies operating in Ghana, invoking provisions of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2019 (Act 989).

In two separate letters dated May 10, 2026, and signed by the newspaper's Managing Editor, Mr. Ayisah Foster, the publication requested detailed information covering taxes, licence fees, revenues, penalties, lottery operations and financial performance spanning several years between 2020 and 2025.

In its request to the GRA, Mr. Ayisah Foster asked the Commissioner-General to disclose the taxes collected between 2020 and 2025 from 36 companies operating within the lottery and gaming ecosystem.

The companies include KGL Technology Limited, Onassis Sports Limited, Alpha Lotto Limited, Game Park Ltd, Afrilotto System Ltd, SIMNET Ghana Limited, TekStart Africa Limited and several others.

The Petitioner stated that the information is being sought under Section 18 of the RTI Act, which grants citizens and institutions the right to request access to information held by public institutions.

In a separate and more extensive application to the NLA, Mr. Ayisah Foster requested details of licence fees and revenues received from 33 lottery-related companies from 2020 to 2025.

Beyond the licensing information, he also demanded financial records relating to three technical service providers, Lots-Services Ghana Limited, SIMNET Ghana Limited and TekStart Africa Limited; seeking to know the total amount paid to them by the NLA between 2018 and 2025.

The publication further requested revenue figures generated through three USSD lottery platforms: *890#, reportedly operated by TekStart Africa Limited; *896#, linked to Alpha Lotto Limited; and *859#, associated with Onassis Sports Limited.

He also asked the NLA to clarify whether the three companies were duly licensed to operate the respective mobile lottery platforms.

If they were not licensed, he requested details of any penalties imposed on them for allegedly operating illegally.

The RTI request extends to the NLA's historical financial records, including total current liabilities from 2012 to 2020, annual 5/90 lottery revenues over the same period, total prize payouts, and yearly lotto prize-to-revenue ratios, commonly referred to as win ratios.

Additionally, the Petitioner is seeking information on the total lotto commissions paid to marketing companies selling lottery products through kiosks and point-of-sale terminals on behalf of the Authority.

One of the more significant aspects of the request concerns revenues generated from live lottery draws conducted by Alpha Lotto Limited on Ghana Television (GTV).

He asked the NLA to disclose how much revenue it received from those broadcasts, while citing provisions of the National Lotto Act, 2006 (Act 722) and the Lottery Regulations, 2008 (L.I. 1948), which mandate the NLA to conduct and supervise lottery draws in Ghana.

He also challenged long-standing claims regarding the NLA's financial contributions to the state, requesting documentary evidence to support assertions that the Authority generated annual revenues or profits ranging from GH¢500 million to GH¢3 billion between 2007 and 2020 for the Consolidated Fund.

Furthermore, he requested details on licence fees and revenues generated from the mobile lottery applications myalphaonline.com and theb2blotto.com between 2020 and 2025, as well as the identities of the companies licensed by the NLA to operate the platforms.

Copies of both RTI applications were sent to the Ministry of Finance and the respective board chairpersons of the GRA and NLA.

The requests are expected to intensify scrutiny of Ghana's lottery and gaming sector, particularly regarding taxation, licensing arrangements, regulatory oversight and the financial performance of both private operators and the National Lottery Authority.

Completed But Empty: -Abuakwa South MP Questions Delay In Opening Trede District Hospital

A fully completed and equipped hospital in the Ashanti Region remains closed to patients nearly two years after its commissioning, prompting concerns over the underutilisation of critical healthcare infrastructure amid growing pressure on existing medical facilities.

Member of Parliament for Abuakwa South, Dr. Kingsley Agyemang, has called for the immediate operationalisation of the Trede District Hospital, arguing that the continued closure of the facility is denying residents access to much-needed healthcare services while valuable public assets risk deterioration.

During an inspection tour of health facilities in the region, Dr. Agyemang expressed concern that the 100-bed hospital, constructed under the Agenda 111 programme and commissioned in December 2024, remains idle despite being fully equipped and ready for use.

The facility includes an Accident and Emergency Unit, consulting rooms, inpatient wards and residential accommodation for health professionals.

According to the MP, the hospital has all the infrastructure required to begin serving patients immediately, with the only major outstanding requirement being the deployment of healthcare personnel.



"The facility is complete and ready. The equipment is available, the accommodation for staff has been provided, and the infrastructure is in place. What is needed now is the workforce to begin delivering healthcare services to the people," he said.

Dr. Agyemang noted that the delay in opening the hospital comes at a time when health facilities across the Ashanti Region, particularly the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH), continue to face challenges associated with overcrowding and increasing patient numbers.

He argued that facilities such as the Trede District Hospital could play a significant role in easing the burden on major referral hospitals by providing quality healthcare services closer to communities.

During his visit, the lawmaker toured the staff accommodation and observed that residential units intended for doctors and nurses remain unoccupied despite being fully furnished and fitted with amenities including air conditioners, television sets, ceiling fans and lighting systems.

He warned that prolonged inactivity at the facility could lead to the deterioration of infrastructure and equipment, resulting in avoidable financial losses to the state.

Dr. Agyemang also raised concerns about construction materials left on-site, some of which he said had already suffered damage due to prolonged exposure to weather conditions.

The MP stressed that healthcare delivery depends not only on physical infrastructure but also on the availability of qualified personnel, urging government to prioritise the recruitment and deployment of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to the facility.

His comments come amid renewed discussions about the utilisation of newly completed healthcare projects across the country and calls for government to ensure that investments in health infrastructure translate into improved healthcare access for citizens.

According to Dr. Agyemang, opening the Trede District Hospital would not only expand healthcare capacity in the Ashanti Region but also ensure that public resources invested in the project deliver the intended benefits to the population.

He therefore urged authorities to expedite all administrative processes necessary to make the facility operational, insisting that communities should not be deprived of healthcare services when the infrastructure is already available.

"The people deserve to benefit from this investment. The facility is ready to serve, and every effort should be made to ensure it begins operating as soon as possible," he stated.

LOCAL NEWS

From Promise to Progress: The Vision Driving Birim North's Next Dev't Agenda

Story By: Nii Okpoti Odamtten & Muhammad Faisal Mustapha..

