

Court okays temporary forfeiture of N30.7m linked to alleged NNPC fraud

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has granted the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) approval to temporarily forfeit the sum of N30.7 million linked to an alleged fraud involving the

Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC).

Justice Emeka Nwite granted the order on Monday after hearing an ex-parte motion filed by the anti-graft agency and moved by its counsel, Emenike Mgbemele.

In his ruling, Justice Nwite

held that the application was meritorious and ordered that the interim forfeiture be published in a national daily, directing any interested persons to appear before the court within 14 days to show why the funds should not be permanently forfeited to the Federal Government.

The judge adjourned the matter until January 22 for a report of compliance.

The suit, marked FHC/ABJ/CS/2775/2025, was instituted by the EFCC through a motion ex-parte dated December 19, 2025, and filed on December 23, 2025, by Ekele Iheanacho, SAN.

The application was subsequently moved on January 2, 2026.

In the motion, the EFCC sought an interim order forfeiting to the Federal Government the sum of N30,700,000.00 lodged in four manager's cheques of N10 million each

and one of N700,000.

The cheques were deposited in the EFCC Recovery Account domiciled with United Bank for Africa, with account number 9058700029, under the name "M/C Draft Outstanding

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...that the people may know

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Stay clear of Rivers politics, Wike tells APC Nat'l Secretary

PORT HARCOURT

Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr Nyesom Wike, has asked the All Progressives Congress (APC) National Secretary, Sen. Ajibola Basiru, to stay clear of Rivers politics.

Wike gave the warning during his "thank you" visit to Oyoigbo Local Government Area of the state.

Basiru had, on Sunday, warned the party's National Vice-Chairman, South-South,

Victor Giadom, to stop disrespecting the Governor Siminalayi Fubara to please Wike.

The warning was sequel to Giadom's comments on December 30, 2025, during Wike's 'thank you' visit to Gokana Local Government Area, where he referred to Fubara as a 'so-called governor.'

Giadom was also quoted to have said that for Fubara to get anything in the state, he must go through the FCT minister.

Wike, while taking exception to Basiru's comments,

asked Giadom to tell the APC scribe to stay clear of Rivers politics 'for his own good.'

"Tell your national secretary to leave Rivers alone, and don't take our support for Mr President for granted.

"You have to be careful of the statement you made," he said.

The former Rivers governor also warned those meddling in the politics of the state because of the alleged N600 billion in the state treasury to stay clear.

He stated that when the people of the state were struggling to support President Bola

Tinubu in 2023, nobody supported them.

The minister, who described Rivers as "a no go area," challenged those he described as greedy politicians to stay away from the state.

"Take the one you have taken and stop making unnecessary comments.

"We have taken a decision to support Mr President and that is exactly what we are doing. When we agreed to support Tinubu in 2023, nobody forced us.

"Now, food is ready and everybody is coming, but when it was hot, nobody was saying

anything. Leave Rivers state alone," he warned.

The FCT minister thanked the people of Oyoigbo, noting that there was no time he 'begged' them for something and they did not oblige.

Earlier, Chairman of Oyoigbo Local Government Council, Mr Okechukwu Agara, expressed his people's gratitude to the minister for all he had done for them.

"For all that you have done for us, we will continue to support you. Just say the word, we will hear and will do exactly what you want us to do," Agara said.

Also, Mr Felix Nweke, representing Tai, Oyoigbo and Eleme Federal Constituency, assured Wike that the council area would continue to support him, any day, any time.

Nweke alleged that development in the area had stagnated since Wike left office as governor in 2023.

Chairman of Renewed Hope in the state, Amb. Desmond Akawor, said that the absence of development in the area was 'very unfortunate.'

Things will get better with the expected change of leadership in 2027," Akawor said.

Ikpoba Hill flyover boosts trade, eases traffic —Residents

BENIN CITY

Traders, motorists and residents around the Ikpoba Hill and Ramat Park axis of Benin City have lauded the ongoing construction of the Ikpoba Hill flyover, describing it as a major boost to economic activities, traffic flow and urban renewal.

The project, the first flyover bridge being constructed in Edo State under the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, has drawn widespread support from stakeholders who say it will address years of gridlock and improve the outlook of the area.

Speaking on the impact of the project, Mr. Lawrence Agwanhima said the flyover would significantly enhance both the economy and aesthet-

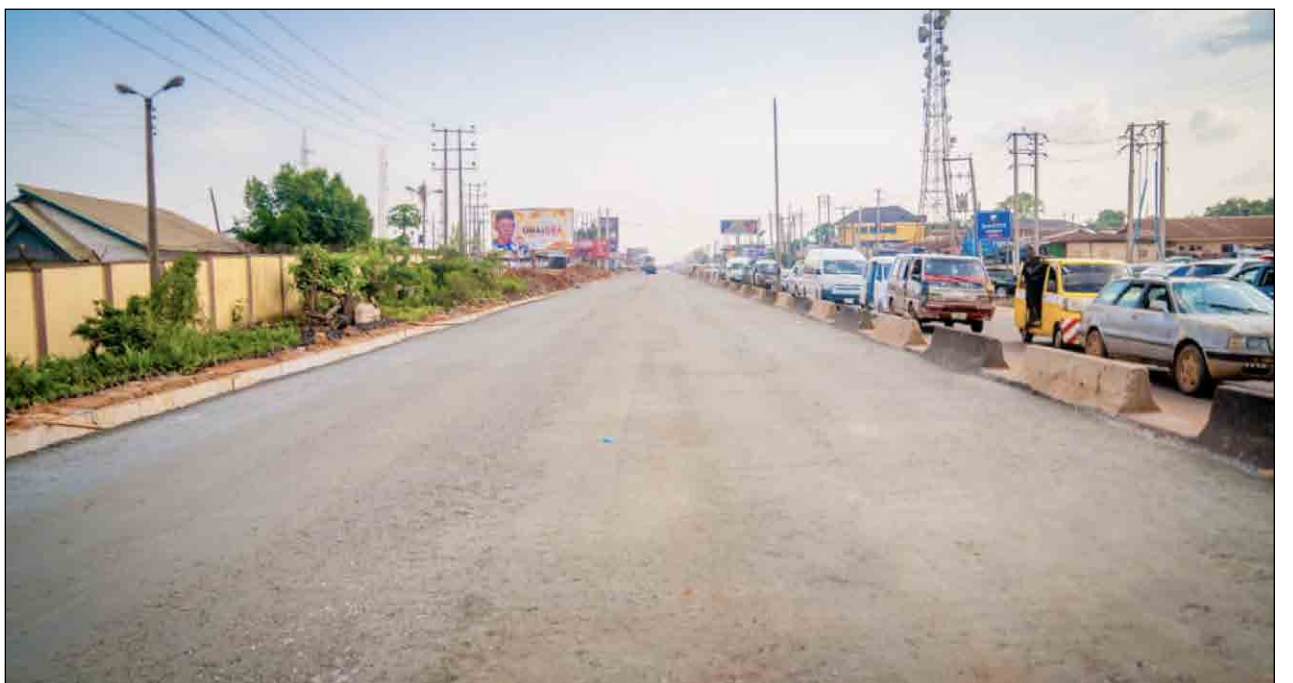
ics of the axis.

"It will improve the economy of this environment and also improve the beauty of this place. Before now, movement here was difficult, but this flyover is a good one," Agwanhima said, urging the governor to sustain the pace of development.

He dismissed concerns about possible occupation of spaces under the bridge by hoodlums, noting that such issues existed before the project and should not be used to hinder infrastructural development.

Also speaking, Mrs. Ese Juliet said the flyover would bring lasting relief to the persistent traffic congestion along the Ikpoba Hill corridor, especially

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UNDERGOING RECONSTRUCTION:

A portion of Sapele Road, Benin City that is undergoing reconstruction.

Troops arrest associate of notorious criminal kingpin, John Ngata in Takum

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Multiple rape allegations: Lagos police invite Pastor Chris

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Guinea Supreme Court confirms Doumbouya's presidential election victory

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AFCON 2025: Super Eagles stroll into quarter-finals after thrashing Mozambique 4-0

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Tinubu seeks Senate approval for new oil and gas regulatory boards

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has asked the Senate to confirm 21 nominees for the boards of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Author-

ity (NMDPRA).

The request was conveyed in two separate letters read on the Senate floor and confirmed by the President's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Chief Bayo Onanuga.

For the NUPRC, President Tinubu nominated former Senator Magnus Abe as Chairman.

Abe, who represented Riv-

ers South-East Senatorial District for two terms, is a former member of the NNPC board and currently chairs the National Agency for the Great Green Wall.

Other non-executive nominees include Engineer Paul Yaro Jezhi, former Trade Union Congress chairman in Kaduna State, and Mr Sunday Adebayo Babalola, a former deputy direc-

tor at the defunct Department of Petroleum Resources.

Executive commissioner nominees for the NUPRC are Muhammed Sabo Lamido (Finance), Edu Inyang (Exploration and Acreage), Justin Ezeala (Economic Regulation and Strategic Planning), Henry Darlington Oki (Development and Production), Indabawa Bashari Alka (Corporate Ser-

vices and Administration), and Mahmood Tijani (Health, Safety and Environment).