The road to development is rarely straight. It winds through challenges, competing priorities, and the constant demand for leadership capable of turning promises into measurable progress.

In Ghana's Eastern Region, one local government leader believes the next five years could redefine the future of Birim North District.

For Hon. Abdul Hakeem Antwi, the newly appointed District Chief Executive of Birim North, public office represents more than administration. It is an opportunity to create lasting change for thousands of residents whose aspirations depend on access to jobs, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Nestled within one of Ghana's resource rich regions, Birim North possesses enormous potential. Its fertile lands, youthful population, entrepreneurial spirit, and strategic location provide the ingredients for sustained growth. Yet like many developing districts, it continues to face significant infrastructural and socio economic challenges.

As he settles into office, Hon. Antwi has outlined an ambitious vision centered on inclusive growth, accountability, and modernization. His objective is clear: to position Birim North among the most progressive and economically vibrant districts in Ghana within the next five years.

The DCE's development agenda is anchored on a belief that local governance must directly improve the quality of life of ordinary citizens. He argues that development should not be measured solely by statistics but by visible improvements in communities.

"We cannot speak of progress when young people remain unemployed, when farmers struggle to access markets, or when communities lack basic infrastructure," Hon. Antwi stated during an interview. "Development must be felt in every household and every community."

At the heart of his strategy is economic transformation. Agriculture remains the backbone of the district's economy, and the DCE sees modernization of the sector as a critical pathway to prosperity.



His administration plans to support farmers through improved extension services, enhanced access to agricultural inputs, irrigation initiatives, and stronger links to domestic and international markets. The goal is to move beyond subsistence farming toward commercial agriculture capable of generating sustainable incomes.

According to Hon. Antwi, agriculture must become a business rather than merely a livelihood. He believes value addition and agro-processing can significantly boost earnings while creating employment opportunities for the district's growing youth population.

"The future of Birim North lies in transforming our agricultural strengths into industrial opportunities," he said. "We must process what we produce and create value within our communities."

Infrastructure development forms another major pillar of his vision. Roads connecting farming communities to commercial centers remain a priority, with plans to advocate for increased investment in transportation networks across the district.

Improved road infrastructure, he argues, will not only facilitate trade but also improve access to healthcare, education, and other essential services.

Education occupies a prominent place in the DCE's development blueprint. He envisions a district where every child, regardless of background, has access to quality learning opportunities.

To achieve this, his administration intends to collaborate with government agencies, development partners, and local stakeholders to improve school facilities, enhance teacher support systems, and promote digital learning initiatives.

Youth empowerment is equally central to his agenda. Recognizing the energy and potential of Birim North's young population, Hon. Antwi is advocating vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and skills acquisition programs designed to prepare young people for emerging economic opportunities.

He believes the district's future prosperity depends on creating pathways for young people to become innovators, business owners, and skilled professionals.

"Our young people are not liabilities; they are our greatest assets," he emphasized. "When we invest in their talents and abilities, we invest in the future of Birim North."

Healthcare delivery also features prominently in his five-year vision. Strengthening access to quality medical services, improving health infrastructure, and supporting healthcare professionals remain key priorities.

The DCE is particularly focused on ensuring that rural communities are not left behind in the delivery of essential healthcare services.

Beyond physical development, Hon. Antwi speaks passionately about governance, transparency, and citizen participation. He believes effective leadership requires constant engagement with communities and openness in decision-making processes.

His administration intends to deepen collaboration with traditional authorities, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and community groups to foster collective ownership of development initiatives.

Environmental sustainability has also emerged as a significant concern. With growing attention on climate resilience and responsible resource management, the DCE advocates balancing economic development with environmental protection.

He argues that sustainable growth requires preserving natural resources while creating opportunities for future generations.

For many residents, the promise of transformation carries both hope and expectation. Citizens are eager to see how the administration's plans translate into practical outcomes on the ground.

Development experts note that local governments increasingly play a critical role in achieving national development goals. Success at the district level often determines the pace of broader economic and social progress.

Hon. Antwi acknowledges the magnitude of the task ahead but remains optimistic. He insists that strategic partnerships, prudent management, and community participation can accelerate development across the district.

"We are not merely planning for the next year or two," he said. "We are building a foundation that future generations will benefit from."

As Birim North enters a new chapter under his leadership, the district stands at a defining moment. The coming years will test the effectiveness of policy implementation and the strength of stakeholder collaboration.

Yet for Hon. Abdul Hakeem Antwi, the destination remains firmly in sight: a modern, prosperous, and inclusive district where opportunity is accessible to all and development reaches every corner of the community.

If his vision succeeds, Birim North may well emerge as one of the Eastern Region's most compelling examples of how local leadership can drive transformational change and inspire a new era of district-level development across Ghana.

FEATURE

The annual festival of floating Accra

Every rainy season, Accra faithfully hosts one of its most-anticipated national events: The Great Aquatic Exhibition of Greater Accra. Unlike festivals such as Homowo, there is no planning committee, no sponsorship, and no advertising.

All it takes is a few hours of rain, clogged drains, buildings planted firmly in waterways, and the collective national decision to postpone common sense for yet another year.

The preparations begin long before the first cloud appears.

A waterway is identified. Surveyors know it. Metropolitan Assemblies know it. Traditional authorities know it. Residents know it. The water itself certainly knows it. Yet, people look at the stream bed and say, "What a beautiful place for a house." Before long, concrete replaces common sense. Foundations are dug, walls are raised, roofs are completed, electricity is connected, and tenants move in.

As the Akan say, "Se wo werɛ fi na wosan kɔfa a, yenkyi" — it is not wrong to go back for what you have forgotten. Unfortunately, when it comes to flooding, Ghana seems determined to forget the same lessons every year and equally determined not to go back for them.

Then the rains arrive.

Water, unlike politicians, does not forget its campaign promises. It faithfully returns to the routes nature assigned to it centuries ago. Finding those routes occupied, it politely knocks. When nobody answers, it enters through doors, windows, ceilings, and occasionally through people's dreams.

Suddenly, everyone is surprised.