Ms Olayemi Adebeyejo was nominated as Secretary and Legal Adviser.

Lamido and Adebeyejo were first appointed in 2022 under the Buhari administration, while Alka joined in 2023; others, including Inyang, Ezeala, Tijani, Babalola, and Jezhi, are fresh nominees.

For the NMDPRA, Mr Adebite Ebiwei Adeniji, a lawyer with over 30 years in

energy and natural resources and former technical adviser to the Minister of State for Petroleum, was nominated as Chairman.

Adeniji also worked with the World Bank on Nigeria's oil and gas reform agenda and is currently Managing Partner of ENR Advisory.

Non-executive members include Chief Kenneth Kobani, former Minister of State for Trade and former Secretary to the Rivers State Government, and Mrs Asabe Ahmed.

**2025 - 2026 CROSS-OVER NIGHT:**

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (middle); his deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (right) and other congregants during the cross-over night from 2025 - 2026 in Benin City.

Edo kidnapping: Younger brother killed, doctor remains in captivity

BENIN CITY

Tragedy has struck a family in Edo State as kidnappers who abducted two brothers have reportedly killed the younger one, while the elder, a medical doctor, remains in captivity.

The deceased, Tahir Abu, was found dead by a riverbank during a bush-combing operation conducted at the weekend by a joint team of police officers, soldiers, local vigilantes and hunters.

Sources said the family was still struggling to raise the ransom demanded by the abductors when Tahir's body was discovered.

The kidnappers were said to have abandoned him and fled deeper into the forest with his elder brother, Dr Babatunde Abu.

Tahir, a newly graduated medical student, was yet to commence his housemanship before his abduction.

Confirming the incident on Monday, the Edo State Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, said the body was recovered during an in-

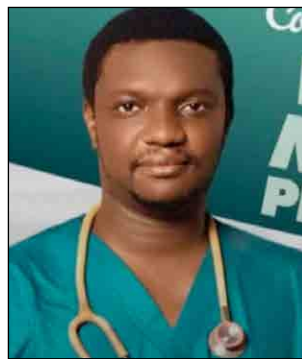
tensive search operation in the bush.

"The body was identified by the family as that of the younger brother of the medical doctor who was kidnapped alongside him," she said.

The brothers were abducted on January 1 along City Pride Road, Igbira Camp, Auch, in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State.

Dr Babatunde Abu, who is undergoing housemanship at the Edo Teaching Hospital, was said to be driving home with his brother when armed men ambushed them near their residence.

It was gathered that the kidnappers had demanded a ransom of N200 million before Tahir's body was found.



DR. ABU

Oil fields dispute: Court orders Minister, others to maintain status quo

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja, on Monday, ordered Mr Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), and others to maintain status quo pending the hearing and determination of a case involving four oil fields.

Justice Emeka Nwite gave the order after Mr Ambrose Unaeye, who appeared for the plaintiffs, Hi-Rev Oil Limited and Hi-Rev Exploration and Production Ltd, moved the application to the effect.

The 2nd and 3rd defendants in the suit, marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/2678/2025, are the Attorney-General of Federation (AGF) and Nigeria Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC).

Justice Nwite had, on Dec. 22, 2025, ordered the minister, the AGF and NUPRC to show cause why the reliefs of the plaintiffs in their motion ex-parte should not be granted.

The judge made the order after Unaeye moved the motion dated and filed on December 11.

The oil and gas companies had sought an order of interim injunction restraining the defendants or whomsoever is acting on their behalf from selling, assigning or allocating the Yorla South (Petroleum Prospecting Licence (PPL) 2A32 - OML 11) located in Rivers.

The order is to also restrain the defendants from allocating Akiapiri (PPL 2A48 - OML 25) located in Bayelsa; Diebu Creek East (OML 32) also located in Bayelsa and Idiok

(PPL 2A41 - OML 67) located in Akwa Ibom, "same being direct replacements for Utapate Oil Field (formerly part of OML 13) and OPL 2002, previously allocated to the plaintiff but was later withdrawn by the defendants, pending the hearing of the interlocutory application in this suit."

Giving four grounds why their application should be granted, the lawyer said the companies were previously allocated the Utapate Oil Field (formerly part of OML 13) and OPL 2002, but were unreasonably withdrawn by the Federal Government.

He said parties had a settlement agreement for the replacement of the Utapate Oil Field, which was accepted or adopted and it became consent judgement.

Unaeye stated that the firms

had taken substantial steps and offered consideration in respect of the grant of the licence to operate OPL and licence to establish a petroleum refinery.

He argued that the companies' legal right is being threatened by the defendants, pursuant to the threat to sell or allocate the oil fields at Yorla South, Akiapiri, Diebu Creek East, and Idiok to third parties via the defendants' offer to the public for round bid, hence, the need for the interim order.

Although the judge did not grant the order, he, however, ordered the defendants to appear on January 5 (yesterday).

When the matter was called on Monday, Unaeye informed the court that an order was made for the defendants to show why their relief should not be granted.

Court okays temporary forfeiture...

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Account."

Arguing the application, EFCC counsel said the forfeiture proceedings were non-conviction-based and brought pursuant to Section 17 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act, 2006.

He submitted that the funds were reasonably suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activities uncovered during investigations into alleged fraudulent transactions linked to officials of the NNPC.

An investigator with the EFCC, Bilkisu Abubakar, in an affidavit deposed to in support of the application, said she was assigned to investigate fraudulent activities involving some high-profile officials of the NNPC, following intelligence reports and petitions received by the commission.

According to her, investigations involved obtaining financial records from commercial banks, writing to relevant government agencies, including the Corporate Affairs Commission, as well as inviting and interviewing individuals who featured prominently in the transactions under review.

Abubakar said during the investigation, the name of one Adamu Yakubu, a Bureau De Change operator, featured prominently in financial records obtained from banks.

She stated that Yakubu was invited by the commission on September 2, 2025, where he

volunteered a statement and submitted a transaction ledger detailing records of customers and the amounts of foreign currency sold to them.

The investigator said analysis of the ledger revealed that over N4 billion had been transferred to the accounts of various individuals and companies on the instruction of one Ibrahim Sani, a staff member of the Federal Inland Revenue Service.

According to her, the balance of N30.7 million sought to be forfeited remained in Yakubu's possession and was traced to funds he claimed were given to him by Ibrahim Sani.

She further disclosed that Ibrahim Sani was invited by the EFCC on September 15, 2025, where he admitted using Yakubu to transfer funds to individuals and companies by depositing large sums of foreign currency, which were converted to naira and transferred based on his instructions.

Abubakar said Sani admitted that he neither ascertained nor verified the source of the funds deposited with the Bureau De Change operator, which the commission reasonably suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activities.

She added that while Ibrahim initially claimed ownership of the N30.7 million, he later denied owning the funds during his statement, insisting that Yakubu was not holding any of his money as at September 15, 2025. Yakubu also denied ownership of the funds.

Ikpoba Hill flyover boosts trade,...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

on market days.

"There is always traffic on this road, particularly during market days. With this bridge, traffic will reduce. My advice is that the government should complete it on time and also expand the road so congestion will not return," she said.

A fresh chicken seller at Ramat Park, Master David Okhaishebor, a student of Army Day School, described the flyover as an innovative intervention that would ease movement and improve business activities.

"Hold-ups will reduce and cars, Keke and other vehicles will move smoothly. It will also help businesses. The bridge should be fenced so that people do not sleep under it and mess up the place," he said.

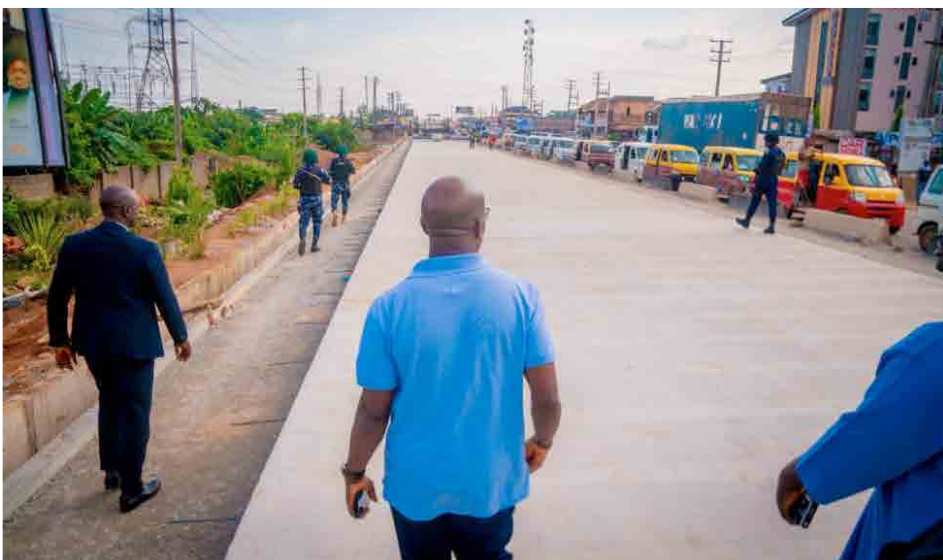
Mr. Chijioke Akaru, who has operated a pharmacy at Ramat Park for over 30 years, said the project would have a positive economic impact on Edo State.

"This flyover will reduce go-slow at Ikpoba Hill and improve businesses. I have been here for more than 30 years and I know what traffic has done to businesses in this area," Akaru said.

The Ikpoba Hill flyover is a flagship infrastructure project of the Governor Monday Okpebholo-led administration, aimed at easing traffic congestion, boosting economic activities and improving the overall outlook of Benin City.

Residents expressed optimism that timely completion of the project would further enhance mobility and support sustainable development across Edo State.

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo with his entourage inspecting ongoing projects in Edo South Senatorial District at the weekend



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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Stella Obasanjo Hospital, Benin-City invites applications from suitable qualified candidate for the following position:

1. CONSULTANTS

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- Paediatrics
- General Surgery
- Internal Medicine
- Accident and Emergency medicine
- Anaesthesia and intensive care
- Radiology
- Ophthalmology
- ENT (Ear, nose and throat)

Requirements:

- MBBS degree from a recognized university
- Fellowship or equivalent post graduate qualified (FWACS, FMCS, FMCPATH, etc.)
- Minimum of 5 years of experience as a consultant in a reputable hospital
- Registration with the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria

2. MEDICAL OFFICERS

- General practitioners with experience in Emergency Medicine, Paediatrics or Surgery
- Recent graduate (post NYSC) are encouraged to apply

Requirements:

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- Registration with MDCN
- NYSC Discharge Certificate or Letter of Exemption

3. Nurses with training in

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- Paediatrics
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 - Anaesthetic Nursing
 - Accident and Emergency Nursing
 - Nephrology Nursing
 - Orthopaedic Nursing
 - Dental Nursing
- NYSC discharged certificate or exemption Certificate

4. RADIOGRAPHERS

- Diagnostic Imaging (X-Ray, CT, MRI)
- Ultrasound

Requirements:

- Relevant certificate
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5. TECHNICIANS

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- Pharmacy

Requirements:

- Relevant certification (e.g. MLT, BMLS)
- Current registration with Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria

HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates should submit their applications with a cover letter, Curriculum Vitae (CV) and copies of relevant certificate to the Chief Medical Director, Stella Obasanjo Hospital, Benin-City, not later than TWO (2) WEEKS TO ONE (1) MONTH FROM THE DATE OF THIS ADVERT. Only shortlisted Candidate will be contacted please.

Signed:

DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION
For: THE CHIEF MEDICAL DIRECTOR

NEWS

Troops arrest associate of notorious criminal kingpin, John Ngata in Takum

MAKURDI

Troops of the Joint Task Force, Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), have arrested an associate of a notorious criminal kingpin, John Ngata, in Takum, Taraba State.

The Acting Media Information Officer, Headquarters of JTF OPWS, Lieutenant Ahmad Zubairu, confirmed the arrest in a statement made available to journalists in Makurdi on Monday.

Zubairu stated that the suspect was arrested on Monday during a roadblock operation. He said the suspect later led troops to John Ngata's armoury, where a large cache of arms and ammunition was recovered.

According to him, upon preliminary interrogation, the suspect voluntarily led troops to a concealed armoury belonging to the criminal network at Amadu Village in Takum Local Government Area.

He said subsequent exploitation of the location resulted in the recovery of 13 AK-47 rifles, 39 AK-47 magazines, 690 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition and four hand grenades.

Zubairu added that following the successful recovery, the armoury was professionally destroyed to prevent further use, after which the troops safely withdrew to their base.

The Force Commander of JTF OPWS, Major-General Moses Gara, commended the

troops for their professionalism, swift response and effective utilisation of intelligence.

Gara said the operation disrupted a criminal supply chain and led to the recovery of lethal weapons.

He reiterated his commitment to sustaining high troop morale by prioritising welfare, logistics support and operational readiness.

The commander also appreciated members of the public for their continuous cooperation and provision of credible intelligence, noting that community support remained a critical enabler in the fight against criminality.

The operation covers Benue, Taraba and Nasarawa states.

Delta govt restates commitment to high-standard road projects

ASABA

The Delta State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to delivering durable and well-engineered road infrastructure across the state.

The Commissioner for Works (Highways and Urban Roads), Mr Reuben Izeze, stated this during a management meeting held on Monday in Asaba.

Izeze said the ministry would continue to execute road projects in strict alignment with the MORE Agenda of Governor Sheriff Oborevwori.

He described the meeting as a moment of reflection and strategic engagement aimed at reinforcing the ministry's priorities for 2026.

According to the commissioner, adherence to approved work plans, budgetary provisions and technical specifications remained non-negotiable.

He emphasised that all projects would be executed strictly within the framework of approved budgetary estimates and Bills of Engineering Measurement and Quantities.

Izeze noted that quality delivery and value for money would continue to guide project implementation in the state.

He also highlighted professionalism, transparency and dedication as core principles that would define the ministry's operations.

The commissioner urged management staff, engineers and technical officers to strengthen teamwork and maintain a high

sense of responsibility to ensure projects are completed on schedule and to specification.

He said efficient road delivery was critical to improving connectivity and stimulating economic growth across Delta State.

Reaffirming the ministry's commitment, Izeze stated that the Oborevwori-led administration remained focused on infrastructural development.

He added that the positive impact of completed and ongoing road projects across the state was evident and continued to enhance residents' quality of life.

The meeting marked the official resumption of work for 2026 and was attended by top officials of the ministry, including the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Juliet Abolajo.

Ogun govt to deliver 2,500 affordable housing units for low-income earners

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun State Government has announced plans to deliver 2,500 affordable housing units for low-income earners across the state.

The Commissioner for Housing, Mr Jamiu Omoniyi, disclosed this on Monday during a news briefing in Abeokuta.

Omoniyi said the housing units would be executed in phases and distributed across different parts of the state.

He explained that the project would be jointly executed by the Ministry of Housing, the Ogun State Housing Corporation and the Ogun State Property Investment Corporation to ensure timely delivery.

The commissioner said 579 housing units would be delivered in the second quarter of the year, while 5,000 plots

of land would be allocated to civil servants, payable through mortgage arrangements.

Speaking on the ministry's performance, Omoniyi said housing delivery in the state had gone beyond shelter provision to embrace dignity, functionality, sustainability, urban renewal and inclusive economic growth.

He said 2025 ended on a strong note with the delivery of 30 duplex units at the Ibara Government Reserved Area Cluster One Extension and an additional 100 duplexes at the President Muhammadu Buhari Estate.

According to him, strong interest from residents, Nigerians in the diaspora and other stakeholders had reinforced the government's resolve to expand access to affordable and quality housing.

Omoniyi said that under the leadership of Governor Dapo

Abiodun, the housing sector had witnessed remarkable transformation through coherent policies, disciplined execution and strategic partnerships.

He added that developments delivered by the ministry met international standards while remaining responsive to local realities, contributing to job creation, wealth generation and overall economic growth.

The commissioner said the ministry and its agencies were strategically positioned to scale up delivery on multiple fronts in 2026.

He listed key projects for the year to include an International Conference Centre in Iperu, a modern 2,500-seat banquet hall and events centre, the Appeal Court Headquarters and residences, Ibara Government Reserved Area Phase II with 50 duplexes, as well as Commissioners' Appointees' and Assembly Quarters.

Army rescues 13, recovers 27 bodies in Nguru boat mishap

ABUJA

Troops of the Nigerian Army have rescued 13 persons alive and recovered 27 bodies following a boat mishap in Nguru Local Gov-

ernment Area of Yobe State.

A credible military source disclosed this to reporters on Monday in Abuja.

The source said the incident occurred at about 12:15 a.m. on January 4, when a local boat

conveying 40 traders from Adiani village in Jigawa State to a market in Nguru capsized in the Garbi riverine area.

According to the source, troops of the 241 Battalion, in collaboration with other security agencies and local divers, immediately mobilised to the

scene and provided emergency assistance.

"The combined search and rescue effort led to the successful rescue of 13 victims alive, while 27 dead bodies were recovered from the river," the source said.

The source added that ar-

rangements were underway for the burial of the deceased in accordance with Islamic rites, while relevant authorities were taking further necessary actions.

He noted that the morale and fighting efficiency of the troops remained satisfactory, reaffirming their commitment

to supporting civil authorities and responding promptly to emergencies within their area of responsibility.

Riverine accidents remain a recurring challenge in parts of the country, often linked to night travel, overloading and poor safety measures.

APC urges opposition to embrace politics of ideas

LAGOS

The All Progressives Congress has urged opposition parties and critics of President Bola Tinubu to embrace a contest of ideas in 2026, insisting that democracy cannot thrive on bitterness and grievance politics.

The party made the call in a statement issued on Monday in Lagos by its spokesperson, Mr Seye Oladejo.

Oladejo said democracy flourishes on the contest of ideas and not on bitterness, adding that an opposition driven by obstruction and grievance does not strengthen democracy.

He said the opposition remained confused, divided and devoid of credible policy alter-

natives despite repeated electoral opportunities.

According to him, persistent refusal to accept electoral outcomes was neither democratic nor patriotic.