Television cameras appear. Officials in reflective jackets emerge. Bulldozers are dispatched. Press conferences are organized. Strong statements are issued. Structures that somehow escaped official notice for months or years are now



discovered to be illegal.

Demolition begins.

The public applauds. The headlines are impressive. Lessons are supposedly learned.

Yet one cannot help asking a simple question: if a building can take months to construct, how does it take a flood to discover it?

Curiously, the builder rarely pays a meaningful price. The officials who approved, ignored, or facilitated the development continue their careers uninterrupted. The permit officers remain permit officers. The developers remain developers. The politicians remain politicians. The only people who suffer lasting consequences are the residents whose personal items are floating towards the Gulf of Guinea.

Then comes the political theatre.

The ruling party blames its predecessors. The opposition reminds everyone that the current administration has also enjoyed several rainy seasons without solving the problem. Citizens complain. Social media erupts. Committees are formed. Reports are commissioned. Promises are made. Then the rains stop, and national amnesia resumes until the next season.

The rain, however, remains gloriously non-partisan. It simply follows gravity and conducts its own annual audit of our planning failures.

Meanwhile, another actor in this drama deserves recognition: the ordinary citizen.

For reasons known only to us and perhaps our ancestors, we have developed a fascinating relationship with waste disposal. Many people appear convinced that drains are merely alternative refuse containers provided by the state. Plastic bottles, sachet water wrappers, food packs, and other objects whose original purpose can no longer be identified are lovingly deposited into gutters.

The same citizens then express profound shock when the drains refuse to function as drains.

The ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people. Flooding in Accra is now largely a discipline problem.

We build where we should not build. We dump where we should not dump. We ignore laws we should obey. We excuse conduct we should condemn. We behave like the man who throws his cooking pot into the river and later accuses the river of theft.

Sadly, the consequences are no laughing matter. Families lose homes built over decades of sacrifice. Sometimes, lives are lost. Small businesses collapse overnight. Insurance coverage is limited. Recovery is slow. Public infrastructure suffers extensive damage. The economic cost runs into millions, while the emotional cost is immeasurable.

The poor, as always, carry the heaviest burden. "When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." In the contest between negligence and nature, ordinary citizens are the grass.

The tragedy is that none of this is inevitable.

In the short term, drains must be desilted aggressively and continuously. Refuse dumping laws should be enforced without fear or favour. Flood-warning systems can be improved. Obstructions in major waterways should be removed immediately before disaster strikes again. Public education can become a year-round commitment instead of a seasonal exercise.

In the medium term, every waterway and floodplain in Accra should be digitally mapped and legally protected. Officials who approve or ignore illegal developments must be held personally accountable. Developers who build in prohibited areas should bear the full cost of demolition and remediation. Drainage infrastructure must be modernised and expanded to match the realities of a growing city. Vulnerable communities should be offered practical relocation options before tragedy forces their displacement. A permanent, non-partisan flood management authority insulated from political cycles may need to oversee all these.

Above all, Ghana must rediscover accountability.

And so, as dark clouds gather once again over Accra, citizens look skyward with a familiar prayer: not merely for less rain, but for more responsibility.

For the greatest flood threatening Accra may not be the water from the heavens. It may be the overflowing river of indiscipline, negligence, impunity, political convenience, and institutional silence that has been rising – unchecked – for decades through our country.

Until that river is contained, Accra's annual swimming competition will remain open to all participants—willing participants, reluctant participants, and those who simply woke up one morning to find a canoe parked in their living room.

By: Tawiah Davies

LOCAL NEWS

Zoomlion, NADMO, FeDEMS, DML & Partners Begin 3 Day Anti-Flood Clean in Accra

As part of efforts to reduce flooding and improve environmental sanitation during this rainy season, the Zoomlion Ghana Limited, in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), FeDEMS Group Ltd, together with Dredge Masters Ghana Limited, personnel from the Ghana Police Service, the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) and MMDAs have commenced a three-day clean-up and desilting exercise in selected flood-prone communities within the Greater Accra Region.

The exercise began Wednesday June 10–12 at 7:00 a.m., targeting major drainage channels and waterways in Roman Ridge, Mallam, Paloma, Circle, Kaneshie and GBC areas, where teams undertook extensive cleaning and desilting works to improve the free flow of rainwater and reduce the risk of flooding.

The initiative comes in the wake of recent heavy downpours that have triggered flooding in some parts of the capital, raising concerns about the impact of poor waste disposal practices and clogged drainage systems on public safety.

Speaking on the sidelines of the exercise, the Greater Accra Regional Director of NADMO, Mr. Dennis Nartey, said the collaboration between NADMO, Zoomlion, FeDEMS, Dredge Masters, Police, Fire Service and MMDAs demonstrates a collective commitment to addressing one of the major causes of flooding in the metropolis.

According to him, every heavy rainfall leaves behind significant amounts of waste and debris, much of which eventually finds its way into drains and waterways. He noted that the situation is further aggravated by residents who deliberately dump refuse into drains, making it difficult for water to flow freely during storms.

Mr. Nartey stressed that many of the challenges associated with flooding were man-made and therefore required a change in attitude from the public. He urged residents to dispose of waste responsibly and make use of designated waste collection systems instead of relying on rainwater to carry away refuse.

He used the occasion to promote the ongoing "No Do No Do" campaign, which seeks to discourage indiscriminate littering and encourage environmental responsibility among citizens.

He emphasised that protecting lives and property from floods required the active participation of every member of society.



Speaking at the exercise, the Chief Corporate Communications Officer of Zoomlion Ghana Limited, Ms. Sophia Kudjordji, said the initiative was specifically aimed at reducing flood incidents during the rainy season by ensuring that drains and gutters remain free from obstructions.

"We are gathered here today to undertake this clean-up exercise as part of efforts to curb flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. Most floods occur because gutters and drains are clogged with waste. Therefore, we are dredging and cleaning these gutters to ensure the free flow of water," she stated.

Ms. Kudjordji noted that while rainfall itself cannot be prevented, the destruction often associated with floods can be minimized through proper sanitation practices and regular maintenance of drainage infrastructure. She explained that by clearing drains and removing accumulated waste, communities would be better protected whenever heavy rains occur.

She therefore called on residents to support the efforts of sanitation authorities by refraining from dumping refuse into drains and waterways, stressing that maintaining a clean environment is a shared responsibility. She expressed confidence that sustained public education and community participation would go a long way toward reducing flooding and safeguarding lives and property across the metropolis.

Also speaking, the Head of Government and Corporate Affairs at Zoomlion Ghana Limited, Ms. Emma Adwoa Appiah Osei-Duah, said the company was pleased to partner NADMO, FeDEMS, and the other agencies in undertaking the exercise, particularly at a time when the country is experiencing frequent heavy rains.

She explained that waste carried by floodwaters often accumulates in drains and waterways, creating blockages that increase the likelihood of flooding.

She added that the clean-up exercise formed part of broader efforts to tackle such challenges through sustained sanitation interventions and stakeholder collaboration.

Ms. Appiah Osei-Duah noted that the three-day programme was designed to support flood prevention efforts by clearing waste and silt from critical drainage channels in affected communities. She added that the partnership reflects a shared commitment to protecting communities and improving environmental conditions across the capital.

Abura Dunkwa Fire Tender Returns After Several Years

Residents of Abura Dunkwa in the Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District of the Central Region and surrounding communities have expressed relief following the restoration of the district's fire tender by the management of the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS).

In an interview with the Ghana News Agency, Divisional Officer Grade I Winifred Bonney, District Fire Commander, said the fire tender had been out of service for several years, creating significant operational challenges for personnel at the Abura Dunkwa Fire Station.



She noted that the restoration of the vehicle marked a major turning point for the district and neighbouring communities, providing the Service with the operational capacity it had long lacked.

According to her, the Abura Dunkwa Fire Station can now respond to emergencies with its own functional equipment, thereby improving emergency response within the area.

However, she identified the absence of fire hydrants as one of the major challenges confronting the Service and appealed to the Government and other relevant stakeholders to provide the necessary support.

The latest criticism of the GNFS followed a fire outbreak on Saturday, May 30, which gutted the premises of Bohyeba FM, a radio station at Nyankumasi Ahenkro in the Assin South District.

The fire destroyed properties worth millions of Ghana cedis. Although no casualties were recorded, firefighters from Mankessim had to respond to the incident and bring the situation under control.

LOCAL NEWS

Ghana, US to meet on Ofori-Atta, other extradition requests

Government spokesperson Felix Kwakye Ofosu has disclosed that Ghana's Attorney-General Dominic Ayine, is expected to hold high-level bilateral discussions with officials of the United States Department of Justice to address all outstanding extradition requests between the two countries.

The planned engagement comes at a time when extradition matters have become a key issue in legal and diplomatic relations between Ghana and the United States, particularly following the successful extradition of former Chief Executive Officer of the Microfinance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC), Sedina Tamakloe Attionu, to Ghana.

Sedina was extradited to Ghana on Tuesday, June 9.

Her return to the country follows years of legal proceedings and efforts by Ghanaian authorities to secure her extradition after she failed to appear before the courts during the trial process.

Upon her arrival in Ghana, officials from the Ghana Police Service and the Ghana Prisons Service took her into custody.

Authorities are currently undertaking the necessary administrative and legal procedures to facilitate the commencement of her prison sentence.

Speaking on the broader implications of the development, Felix Kwakye Ofosu indicated in a Facebook post that the government intends to use the upcoming meeting between the Attorney-General and officials of the U.S. Department of Justice to strengthen cooperation on extradition matters and address all pending requests involving both countries.



The discussions are expected to cover several high-profile cases currently attracting public attention.

Among them is Ghana's request for the extradition of former Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta.

The former minister has been the subject of investigations by state authorities, and the government has indicated its intention to pursue all lawful avenues to secure his return should extradition become necessary.

The bilateral talks are also expected to consider requests originating from the United States.

American authorities are reportedly seeking the extradition of a number of individuals wanted in connection with various criminal investigations and prosecutions, including a suspect identified as Abu Trica.

NPP demands firm assurance BoG headquarters will not be sold

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) has challenged the government to provide concrete assurances that any plan to sell the new headquarters of the Bank of Ghana (BoG) has been permanently shelved, insisting that official denials alone are insufficient.

The demand follows claims that the central bank was considering selling its new headquarters under a sale-and-leaseback arrangement. The Bank of Ghana has since dismissed the reports, describing them as false and misleading.

However, in a statement issued on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, the opposition party said that while it had taken the central bank at its word following its June 2 denial, lingering concerns remained because the proposal had previously been publicly raised by Finance Minister Cassiel Ato Forson.

According to the NPP, Dr Forson stated during an appearance on Joy News' PM Express on March 11, 2025, shortly after presenting the national budget, that the Bank of Ghana should "look within" for recapitalisation options and had "a choice to sell and lease back" its new headquarters.



The party argued that those comments, coupled with a recent media report detailing an alleged $260 million sale-and-leaseback proposal, had created legitimate concerns about whether the option was still being considered within government circles.

"We acknowledge the Bank's denial and take it at its word that no such transaction is on the table today," the party said.

"However, the government must substantively abandon the idea."

The NPP maintained that if the government genuinely has no intention of pursuing such a transaction, it must demonstrate that commitment through clear policy measures rather than public statements alone.

As part of that process, the party called on the government to publish a detailed recapitalisation plan for the central bank, setting out the funding sources, financial instruments, and timelines for restoring the institution's financial position.

According to the NPP, selling the headquarters would not resolve the underlying causes of the Bank of Ghana's financial difficulties but would instead amount to exchanging a long-term national asset for a short-term financial solution.

The party further cautioned that a sale-and-leaseback arrangement could saddle the central bank with long-term rental obligations while relinquishing ownership of a valuable and appreciating public asset.

It also raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest, arguing that entities regulated by the central bank could ultimately emerge as owners or financiers of the property.

The statement noted that the government and the Bank of Ghana have already agreed on a phased recapitalisation programme spanning 2026 to 2032.

The opposition therefore urged authorities to focus on implementing that programme rather than exploring asset sales.

In addition, the NPP called on the government to halt policies it believes are worsening the central bank's financial position and to provide greater transparency regarding efforts to restore the institution's balance sheet.