Oladejo stressed that accountability should not be misrepresented as persecution, noting that criminal allegations must be addressed within the framework of the rule of law.

He urged opposition parties to take responsibility for their internal challenges instead of blaming institutions and imaginary enemies.

The spokesman also called on opposition figures to demonstrate moral clarity in condemning terrorism, criminality and violence without ethnic or political considerations.



GBAJABIAMILA VISITS CHILDREN HOME:

L-R: Chief of Staff to the President, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila visit Hearts of God Children Home at Surulere in Lagos.

Lagos fire: Family sympathises with victims, seeks building assessment

LAGOS

The Sunmonu Animashaun Family has sympathised with residents, traders and businesses affected by a devastating fire on Lagos Island and has called for an assessment by the Lagos State Building Control Agency.

The family made the appeal in a statement jointly signed by the Acting Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr Rafiu Jawando, and the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, Otunba Hakeem Oladipo Animashaun.

The statement recalled that the fire incident began on December 24, 2025, at Shitta-Bey Court, also known as Great Nigeria House, before spreading to the family house, Agbole

Animashaun, and other adjoining buildings.

It stated that the inferno later crossed the road and completely razed the Shitta-Bey Mosque.

The family said the impact of the fire was extensive, with five buildings belonging to different branches of the family affected.

It disclosed that fire service officials demolished part of the family house to prevent the spread of the fire and aid firefighting efforts, an action that significantly compromised the structural integrity of the building.

According to the statement, the building could no longer guarantee the safety of occupants, prompting the family to request an urgent assessment by the Lagos State Building Control Agency.

Aiyedatiwa commends Ondo workers, seeks continued support in 2026

AKURE

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has urged public servants and political office holders to remain committed to the effective implementation of his administration's agenda in 2026.

Governor Aiyedatiwa made the call on Monday in Akure at the 2026 first working day prayer meeting, marking the first official working day of the year.

The governor said the gathering was to thank God for the outgoing year and to seek divine guidance in the new year.

He stated that his administration had recorded progress in infrastructure, education,

healthcare and security, noting that about 190 kilometres of roads were currently under construction or rehabilitation across the state.

According to him, no fewer than 280 classrooms have been constructed or renovated, while 112 health centres were awarded for renovation and expansion.

Governor Aiyedatiwa said the state had secured the revalidation of the Ondo Deep Sea Port licence and was strengthening the Amotekun Corps with the recruitment of 500 additional personnel.

He assured workers of continued prompt payment of salaries, regular promotions and steady payment of gratuities, while calling on residents

to support government programmes.

The governor further assured that the 2026 Budget would be faithfully implemented.

"Our focus on the economic transformation of Ondo State is non-negotiable. We are pursuing economic commanding heights that will drive the transition of Ondo State from a predominantly civil service state to an industrial giant.

"Arrangements are also ongoing through public-private partnerships to reactivate and re-modernise some moribund industries, including the Ceramic Industry in Ifo and the Oil Mill in Okitipupa, alongside a host of new industries planned for the Ore axis.

"The security situation in Ondo State has improved tremendously through synergy

among security agencies in the provision of logistics and support.

"We have continued to strengthen our public service for optimum efficiency and effectiveness. It is our firm belief that no administration can rise above the delivery capacity and capability of its bureaucracy.

"I therefore acknowledge the commitment and dedication of our public service, the backbone of our administration.

"I express my profound gratitude to every civil servant, teacher, health worker and political office holder for your patriotism and hard work.

"I cherish you all. Be assured that this administration will continue to recognise and reward your invaluable contributions to the steady implementation of our policy blueprint," he said.

Firm commits to providing daily meals for children, vulnerable people

EZZA-SOUTH (EBONYI)

The One Meal a Day for the Children Initiative has pledged to improve the food intake of needy children and women to promote better living standards.

The founder of the non-governmental organisation, Mrs Ijeoma Nwokpoku, disclosed this during an outreach programme on Monday at Amudo in Aguiyima Community of Ezza-South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

She said the initiative was designed to ensure that every

child has access to at least one nutritious meal daily, in a bid to eliminate hunger.

According to her, the intervention targets vulnerable children, women and the elderly.

"This outreach marks our first charity programme for 2026 as we step into the year with purpose, ensuring that no child goes hungry and no woman is forgotten.

"Apart from food, we offer hope and remind them that they are seen and valued," she said.

Mrs Nwokpoku added that the initiative is self-funded, with contributions from family

members and friends.

She disclosed that the organisation had sponsored three university graduates from the community and was currently supporting others still in school.

She also said the initiative had supported widows and the elderly, as well as assisted indigent patients in settling medical bills.

According to her, the organisation operates in all the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, with a vision of building a society where no child goes to bed hungry.

On challenges, she identi-

fied inadequate funding as a major setback hindering the organisation's operations and appealed for assistance from well-meaning individuals.

In his remarks, the Legal Adviser of the organisation, Mr Nathaniel Nwokpoku, expressed confidence that the group would remain committed to ensuring that the less privileged have access to food.

Delivering a health talk, a nurse, Mrs Ukamaka Nwafor, urged beneficiaries to consume natural and healthy foods and ensure adequate water intake for overall well-being.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH

I, OMOREGIE UYIOGHOSA FAVOUR am the same person as OMOROGIE FAVOUR UYIOGHOSA and I now wish to be known and addressed as OMOREGIE UYIOGHOSA FAVOUR. Also my correct date of Birth is 25/8/2003 not 25/8/2002 as wrongly written in my BVN. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as MISS EKHATOR OSARIEME VIVIAN, now wish to be known as MRS. OMORAGBON OSARIEME VIVIAN. Former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that IGBINADOR ESOHE and IGBINADOR ESOHE BENEDICTA, are one and the same person. Henceforth I now wish to be known and called IGBINADOR ESOHE BENEDICTA. Former documents remain valid general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF MIDDLE NAME/RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME AND CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

I formerly known and called as OMOREGIE CLINTON, I now wish to be known and addressed as OMOREGIE OSARIEWEKEMWEN CLINTON. Also my correct date of Birth is 14/11/1997 not 14/11/1998 as wrongly written in my BVN. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as IMAFIDION ISRAEL WISDOM, now wish to be known as IMAFIDION ISRAEL ISAAC. Former documents remain valid, general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that UHUANGHO AMEN ERNEST and UHUANGHO ERNEST, are one and the same person. Henceforth I wish to be known and called UHUANGHO AMEN ERNEST. Former documents remain valid general public should please take note.

NEWS

Multiple rape allegations: Lagos police invite Pastor Chris

LAGOS

The Lagos State Police Command has invited Pastor Chris Okafor, Senior Pastor of the Mountain of Liberation and Miracles Ministries, over alleged multiple rape and other sexual offences.

The command's spokesperson, SP Abimbola Adebisi, confirmed

the development in a statement issued in Lagos on Monday.

She said the Commissioner of Police, Mr Olohundare Jimoh, had directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) to conduct a thorough investigation into the allegations.

According to her, the suspect

has been formally served with an invitation letter through his legal representative and is expected to cooperate fully with investigators at the SCID, Panti.

"He is expected to cooperate with the police as investigations into what were described as capital offences and other serious crimes commence.

"CP Jimoh also ordered immediate and full security coverage for alleged victims, urging them to come forward to report their complaints at the SCID," she said.

Adebisi assured the public that the identities of victims and witnesses would be kept strictly confidential and adequately protected throughout

the investigation.

She appealed to anyone with credible information or evidence relevant to the case to assist investigators by contacting the SCID directly or through the Police Public Relations Department at the Lagos State Police Command.

The spokesperson assured members of the public that the

investigation would be conducted in a professional, transparent and unbiased manner, in line with the law.

She added that the command remained committed to maintaining law and order and ensuring that all allegations of criminal acts against any individual were discreetly and thoroughly investigated.



SCHOOL RESUMPTION:

Students of Oke-Bola Comprehensive High School Ibadan during their school's resumption after the Christmas and New Year holidays on Monday.

Edo Entertainment Magazine to promote culture, music talents —Eghe-Nova

BENIN CITY

The Edo Entertainment Magazine has been described as a cultural archive, a rallying point and a marketplace of ideas aimed at placing the narratives of the state's entertainment industry in proper perspective.

It is also positioned as a platform dedicated to celebrating, preserving and projecting the creativity that flows from Edo State to the world.

The Governor of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN), Edo State, and Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, Comrade Willy

Eghe-Nova, made this known during the celebration of his service in PMAN, awards ceremony, and the unveiling of the magazine and an album in Benin City.

According to him, the magazine seeks to tell Edo's story with dignity, spotlight hidden talents and offer opportunities for collaboration, investment and growth within the entertainment industry.

Eghe-Nova said the publication was conceived to change contrived narratives, foster unity within the industry and preserve Edo cultural pride for posterity.

He noted that Edo State is

blessed with abundant talents in music, filmmaking, comedy, dance and fashion design, whose collective efforts project the state's story to global audiences, but lamented that their contributions often go unrecognised.

Having served PMAN in various capacities for over 11 years, Eghe-Nova said he was leaving behind a legacy of service built on integrity, adding that part of this legacy was the successful conduct of elections for a new executive committee.