"The Bank Square belongs to the people of Ghana. It is not a distressed asset to be auctioned to plug a hole that prudent policy should never have created," the NPP said.

While the Bank of Ghana has repeatedly described reports suggesting it is considering the sale of its headquarters as "false and misleading," the NPP insists that the government must go beyond denials and provide clear evidence that the proposal has been definitively ruled out.

LOCAL NEWS

Mahama to assess Ministers ahead of possible reshuffle



President John Dramani Mahama has hinted at a possible reshuffle in the coming days as the government prepares to assess the performance of ministers and Chief Executive Officers of state institutions.

In a statement issued by the Presidency on Monday, June 8, Secretary to the President, Callistus Mahama, indicated that President Mahama will soon undertake a comprehensive review of all ministers and heads of state institutions to determine their retention, reassignment, or removal from office.

"The findings of this review shall constitute a key basis for decisions relating to retention in office, reassignment of responsibilities, and any future Cabinet or executive restructuring," the statement said.

It further stressed that public officials are expected to focus on the delivery of results for the Ghanaian people, rather than engaging in or seeking recognition from external award schemes described as having questionable credibility.

According to the Presidency, some private organisations presenting awards to public officials as "best-performing," "most outstanding," or "most influential" lack clear credentials, transparent methodologies, and verifiable criteria for assessing performance.

"The increasing trend of Ministers of State, Chief Executive Officers of State Institutions, and other public officials participating in and accepting awards from various private organisations… has the potential to undermine the integrity of public service, create misconceptions regarding government performance assessment, and expose the Government to unnecessary public criticism and embarrassment," the statement warned.

It added that public office is a solemn responsibility that cannot be measured by privately organised ceremonies or commercial award schemes whose standards are not subject to public scrutiny.

The President has therefore directed that all Ministers of State, Chief Executive Officers, and political appointees refrain from participating in, endorsing, sponsoring, or accepting such awards unless expressly authorised by the Office of the President.

The statement also reiterated that government remains focused on delivering its policy commitments and development agenda, with performance to be assessed based on measurable outcomes, effective service delivery, prudent management of public resources, and implementation of agreed policy objectives.

"Public officials are therefore encouraged to devote their full attention to the execution of their mandates and the delivery of results for the people of Ghana rather than seeking or participating in external recognition schemes of questionable credibility," it added.

The Presidency assured that a full performance review of ministers and chief executives will be conducted in due course, with the results forming the basis for decisions on Cabinet and administrative changes.

Don't block 20% transport fare hike – CUTS Int'l to gov't

West Africa Director of CUTS International, Appiah Adomako Kusi, has urged the government not to block the announced 20% increase in public transport fares, arguing that transport operators must be allowed to adjust prices in response to rising operating costs.

His comments come ahead of an expected meeting between the Transport Ministry and transport unions on Monday, June 1, following the announcement of a nationwide fare increase by transport operators.

Speaking on Channel One News on Saturday, May 30, Mr Kusi said it would be unfair for authorities to prevent transport operators from reviewing fares while fuel prices and other key operational costs continue to rise.

According to him, transport operators have been grappling with frequent increases in fuel prices, making it difficult for many businesses in the sector to sustain their operations under existing fare levels.

He argued that restricting private transport operators from implementing the adjustment could undermine their business models, particularly at a time when the cost of running commercial vehicles continues to increase.

Mr Kusi noted that while state-supported transport services may be able to absorb some of the cost pressures, private operators do not enjoy similar support and therefore require flexibility to remain viable.

"I think it will be unfair to ask the transport operators to halt their price increase when we allow NPA and fuel importers to increase when we have been adjusting prices upward every two weeks. It will be very unfair to those who have invested in that particular business," he said.

He further appealed to commuters to bear with the decision, describing the proposed fare adjustment as a necessary response to prevailing economic conditions rather than an arbitrary increase.

The Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) and the Commercial Transport Operators of Ghana announced a 20% increase in public transport fares effective Tuesday, June 2, 2026, citing persistent increases in fuel prices and the cost of vehicle spare parts as the basis for the adjustment.



BU$IN€$$

Stable cedi hurting exports, favouring imports — Richmond Atuahene



Financial analyst Dr. Richmond Atuahene has warned that the stability of the Ghana cedi may be undermining the country's export sector, arguing that current economic trends continue to favour imports over local production and export.

Speaking on the Citi Breakfast Show on Thursday, April 16, 2026, Atuahene said a stable currency, while often seen as positive, can reduce incentives for exporters and reinforce Ghana's dependence on imports.

"Anytime the cedi stabilises, the export sector suffers. The reason is that if the cedi is GH¢10 to $1 and I export and I come back with the same GH¢10, then what is the aim of exporting rather than importing," he said.

He argued that recent economic gains, including improved reserves, risk deepening what he described as an "import mentality" if not matched with deliberate policies to boost exports.

"When we say the cedi has stabilised and we have reserves, all these things are made to support the import mentality that we have. We need to change that mentality," he said.

Dr Atuahene called for a shift towards an export-led growth strategy, insisting that Ghana must prioritise local production to reduce pressure on inflation and strengthen the economy.

"We need to see that if we use an export methodology instead of an import methodology, people will not be dwelling too much on inflation. We import literally everything, even things we can grow here," he said.

He also pointed to rising remittances as an opportunity to expand export capacity, rather than fuel imports.

"The president himself mentioned that remittances have risen significantly. But instead of expanding the base of exports, we are expanding the base of imports. So importers are happy, and are winning, at the detriment of exporters," he added.

Atuahene stressed the need for policy reforms to support exporters and reduce reliance on imports, warning that without a structural shift, Ghana's economic gains may not translate into long-term resilience.

DTI honours Kufuor with Entrepreneurship Centre to drive industrial growth



Ghana's push for industrialisation and enterprise development is receiving a symbolic boost with the naming of a new entrepreneurship hub after former President John Agyekum Kufuor.

The Design and Technology Institute has announced that its entrepreneurship centre at the Berekuso campus will be known as the "J. A. Kufuor Centre for Entrepreneurship", in recognition of his long-standing support for private sector-led growth.

Founder of the Institute, Constance Swaniker, says the decision goes beyond symbolism, positioning the centre as a practical engine for business creation, job generation, and industrial transformation.

The facility forms part of a larger multi-skills campus expected to train thousands of young people annually, with a strong focus on entrepreneurship, technical skills, and industry-driven innovation.

According to her, the centre will serve as a pipeline for building sustainable businesses, especially among young people, helping to address unemployment while strengthening Ghana's productive base.

The move also reinforces calls for deeper private sector participation in skills development, as Ghana seeks to transition from a raw-material exporting economy to one anchored in manufacturing and value addition.

The naming is being positioned as a "living legacy", with success to be measured not by recognition, but by the number of businesses created and jobs sustained.

China accounts for over 23% of Ghana's imports in Q4 of 2025

Ghana's growing demand for food and consumer goods continues to be met largely through international markets, with Asia led by China emerging as the country's primary sourcing destination in the final quarter of 2025.

New trade data from the Ghana Statistical Service show that China accounted for GH¢14.3 billion of Ghana's total imports in Q4 2025, representing 23.3 percent of all goods brought into the country and cementing its position as the single largest external supplier.

The United States, Netherlands, Belgium and Nigeria followed as other key origin markets, collectively reinforcing Ghana's reliance on a relatively small group of countries for critical imports, including food-related products and agricultural inputs.

Beyond these top suppliers, the structure of Ghana's food import chain reveals a wider global network.

Vegetable products, a key component of the country's food imports, were sourced predominantly from Vietnam, underscoring the role of Asian markets in supporting domestic consumption.

Overall, Ghana's import bill stood at GH¢61.4 billion in the fourth quarter, driven largely by demand for fuels, machinery, vehicles and consumer goods – many of which are essential to food production, processing and distribution.

While imports remained strong, the country recorded a significant trade surplus during the period, supported by robust exports to markets such as India and the United Arab Emirates.

However, exports continue to be heavily concentrated in primary commodities, particularly gold and cocoa, contrasting with the diversified nature of imports.

The data highlights a persistent structural gap: Ghana exports largely raw materials but depends on global partners for finished and semi-processed goods, including food supplies.

With Asia accounting for nearly half of all imports, the country's food security and price stability remain closely tied to global trade dynamics raising fresh questions about the pace of Ghana's import substitution and local production strategies.



LOCAL NEWS

Structural inefficiencies, weak purchasing power keep living costs high — Atuahene



Financial analyst Richmond Atuahene has stated that Ghana's declining inflation rate has not translated into a lower cost of living for many households, citing lagging purchasing power and deep structural inefficiencies in the economy.

As of March 2026, Ghana's annual inflation rate eased to 3.2%, continuing a 15-month downward trend and marking its lowest level since 2021.

Although inflation has fallen to its lowest level in years, many consumers say this has not translated into a reduction in their cost of living or improvements in their everyday lives. They note that prices of essentials such as food, transport, fuel, and utilities remain high.

Speaking on the Citi Breakfast Show, Dr Atuahene said the disconnect between "paper inflation" figures and real household experience stems from the sharp inflation surge in previous years and its delayed impact on the economy.

"There is a lag in the economy, and it is because inflation went to about 54% in 2022. Coming down to 3.3%, there is a delayed effect. This means that the rate at which inflation went up, it doesn't come down to the same level," he said.

He argued that incomes have not kept pace with price movements, thereby eroding the purchasing power of the average Ghanaian.

"That is why once incomes lag behind, the purchasing power comes down… it has eroded the purchasing power of the average Ghanaian. No matter the inflation figures you see, you have forgotten that whatever savings you had would have possibly run into the negative," he said.

Dr Atuahene also pointed to long-standing structural challenges, including poor transport infrastructure and inefficient logistics systems, as key drivers of persistently high prices.

"Someone cultivating tomatoes or yams in a rural area could have delivered this food to Accra within five hours. Today, it will take more than 10 hours to bring tomatoes from Kete Krachi to Accra," he said.

He added that inefficiencies in road networks and the absence of a reliable railway system continue to push up prices, even when inflation appears stable.

"In countries where they have solved these structural issues, inflation and the cost of living are better than what we have," he said.

"Even if inflation is zero and you produce in my village, by the time it gets to Accra, transport and wastage alone can affect prices," he added.

Tsatsu Tsikata: SALL residents deserve reparations over 'historic injustice'



Private legal practitioner Tsatsu Tsikata has called for reparations for residents of Santrokofi, Akpafu, Likpe, and Lolobi (SALL), arguing that they were unjustly denied parliamentary representation during Ghana's 8th Parliament.

The situation, he said, arose after the creation of the Oti Region under Constitutional Instrument 112, which left the SALL communities without a Member of Parliament following the 2020 general elections.

Speaking at an honorific lecture and awards ceremony at the University of Professional Studies, Accra, on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, Mr Tsikata said subsequent administrative changes, including the creation of the Guan Constituency ahead of the 2024 elections, do not sufficiently address the harm caused.

"It cannot be said that the subsequent creation of a Guan district and a Guan constituency are sufficient to remedy the injustice to the people of SALL," he said. "For one thing, the mere denomination of a district and a constituency does not provide the development resources that are the legitimate aspiration of the people."

He argued that residents were deprived not only of parliamentary representation but also of development opportunities linked to having a legislator.

"For the period they lacked representation in parliament and their share of the resources that could have been available through a member of parliament, I dare say they are owed reparation," Mr Tsikata said.

He further described the situation as a "historic injustice" stemming from decisions by the Electoral Commission of Ghana, which he said prevented eligible voters in the area from participating in the 2020 parliamentary election.

"Please remember that the EC itself has admitted that it would have been illegal to have asked the voters in those areas to vote in the Buem constituency in December 2020," he said. "Yet, that is what the constitutional instrument which the EC has claimed in its defense to the election petition to be the applicable instrument."

The issue, he noted, remains subject to judicial resolution, as affected residents continue to seek redress over their exclusion from the electoral process.

Free sanitary pads improving girls' retention in schools - Eduwatch



The Executive Director of Africa Education Watch (Eduwatch), Kofi Asare, has indicated that the government's Free Sanitary Pad Initiative is beginning to show positive impact in schools, particularly in improving girls' retention and easing pressure on teachers.