He commended the Chairman of the occasion, Double Chief Ambassador Dion Osagie, for the idea that birthed the magazine, and Dr Amos Abu, Life Patron of PMAN Edo State, for his sustained interest in the association.

Osagie described the magazine as a medium that would promote the cultural heritage of Edo State and contribute significantly to its economy.

On his part, Dr Abu, who was honoured for his support for the less privileged and the promotion of Edo arts and culture, described the establishment of the magazine as timely, noting that it would also promote the entertainment and hospitality industries in the state.

Dr Abu, a Senior Natural Resources Management Specialist at the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), Washington DC, expressed gratitude for the recognition and pledged continued support for PMAN Edo State.

Farmers raise alarm over hippo attacks on farmlands in Gombe

YAMALTU/DEBA

Farmers in Hinna Community, Yamaltu-Deba Local Government Area of Gombe State, have raised alarm over increasing hippopotamus attacks on their farmlands and livelihoods.

The Head of Farmers in the community, Mr Zakari Ladan, disclosed this in an interview on Monday.

Ladan said persistent hippo attacks had resulted in huge losses, noting that the animals frequently destroyed crops and posed serious threats to residents.

He said the population of hippopotamuses in the area had grown to more than 40, wreaking havoc on farmlands and affecting both farmers and fishermen.

According to him, from September 2025 to date, no fewer than 100 hectares of farmland cultivating various crops and vegetables had been destroyed.

He listed crops affected to include rice, beans, cabbage, maize, carrots, okra, sweet melon, watermelon, onions and other vegetables, with losses

estimated at over N180 million. "We are seriously worried about the hippos destroying our farmlands and livelihoods.

"From September 2025 to date, three persons have been killed, while three others who sustained serious injuries are currently hospitalised in Gombe," he said.

Ladan added that a single hippo could destroy up to two hectares of farmland in one day.

Another farmer, Malam Haruna Hinna, said his carrot and okro farms had been destroyed, noting that one hectare of carrot was valued at N1.7 million.

Hinna said farmers had continued to lose their investments despite reporting the situation annually to the state government, non-governmental organisations and other authorities.

"We need urgent intervention from both the Federal and state governments. We are tired and financially exhausted," he said.

Other farmers echoed similar concerns and appealed for support with farm inputs, while also calling on stakeholders to help fishermen adopt fish farming as an alternative livelihood.

Ex-ANAN President hails FG for stabilising Naira in 2025

SANGO-OTA

A former President of the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN), Dr Samuel Nzekwe, has commended the Federal Government for stabilising the Naira between N1,450 and N1,500 in 2025.

Nzekwe spoke with journalists on Monday in Ota.

"The Federal Government did well in stabilising the Naira last year; however, there is still a need for improvement in the economy," he said.

He urged the government to make concerted efforts in 2026 to further stabilise the currency, identifying exchange rate instability as a major driver of inflation.

Nzekwe said heavy reliance on imported goods had increased demand for foreign exchange, thereby exerting pressure on the Naira.

"The Federal Government needs to create an enabling environment for the manufacturing sector to thrive so that Nigerians can embrace Made-in-Nigeria products and reduce pressure on the dollar," he said.

He also called for improved security to enable more Nigerians return to farming, noting that the country has comparative advantage in agriculture.

Nzekwe further advised the government to provide more infrastructure and a conducive business environment to attract foreign investors in 2026.

Bode George calls for viable opposition to strengthen democracy

LAGOS

Former Deputy National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Olabode George, has called for the sustenance of a viable opposition to strengthen Nigeria's democracy.

George made the call in a statement on Monday while reflecting on the country's democratic journey and recent political and economic developments.

According to him, democracy without a viable opposition is a dictatorship in disguise.

"Democracy thrives on a plu-

rality of ideas, not the silence of the graveyard," George said.

He decried what he described as growing intolerance of dissenting political voices, warning that such trends posed serious threats to democratic governance.

George described the reported harassment of Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State and Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State as dangerous to Nigeria's federal structure.

"The harassment of these governors is not a mere political skirmish; it is a calculated assault on federalism," he said.

According to him, intimidation of elected state executives for holding opposing views signals a drift toward authoritarianism.

George warned that policies perceived as weakening opposition parties could undermine democracy, stressing that leadership must reflect service and sacrifice to be impactful.

He urged the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to uphold fairness and transparency ahead of future elections.

"The credibility of our democracy rests squarely on

INEC. The era of miracle results and technical glitches must end," he said.

On economic policies, George cautioned the Federal Government against imposing taxes that could stifle businesses and worsen citizens' hardship.

"While revenue generation is important, it must not come at the cost of the people's survival," he said.

Drawing lessons from abroad, he cited Venezuela as an example of how excessive taxation and suppression of opposition could destabilise even resource-rich nations.

Mbah urges workers' support to achieve 2026 IGR projection

ENUGU

Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State has called on civil servants to support his administration's efforts to realise its projected internal-

ly generated revenue for 2026.

Mbah made the call on Monday during the 2026 New Year Workers' Mass held at the Government House Chapel, Enugu.

CONTINUES ON PG 7

Alleged \$9.7m terrorism financing: Court rejects Bauchi Finance Commissioner, others' bail

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja, on Monday, refused the bail application filed by Yakubu Adamu, Commissioner of Finance, Bauchi State, and his co-defendants, who are facing alleged \$9.7 million terrorism financing charges.

Justice Emeka Nwite, in his ruling, held that the offences for which the defendants are charged threaten national security and public safety.

The judge further held that terrorism-related offences threaten social order and that pre-trial release could endanger the public, hence bail could not be granted.

Justice Nwite, however, ordered an accelerated hearing of the matter.

"I am not unmindful of the constitutional provision of Section 36(5), which provides that every person who is charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

"But I must not hesitate to

state that the said constitutional provision is not absolute. In the consideration of an application for bail, all factors have to be considered," he said.

Citing the 2001 Supreme Court decision in *Bamaiyi v. State*, the judge noted that it is proper to consider the nature of the offence, the evidence in support of it, and the severity of the punishment upon conviction.

He said these critical factors, particularly the likelihood of the defendants making themselves available for trial, should not be glossed over.

Justice Nwite said, "Our criminal justice system has its stipulations and safeguards for the prosecutor, the accused, and the victim.

"In the proper operation of that system, where there is good reason to believe that an accused person will not jump bail or interfere with witnesses, the court may exercise its discretion to grant bail.

"I have carefully considered the affidavit evidence and the proof of evidence before me at this point in time, especial-

ly the statement of Dan Lawan Abdulmumuni and other prosecution witnesses, together with the grave threat to national security and public safety that this case poses.

"I have also taken cognizance of the fact that terrorism-re-

lated offences threaten social order and that pre-trial release could endanger the public.

"In my view, the prosecution has succeeded in raising a reasonable presumption of criminal responsibility on the part of the applicants. Consequently, the

application is hereby refused."

Justice Nwite adjourned the matter until January 13 for commencement of trial.

Adamu and his co-defendants were remanded at the Kuje Correctional Centre following their arraignment on a 10-count charge on December 31, 2025.

The 1st defendant was arraigned alongside Balarabe

Abdullahi Ilelah, Aminu Mohammed Bose, and Kabiru Yahaya Mohammed, who are Bauchi State civil servants. All the defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The charge, marked FHC/ABJ/CR/705/2025, was dated and filed on December 30, 2025, by EFCC counsel, Samuel Chime.



PRESENTATION OF THE PRIZE:

Chief Executive Officer, Products Development Institute (PRODA), Dr Peter Okwudilichukwu-Ogbobe (L); Team Lead, Overall PRODA 2025 Productivity Award Winning Team of Electrical Power and Electronics Development Department, Mr Ngwoke Chika (3rd L) with members of his Team, during the presentation of the prize in Enugu on Monday.

AIG orders probe of burnt Police Mobile Force 13 complex

MAKURDI

The Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Zone Four, Makurdi, Mr Zacharia Achinyan, has ordered a probe into the fire incident that razed the Police Mobile Force 13 complex in Makurdi, Benue State.

Achinyan gave the directive on Monday during an on-the-spot assessment visit to the burnt Police Mobile Force 13 facility.

The Mobile Police Unit office complex was razed by fire on Sunday morning.

The Zonal Public Relations Officer, Assistant Superintendent of Police Ayo Oluwaseun,

said in a statement that the AIG was received by the Commissioner of Police, Benue State Command, alongside the Commanding Officer of Police Mobile Force 13.

The AIG expressed concern over the incident and directed the Commissioner of Police to immediately commence a diligent and thorough investigation to determine the cause of the fire.

He reassured members of the public that the situation had been brought under control and urged them to remain calm and continue their lawful activities, assuring that adequate security measures were in place.

Mbah urges workers' support to...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 6

The Holy Mass was officiated by the Catholic Bishop of Enugu Diocese, Most Reverend Callistus Onaga, who was represented by the Diocesan Vicar General, Monsignor Geoffrey Aguiwgo.

The state's projected internally generated revenue for the year stands at N870 billion, with a daily target of N2.5 billion.

The governor described civil servants as the engine room of government, noting that the success or failure of any administration depended largely on their performance.

He urged workers to support one another, maintain discipline, arrive at work on time and play their roles diligently in order to meet the state's ambitious revenue targets across ministries,

departments and agencies.

Mbah said achieving the projection would not be easy, particularly in view of global geopolitical tensions, but stressed that collective effort would help the state absorb economic shocks.

He also thanked religious leaders for their support and prayers, assuring that his administration would intensify efforts to deliver more dividends of democracy in 2026.

Speaking earlier, the Chaplain of the Government House Chapel, Reverend Father Anthony Udeh, emphasised the importance of beginning the year with gratitude and thanksgiving to God.

He urged civil servants to emulate Governor Mbah, whom he described as a servant leader, and to discharge their duties with integrity.

Defendant docked for allegedly stealing cocoa beans worth N350,000

ILE-IFE

A 24-year-old man, Idowu Eluyinka, on Monday appeared before an Ile-Ife Magistrates' Court for allegedly stealing cocoa beans

valued at N350,000.

The defendant is standing trial on a two-count charge of conspiracy and stealing. He pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, ASP Abdullahi Emmanuel, told the

court that the offence was committed on December 30, 2025, at Ilesanmi village, Ile-Ife.

He alleged that the defendant conspired with others now at large to steal cocoa beans belonging to Mr Olajulo Fatai.

Magistrate Abosede Sarumi granted the defendant bail in the sum of N500,000 with two sureties in like sum, who must reside within the court's jurisdiction and depose to affidavits of means.

The case was adjourned until February 4 for hearing.

Police arrest 55-year-old man for allegedly impregnating a minor

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State has arrested a 55-year-old man, Ademola Joshua, over an alleged case of incest and sexual abuse

involving a 15-year-old minor.

The command's spokesperson, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, said the incident was reported on January 4 by Adewale of Ilara-Mokin.

According to him, the matter came to light following in-

vestigations into the cause of the victim's pregnancy.

"The case has been referred to the Gender-Based Violence unit for thorough investigation. The suspect is in custody and will be charged to court," Jimoh said.

He reaffirmed the commitment of the police under the leadership of Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, to protecting women and children and tackling gender-based violence.

Police arraign employee over alleged conversion of N416,000

ILE-IFE (OSUN)

The Police in Osun State on Monday arraigned a 35-year-old bakery manager, Sodiq Mustapha, before

an Ile-Ife Magistrates' Court for allegedly converting N416,000 belonging to his employer.

The defendant pleaded not guilty to charges of cheating and stealing.

The prosecutor alleged that the offence was committed in December 2025 at Ilala Obalagun, Ile-Ife.

Magistrate Abosede Sarumi granted bail in the sum of N200,000 with two sureties,

who must depose to affidavits of means of livelihood and provide evidence of three years' tax clearance.

The case was adjourned until January 19.

Ex-ANAN President hails FG for stabilising Naira in 2025

SANGO-OTA

A former President of the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN), Dr Samuel Nzekwe, has commended the Federal Government for stabilising the Naira between N1,450 and N1,500 in 2025.

Nzekwe spoke with journal-

ists on Monday in Ota.

"The Federal Government did well in stabilising the Naira last year; however, there is still a need for improvement in the economy," he said.

He urged the government to make concerted efforts in 2026 to further stabilise the currency, identifying exchange rate instability as a major driver of inflation.

Nzekwe said heavy reliance on imported goods had increased demand for foreign exchange, thereby exerting pressure on the Naira.

"The Federal Government needs to create an enabling environment for the manufacturing sector to thrive so that Nigerians can embrace Made-in-Nigeria products and reduce pressure on

the dollar," he said.

He also called for improved security to enable more Nigerians return to farming, noting that the country has comparative advantage in agriculture.

Nzekwe further advised the government to provide more infrastructure and a conducive business environment to attract foreign investors in 2026.

NEWS

Foreign

Trump warns new Venezuelan leader as Maduro set to appear in court

Donald Trump has warned Venezuela's new leader Delcy Rodríguez she could "pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro" if she "doesn't do what's right".

His comments to US magazine The Atlantic came as the country's deposed president Nicolás Maduro was set to appear in a New York court on Monday.

The US accuses Maduro, who is charged with drug trafficking and weapons offences, of running a "narco-terrorist" regime, a claim he denies.

Rodríguez - who served as Maduro's vice president - adopted a conciliatory tone at her first cabinet meeting on Sunday, offering co-operation with the US.

"We invite the US government to collaborate with us on an agenda of co-operation ori-

entated towards shared development within the framework of international law," she said.

Backed by Venezuela's Supreme Court and the military, she will be sworn in as president on Monday in Caracas, at 08:00 local time (12:00 GMT).

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has insisted the US is not at war with Venezuela, after air strikes in Caracas on Saturday led to Maduro and his wife being taken into custody and transported to the US.

Some Democratic lawmakers said the operation was an "act of war".

In an interview with The Atlantic on Sunday, Trump said of Rodríguez: "If she doesn't do what's right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro."

He added that for Venezue-

la, "Regime change, anything you want to call it, is better than what you have right now. Can't get any worse".

On Saturday, Trump vowed the US would "run" the country until "a safe and proper and judicious transition" was possible.

Trump also promised US oil companies would move into the country to fix infrastructure "and start making money for the country".

Despite the US president's claims, Maduro's allies remain in charge.

The Cuban government has said 32 "brave Cuban combatants" died when US forces attacked and captured Maduro and his wife. Cuba - a long-standing socialist ally of Maduro - has announced two days of national mourning.

In several TV interviews on Sunday morning, Rubio defended the US's military operation in Venezuela, stressing the action did not mean the US is at war with the South American country.

"We are at war against drug trafficking organisations. That's not a war against Venezuela," Rubio told NBC's Meet the Press on Sunday morning.

The secretary of state also told CBS that if Venezuela doesn't "make the right decisions", the US "will retain multiple levers of leverage to ensure that our interests are protected".

That includes the "quarantine" the US has placed on Venezuela's oil, he said.

"We're going to judge everything by what they do, and we're going to see what they do," he added.

Sudan: tens of thousands displaced by latest front in civil war

Tens of thousands of people have been recently displaced by fighting in Sudan as the civil war rages on. The latest front in the war between the Sudanese army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, who have been fighting since April 2023, is southern Kordofan.

Hanan Abdallah was living in a town in west Kordofan, and had to flee her home with nothing. "We were living in the city of Babanusa (town in West Kordofan) when the Rapid Support Forces came and expelled us from our homes, they didn't even allow anyone to put on their clothes, our children fled barefoot," she says.

In recent weeks, the Rapid Support Forces have bolstered their control over west Kordofan, as well as their seige on Kadugli and Dilling in South

Kordofan, where hundreds of thousands are now grappling with starvation.

Khamisa Othman is among those who have faced shortages of basic supplies. "During our escape, there was no water, no food, and no shop to buy anything from, we searched through the forests for water and found only a pond used by livestock and shepherds, so we drank from it," she says.

The Rapid Support Forces are pressing deeper into oil rich Kordofan after capturing the army's last stronghold in neighbouring Darfur in October.

The conflict has triggered what the United Nations has described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with both the Sudanese army and Rapid Support Forces accused of war crimes.



THE MACRONS:

Brigitte and husband Emmanuel Macron

'We need Greenland': Trump repeats threat to annex Danish territory

Donald Trump has again proposed annexing Greenland, after Denmark's leader urged him to "stop the threats" over the island.

Speaking to reporters, the US president said "we need Greenland from the standpoint of national security".

Trump has repeatedly raised the prospect of the semi-autonomous Danish territory becoming an annexed part of the US, citing its strategic location for defence purposes and mineral wealth.

Greenland's Prime Minister Jens Frederik Nielsen responded by saying "that's enough now" and described the notion of US control over the island as a "fantasy".

He said: "No more pressure. No more insinuations. No more fantasies of annexation.

We are open to dialogue. We are open to discussions. But this must happen through the proper channels and with respect for international law."

Earlier, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had said "the US has no right to annex any of the three nations in the Danish kingdom".

Frederiksen added that Denmark "and thus Greenland" was a Nato member and covered by the alliance's security guarantee, and said a defence agreement granting the US access to the island was already in place.

The Danish prime minister released her statement after Katie Miller - the wife of one of Trump's senior aides, Stephen Miller - posted on social media a map of Greenland in the colours of the American flag

alongside the word "SOON".

The Danish ambassador to the US responded to the post by Miller - a right-wing podcaster and former aide to Trump during his first term - with a "friendly reminder" that the two countries were allies and saying Denmark expected respect for its territorial integrity.

The back and forth over the future Greenland comes in the wake of a major military operation against Venezuela on Saturday, seizing its president Nicolás Maduro and his wife and removing them to New York.

Trump later said the US would "run" Venezuela and US oil companies would "start making money for the country".

The situation has reignited fears that the US may consider using force to secure control of Green-

land, a vast island in the Arctic - something the US president has previously refused to rule out.

Trump has claimed that making it part of the United States would serve American security interests due to its strategic location and its abundance of minerals critical to high-tech sectors.

The Trump administration's recent move to appoint a special envoy to Greenland prompted anger in Denmark.