Speaking on The Point of View on Wednesday, April 15, Kofi Asare shared findings from monitoring conducted by his organisation across selected districts.

According to him, the government has procured and distributed millions of sanitary pads to support female students.

"Key issues are that yes we've seen that the government procured about 12 million sanitary pads and distributed them to schools. In the 10 districts we tracked, in excess of 300,000 has been received, about 340,000 or so has been received which is about an average of 35,000 or so per district," he said.

He explained that at the school level, distribution to students varied, but the availability of the products has been beneficial.

"At the school level we realised that distribution range between three and nine and it was good that the pads were available for schools for girls to use," he noted.

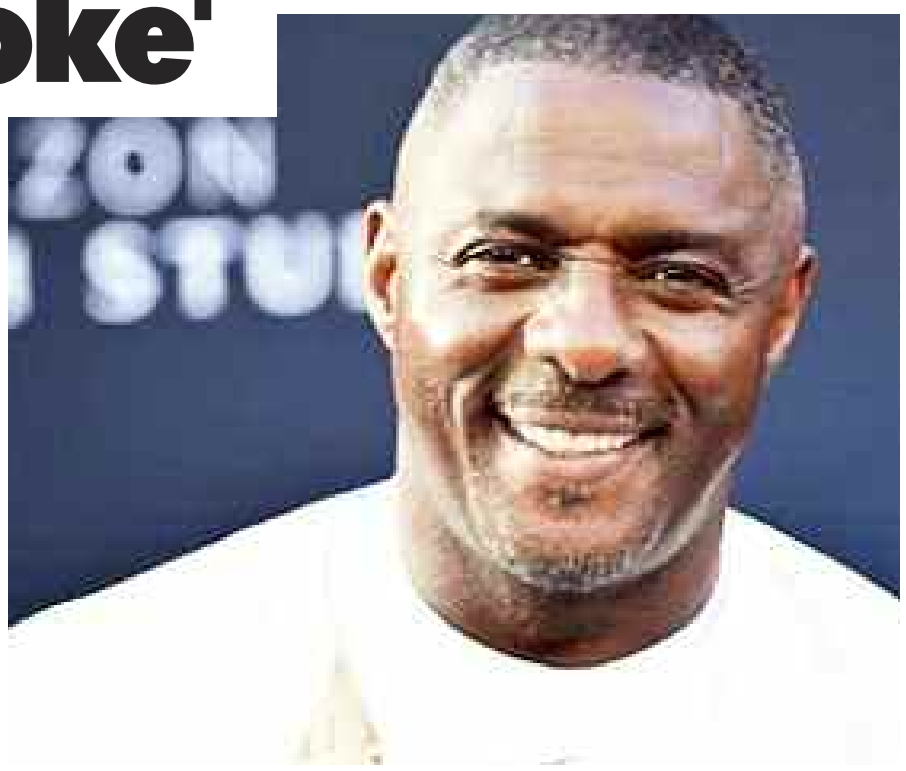
Kofi Asare added that early signs point to a positive impact of the initiative, especially in keeping girls in school and reducing challenges faced by teachers.

"Impact yes, girls' retention had improved, burdens on teachers lifted," he stated.

The Free Sanitary Pad Initiative forms part of broader efforts to support girls' education and reduce barriers to school attendance.

ENTERTAINMENT

Idris Elba: 'Don't try to make James Bond woke'



British actor Sir Idris Elba has said that James Bond shouldn't become "woke" and that some audiences would not accept a black male playing 007.

Sir Idris, who has previously said that he was "never in the race" to play the famous spy despite years of rumours, told GQ that he was nevertheless flattered by the suggestion.

He said that Bond "was written how he was written for a reason", but added he was "complimented" by being linked to the role.

"In realistic terms, some markets just don't go for that," Sir Idris said. "Bond is big all over the world. And [audiences] won't [all] go for a black male, an African male, playing Bond. That's not what they like in their culture. Period."

Sir Idris continued: "Bond is so unrealistic, so a hint of reality is good, but let's not try and make it woke. I think you've got to be pure to what it is: escapism. Don't try to answer the world's taste. Just be Bond."

The actor, who is currently starring in the film Masters of the Universe as Man-at-Arms, joked about the fact his latest character - a 1980s cartoon character with a ginger moustache - looked nothing like him.

"Talk about recasting," he says. "I was a bit conscious about it. But then I was like, 'What are you talking about?! Man-At-Arms could be any colour! He's got green legs, for God's sake!'"

Rumoured casting

The search for the next 007 officially began last month, after years of anticipation and speculation about who will take over from Daniel Craig.

Auditions have been taking place in recent weeks, according to Hollywood outlet Variety, and the statement signals the beginning of the end of the long wait for a new James Bond.

"While we don't plan to comment on specific details during the casting process, we're excited to share more news with 007 fans as soon as the time is right," Amazon added.

It's been five years since the release of No Time To Die, Craig's final film as the famous spy.

The studio has already announced that the next movie will be directed by Dune's Denis Villeneuve and written by Peaky Blinders creator Steven Knight.

Variety reported that Nina Gold, one of Hollywood's leading casting directors, who has worked on the Paddington, Star Wars, Jurassic Park and Mamma Mia! franchises, is conducting the search for a new lead actor.

Rumoured possibles for the role include Callum Turner - who recently married Dua Lipa - Henry Cavill and Aaron Taylor-Johnson.

Ariana Grande and Ethan Slater split after three years



Ariana Grande and Ethan Slater have ended their relationship after nearly three years together, according to US reports.

The couple separated "quietly" and in an "amicable" manner several months ago, a source told US magazine People.

"They gave lots of time and careful consideration and decided to go their separate ways," the source told the publication. "They are still friends and very supportive of one another."

The performing pair met while starring together in the modern film adaptation of the stage musical Wicked. BBC News has asked Grande and Slater's representatives for comment.

The singer and actress, 32, first met Slater, 34, in 2023 while they were shooting the Wizard of Oz spin-off in the UK.

Grande starred as Glinda the good witch in the two films, while Slater portrayed Boq Woodsman, who is later turned into the Tin Man.