Greenland, which has a population of 57,000 people, has had extensive self-government since 1979, though defence and foreign policy remain in Danish hands.

While most Greenlanders favour eventual independence from Denmark, opinion polls show overwhelming opposition to becoming part of the US.

Ten found guilty of cyber-bullying Brigitte Macron

Ten people have been found guilty of cyber-bullying Brigitte Macron, the wife of French President Emmanuel Macron, by a Paris court.

The defendants were accused of spreading false claims about her gender and sexuality, as well as making "malicious remarks" about the 24-year age gap between the couple.

Most of the defendants were handed suspended prison sentences of up to eight months, but one was jailed immediately for failing to attend court. Some had their social media accounts suspended.

The judge said the eight men and two women had acted with a clear desire to do harm to Brigitte Macron, making remarks online that were degrading and insulting.

Two of the defendants - self-styled independent journalist Natacha Rey and internet fortune-teller Amandine Roy - were found guilty of slander in 2024 for claiming that France's first lady had never existed.

They said her brother Jean-Michel Trogneux had changed gender and started using her name.

They were later cleared on appeal. The argument used by the appeals court in clearing them was that saying someone had changed gender was not necessarily an "attack on their honour".

The Macrons are now taking that case to the high court of appeal.

"The most important things are the prevention courses and the suspension of some of the accounts" of the perpetrators, Jean Ennoch, Brigitte Macron's lawyer, said after the verdict was handed down, the AFP news agency reported.

Tiphaine Auzière, Brigitte Macron's daughter from a previous marriage, previously told the trial that the cyber-bul-

lying had negatively affected her mother's health and living conditions.

She said her mother "has had to be careful about her choices of outfits, of posture... she knows perfectly well that her image will be used to back these theories".

While her mother had "learned to live with it", Auzière said, she suffered from the repercussions on her grandchildren who were taunted at school.

Monday's ruling in France is a forerunner of a much bigger trial due in the US, where the Macrons have filed a defamation lawsuit against right-wing influencer Candace Owens, who has also voiced conspiracy theories about the first lady's gender.

They alleged that she "disregarded all credible evidence disproving her claim in favour of platforming known conspiracy theorists and proven defamers".

Owens has regularly repeated the claims on her podcast and social media channels, and in March 2024 stated that she would stake her "entire professional reputation" on her belief that the first lady "is in fact a man".

The presidential couple were initially advised that the best course was to ignore the online gossip, because to go to law would simply amplify it.

But last year there was a radical change of course.

The Macrons decided that the scale of the online attacks was now too large to ignore. So, at risk of exposing their private selves in a US court, they determined to push back against the conspiracy theorists.

A conspiracy theory claiming that Brigitte Macron is a transgender woman has circulated since her husband was first elected in 2017.

Foreign

NEWS

Uganda denies plans to block internet during election

Uganda's authorities have denied reports that they are planning to cut access to the internet during next week's election.

The main opposition candidate last week repeated claims that the government was going to block the internet to prevent his supporters from mobilising, and sharing election results.

On Friday, satellite internet provider Starlink restricted its services in Uganda following an order from the communications regulator, fuelling these concerns.

President Yoweri Museveni is seeking to extend his 40-year rule in the 15 January elections. His strongest challenger is expected to be Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, a former pop star.

This is a repeat of the 2021 poll, which saw widespread protests with dozens killed, while the internet was cut for four days.

Meanwhile, the government has banned live broadcasts of riots, "unlawful processions" and other violent incidents ahead of the election, arguing that these could "escalate tensions and spread panic".

However, the head of the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) said reports of a possible internet blackout were "mere rumours,"

insisting that the commission's role was to guarantee uninterrupted connectivity nationwide.

"As of now, there is no resolution to switch off the internet," UCC Executive Director Nyombi Thembo told Kampala-based Capital FM.

This point was also made by Amina Zawedde, the most senior official at the Ministry of Communications and National Guidance.

"Government has not announced, directed, or implemented any decision to shut down the internet during the election period," she said, describing the reports as false, misleading and liable to create fear.

She further cautioned against the spread of false or inflammatory content.

"Digital platforms are not exempt from the law," Zawedde said, adding that the Computer Misuse Act applied fully to online conduct, including the spread of false information and offensive communication.

She also stressed that only the Electoral Commission had the mandate to declare results, and broadcasting unverified or premature results was illegal.

"Freedom of expression must be exercised responsibly and within the framework of the law," she added.

Thirty-two Cubans killed during US attack on Venezuela

The Cuban government says 32 of its nationals were killed during the US operation to seize Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro.

It described the dead as members of its armed forces and intelligence agencies were killed "in combat actions", declaring two days of national mourning.

The armed forces added the Cubans "fell, after fierce resistance, in direct combat against the attackers or as a result of bombardments of installations".

Cuba, a long-standing ally of Venezuela, has for years supplied Maduro with his personal security detail and has personnel throughout the Venezuelan military.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said the country had been providing protection to Maduro and his wife "at the request" of Venezuela.

US spies had been monitoring Maduro's movements for months before US forces struck, according to US General Dan Caine.

Gen Caine said that they had learned where the former leader moved, lived, travelled, ate, and worked.

The New York Times reported that the CIA had also recruited a "Venezuelan source" who it says informed the Americans of Maduro's exact location.

Many of those killed are believed to have been part of Maduro's close security detail, who were with him at the time.

Venezuela has not confirmed how many people were

killed, but its armed forces have said that a "large part" of Maduro's security team were among the casualties.

An official statement from the Cuban government read: "Our compatriots fulfilled their duty with dignity and heroism".

The total death toll - according to an unnamed Venezuelan official cited by the New York Times - stood at 80 and was expected to rise. BBC News has not independently verified that report.

In the days following the seizure of Maduro, questions have been raised over whether the Trump administration could consider a similar operation against Cuba, which, like Venezuela, has had decades of adversarial relations with the US.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, US President Donald Trump said military action would not be necessary because "Cuba is ready to fall".

He continued: "I don't think we need any action. Looks like it's going down. It's going down for the count."

On Saturday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio described Cuba as a "disaster" run by "incompetent, senile men".

"If I lived in Havana, and I was in the government, I'd be concerned - at least a little bit," Rubio said.

In July last year, Trump signed a memorandum imposing tighter restrictions on Cuba, reversing moves by his predecessor, Joe Biden, easing pressure on the Caribbean island nation.



VENEZUELA PROTESTS:

Protesters rally outside the White House in Washington after the US captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife in a military operation, 3 January 2026.

Pentagon moves to punish Democratic senator over 'seditious video'

The Pentagon says it is taking steps to demote Democratic Senator and former Navy Captain Mark Kelly, with a reduction in pension, over a video the department described as "seditious".

"Senator Mark Kelly - and five other members of Congress - released a reckless and seditious video that was clearly intended to undermine good order and military discipline," Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth wrote on X.

The Arizona senator was one of six Democratic lawmakers who released a video urging military members to refuse unlawful orders, following US strikes on

alleged drug-trafficking boats.

Kelly, a former Navy pilot and astronaut, called Hegseth's action "outrageous" and "un-American".

He has 30 days to submit an official response to the Pentagon's notice, according to Hegseth's tweet on Monday morning.

"As a retired Navy Captain who is still receiving a military pension, Captain Kelly knows he is still accountable to military justice. And the Department of War - and the American people - expect justice," Hegseth wrote in his statement on X.

Hegseth said the department had initiated retirement-grade determination proceedings,

where a reduction in Kelly's retired grade would result in a reduction in retired pay.

"If Pete Hegseth, the most unqualified Secretary of Defense in our country's history, thinks he can intimidate me with a censure or threats to demote me or prosecute me, he still doesn't get it," Kelly wrote on X on Monday.

"I will fight this with everything I've got - not for myself, but to send a message back that Pete Hegseth and Donald Trump don't get to decide what Americans in this country get to say about their government."

The controversy stems from a video released last November

where Kelly and five other Democratic lawmakers who had also served in the military or intelligence told US service members that they "can refuse illegal orders".

It was released amid rising questions of legality regarding American strikes on alleged narco-trafficking boats off the coast of South America.

Kelly says in the video: "Our laws are clear. You can refuse illegal orders."

"Like us, you all swore an oath to protect and defend this constitution. Right now, the threats coming to our constitution aren't just coming from abroad but from right here at home."

Trump reacted to the video in a series of Truth Social posts, accusing the lawmakers of "SEDITIONOUS BEHAVIOR AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL".

Shortly after, the Trump administration announced it was opening a review of Kelly's conduct under military law.

Kelly, a highly decorated retired Navy captain, who served for more than two decades and deployed multiple times, then responded saying: "If this is meant to intimidate me and other members of Congress from doing our jobs and holding this administration accountable, it won't work."

Experts say even though Kelly retired from the military, he is still subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) - a federal law enacted by Congress in 1951 that subjects members of the military to a special set of rules.

But legal analysts have questioned the Pentagon's authority to punish a sitting member of Congress for political speech, though the department maintains retired officers remain subject to certain aspects.

Guinea Supreme Court confirms Doumbouya's presidential election victory

Guinea's Supreme Court on Sunday validated an overwhelming presidential election victory for junta chief Mamady Doumbouya, crediting him with 86.72% of votes.