After going Instagram official in real life in 2024, the couple appeared together at promotional events for both Wicked and its sequel, Wicked: For Good.

Both stars finalised divorces from their former partners during their time together.

Last weekend, Grande began her long-awaited Eternal Sunshine tour - her first since 2019.

The live shows come three years after the Eternal Sunshine album was released, and ahead of Grande's forthcoming album Petal, which drops next month and has been preceded by a new single, Hate That I Made You Love Me.

The pop star, also known for hits including Twilight Zone and Side To Side, has focused more on acting in recent years and said in November that the tour would be her last for a "long time".

She received an Oscar nomination for best supporting actress for her role in the first Wicked movie.

Fellow actor and singer Slater was nominated, along with the entire Wicked ensemble, for outstanding performance by a cast in the same movie at the Actor Awards, formerly known as the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards.

He was also nominated for a Tony Award for his Broadway debut as SpongeBob SquarePants.

'I never lost faith': David Raya's incredible journey from non-league to Champions League finalist

When David Raya steps out onto the pristinely manicured grass of Budapest's Puskás Aréna for Saturday's Champions League Final, he'll do so to the soundtrack of nearly 70,000 boisterous spectators.

The sparkling pinnacle of European soccer's elite club competition will be a far cry from the bumpy pitches and concrete terracing of England's non-league the goalkeeper once graced.

Twelve years ago, he was a Spanish teenager on a character-building loan spell with then fifth-tier Southport FC.

Fast forward to today, he's one of the most influential keepers of his generation and stands on the brink of history as Arsenal chases a first ever Champions League crown. It's the stuff of dreams.

What would David Raya the boy make of David Raya the man?

"He'll be over the moon," the Spanish keeper says with a smile speaking to CNN Sports ahead of the showdown with Paris Saint-Germain.

"He'll just say everything has paid off. Every training, every call to home and every moment that you are by yourself.

"He'd be very proud of the journey that we have taken."

Did he always have faith?

"Yes, always," Raya proclaims. "I never lost the faith."

Defying the odds

Raya's journey to the upper echelons of the game has not been so much smooth and linear as uneven and circuitous.

It's been one underpinned throughout by resilience, support and an unwavering belief in achieving his ultimate dream destination: the promised land of silverware.

With the blessing of his parents and despite not speaking a word of English, Raya pursued his "chance of a lifetime" by leaving his hometown of Barcelona as a 16-year-old to join Blackburn Rovers' academy in 2012.

"(They've) always been there pushing me and trying to be a better person and a better player," he says.

"It (was) a shock of culture. It's tough, (but) I think it was tougher for my mom and dad than it was for me."

It was as he was turning 19, when he dropped down the divisions to the then fifth-tier Merseyside club that he embarked on, as he describes it, "a point of maturity (and) one of the best moments of my career."

Washing his own gloves and kit between matches, Raya talks first-hand of seeing the significance of winning matches as players balanced training with work.

"It helps to pay more bills and pay the mortgages," he recalls.

"It gives you another perspective of football and how well treated we are when we are in a higher level."



Premier League dream

But he too had to bide his time, recalling months when he'd go without playing a game on his return to Rovers.

Far from giving up, it hardened his mental resolve, and when his break with the Lancashire club and subsequently a trip to Brentford came, he didn't think twice.

His journey to the promised land of the Premier League was finally achieved in the summer of 2021.

Not only did it mark the culmination of a childhood dream, it too was to signal the beginning of a new chapter in his remarkable rise in the game.

"When I came to England, I made a promise that I wasn't going to move from England until I played in the Premier League, and I did," Raya recalls.

"I didn't take it for granted. I always want more. I always want to make that next step and next challenge.

"I think that positive mind and that dreaming, visualizing the stuff has helped me to be where I am right now."

Arsenal was to be that next step on the ladder as he moved to the North London club in August 2023.

Since establishing himself as the undisputed No. 1, the Spaniard hasn't looked back, developing into one of the Gunners' most important players and the undisputed best goalkeeper in the Premier League.

Ballon d'Or contender?

His superlative shot-stopping ability, commanding distribution and defining game-winning moments this season contributed substantially to the Gunners ending their 22-year wait for a Premier League trophy – this after so many recent near misses.

"Incredible feeling (and) everything has paid off … the way we did this is incredible," he exhales.

"It's a relief. It's a weight off the shoulders and now we can be a little bit more free in a way. So that will help us to be even better, to be more convinced of what we're capable of.

"It has to be a turning point for the club, for everyone that is involved here … So why can we not go next season and have the same aim?"

Raya too became just the fourth player to win the Golden Glove Award for the most for clean sheets for a third successive season with his form leading to pundit and social media chatter about being a contender for the prestigious Ballon d'Or accolade.

"Obviously, it's something that you like to hear and you like to see people talking about that potential and I would love to be in that list and to be competing with the best in the world," he humbly replies when asked about his chances.

"I leave that for the pundits and the people that speak sport. I just want to be the best version of myself every day … and the rest will come along."

Eyeing Champions League glory

Sustained success is what Raya and Arsenal are now eyeing up as they go in search of European glory.

Twenty years on from their debut appearance in a Champions League final – a 2-1 defeat to Barcelona – it's defending champion PSG that stands between them and silverware.

The Gunners lost out to Luis Enrique's slick outfit at the semfinal stages last season, and with Les Parisiens boasting a star-studded front three of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Ousmane Dembélé and Désiré Doué, Raya knows he'll have his work cut out.

He too will want to avoid the fate that befell then Arsenal keeper Jens Lehmann who made unwanted history by becoming the first player ever sent off in a Champions League final.

"We know how good they are. Any player can hurt you from anywhere, so I know it's going to be a busy evening," Raya tells CNN.

"If we do things well, we defend how we know how to defend, and then with the ball we are the way we want to play, I think we have a big chance to hurt them and score a lot more goals than them."

With the Premier League chip off their back and a squad liberated from the fear of failure, the opportunity of further glory awaits the Gunners.

"That's the message. We have to think that we are going to win the Champions League because we're super convinced of what we're capable of.

"If we do what we have to do, we have a big chance to win."

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