This confirms provisional

results announced earlier last week, following the December 28 election that excluded opposition heavyweights from the ballot.

The runner-up, Abdoulaye Yéro Baldé, won 6.59% of the vote, also unchanged from the

provisional result.

Baldé, who had challenged the election result in a filing with the Supreme Court, had since "voluntarily withdrawn" the complaint, the Court's first president, Fode Bangoura, said as he announced the final election tally.

In his first address to the nation after official results were released, Doumbouya adopted a unifying tone.

"Today, there are neither winners nor losers. There is only one Guinea, united and indivisible," the president-elect said in a broadcast late Sunday, calling on citizens to "build a new Guinea, a Guinea of peace, justice, shared prosperity, and fully assumed political and economic sovereignty."

Mamadi Doumbouya came to power in a 2021 coup that ousted President Alpha Condé.

This year's presidential election was widely seen as a means to legitimise his stay in power.

ECOWAS urges respect for Venezuela's independence after US operation

The Economic Community of West African States has expressed concern over the situation in Venezuela, after the United States captured its president, Nicolás Maduro, and carried out military strikes on its capital Caracas.


ECOWAS urged the international community to "respect the independence and territorial integrity" of Venezuela.

The bloc also expressed support for the country's population, "as they shape the future

of their country through an inclusive process," it said in a statement on Sunday night.

ECOWAS acknowledged "the right of states to fight international crimes" but called on all countries to respect international law, "especially article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter," which demands that states refrain from the threat or use of force against other nations.

The bloc also aligned itself with the African Union, which has called for restraint and dialogue, including "among Venezuelans themselves."

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Kwara United resume for NPFL second round, chairman demands improved performance

Officials and players of Kwara United Football Club have resumed preparations for the second round of the 2025/2026 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) following a one-week break for the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Welcoming the team back to camp, the Club Chairman, Mr. Kumbi Titiloye, charged the players and officials to redouble their efforts in the second stanza of the league, describing the club's first-round performance as below expectations.

Titiloye expressed mixed

feelings over the team's outing in the first round, noting that the second round presents an opportunity for players to re-write their names in gold and restore the club's pride.

According to him, players must justify their salaries and places in the team with impressive performances on the field of play.

"You must sit tight and ensure you justify your inclusion in the team with your performances," the chairman charged the players.

Earlier, the team's head coach, Ashifat Suleiman, assured the

club's management and fans of the team's commitment to finishing the season strongly.

Coach Suleiman disclosed that all grey areas noticed in the first round would be addressed in the second round, expressing confidence that the team would recover lost points.

"We will surely make up for the lost points. I only urge my players to remain dedicated to the club's target," he said.

Kwara United ended the first round of the NPFL season after 19 matches, recording six wins, six draws, and seven defeats.



KWARA UNITED

Wikki Tourists' Chairman assures renewed drive to revive club

The newly appointed Chairman of Wikki Tourists Football Club of Bauchi, Alhaji Salmanu Abubakar, has assured supporters of renewed drive to reposition the club for better performance in the ongoing 2025/2026 Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL) season.

He gave the assurance at a news conference on Monday in Bauchi and expressed concern over the club's current 14th position on the league table, but pledged decisive action to improve results.

He said that the club management was already working on reinforcing the squad through the recruitment of proven professional goal scorers to boost the team's attacking strength.

The chairman added that the club had adopted a new playing style aimed at enhancing performance and competitiveness in the league.

According to him, early signs from the ongoing season are encouraging, but patience and collective support are required to achieve the desired turnaround.

Abubakar also assured supporters and stakeholders that his leadership would ensure level playing ground for all, stressing that professionalism, transparency, and discipline would guide the club's opera-

tions.

He urged fans to remain calm, steadfast and supportive, while also calling for prayers to back the management and technical crew.

He pledged clear division of labour and shared responsibilities within the club's structure, explaining that key officials, including the camp commandant and team management, would be assigned defined roles to enhance efficiency and accountability.

He emphasised that Wikki Tourists FC is neither a political, tribal, nor regional club, but a unifying team that belongs to all citizens of the state.

He also pledged to involve the Sports Writers Association

of Nigeria (SWAN) in the club's activities to promote transparency and collective success.

He expressed gratitude to Gov. Bala Mohammed, and the Commissioner for Youth and

Sports Development, Alhaji Babayo Gabarin, for finding him worthy of the appointment, pledging not to disappoint the government and the people.



XX

2025 AFCON: Coach handed eight-match ban after allegation on referees

Former Tanzania national team head coach Adel Amrouche has been handed an eight-match suspension following controversial comments he made regarding the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and Morocco's alleged influence within the continental body.

Amrouche was sanctioned after publicly accusing Morocco of exerting undue control over CAF affairs, including

claims that the North African nation was involved in the selection of referees for competitions.

CAF's disciplinary authorities deemed the remarks inappropriate and damaging to the integrity of African football governance.

The fallout from the comments extended beyond the suspension, as Amrouche was also relieved of his duties as Tanzania coach shortly after

the incident.

The Tanzania Football Federation moved swiftly to distance itself from the controversy, citing the need to protect its relationship with CAF and uphold the principles of professionalism.

CAF has maintained that match officials are appointed through established and transparent procedures, reiterating its commitment to fairness and neutrality in all competitions

Manchester Utd sack manager Amorim after Leeds draw

Manchester United on Monday sacked head coach Ruben Amorim, a day after a draw with relegation-threatened Leeds United.

The English Premier League (EPL) club broke the news in a statement on its official website on Monday.

United said the decision would boost chances of the highest possible league finish, with the club sixth and trailing leaders Arsenal by 17 points.

"With Manchester United sitting sixth in the Premier League, the club's leadership has reluctantly made the decision that it is the right time to make a change.

"This will give the team the best opportunity of the highest

possible Premier League finish," the club said in a statement.

The Red Devils have won one of their last five league matches, prompting leadership to act despite a season still in contention.

The statement also said the sack followed Amorim's defiant responses on job security, insisting he held full managerial authority and was not merely a coach.

"He appeared downbeat on transfers and bristled after the Leeds draw, rebuking reporters over "selective information" while defending his position."

The 40-year-old said he had no intention of leaving Old Trafford, repeatedly stressing authority beyond coaching duties.



RUBEN AMORIM

AFCON 2025: Cameroon players earn huge bonuses after South Africa victory



Players of the Cameroon national team have been rewarded handsomely following their hard-fought victory over South Africa at the ongoing 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

The Indomitable Lions secured a 2-1 win against Bafana Bafana to book their place in the quarterfinals of the competition, continuing their quest

for a sixth continental title.

Following the qualification, each Cameroon player is set to receive a total of 18,180,000 CFA francs as a combination of winning and qualification bonuses.

The amount is estimated at approximately \$32,550 USD per player, underlining the significance placed on success by the Cameroonian football authorities.

The five-time African champions showed resilience and determination to overcome South Africa, with the victory further boosting morale within the camp ahead of the quarter-final clash.

Cameroon will now turn their attention to the next round as they aim to maintain momentum and challenge for the AFCON 2025 trophy.

SPORTS

AFCON 2025: Super Eagles stroll into quarter-finals after thrashing Mozambique 4-0

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE
NAN Report

Nigeria's Super Eagles, yesterday sealed a place in the AFCON 2025 quarter-finals after overpowering Mozambique 4-0 in a dominant last-16 encounter in Morocco with authority and attacking flair.

The Nigeria's frontline of Ademola Lukman, Victor Osimhen and Akor Adams were in top form as they dismantled the Mambas of Mozambique to

ease into the last eight at the end in what looked like a one-sided encounter following the Nigeria's representatives' dominance throughout the game.

Ademola Lookman opened scoring for Nigeria in the 20th minute of action after steering a precise finish into the top corner following a composed square pass from industrious forward Akor Adams to light up the Complexe Sportif de Fès stadium in Morocco

Goal thirsty Victor Osimhen took the game beyond the

reach of the Mambas, increasing Nigeria's advantage and control with two well-taken goals struck in the 25th and 47th minute respectively.

The goals effectively collapsed Mozambique's resistance and underlined the Super Eagles' tournament ambitions

Akor Adams capped the impressive display by soaring Super Eagles as he smashed home his first goal of the tournament in the 75th minute.

His shot from close range was too hot for goalkeeper Er-

nan Siluane to handle, as Nigeria maintained composure throughout the encounter.

Eagles have maintained a hundred percent record since tournament kickoff winning all three matches at the group stage before Mozambique thrashing

Nigeria will meet either Algeria or DR Congo in Saturday's quarter-finals battle and will be going into the last eight contest with confidence as they continue their pursuit of a fourth continental title.



ADEMOLA LUKMAN AND VICTOR OSIMHEN

Nigeria weightlifting President, Dr Ibrahim Abdul salutes NSC, NOC, media for support in 2025

The President, Nigeria Weightlifting Federation (NWF), Dr Ibrahim Alaid Abdul has expressed deep appreciation to the National Sports Commission (NSC), Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), the Media, board members of the federation, coaches, referees and athletes for their unprecedented support to the weightlifting sport in the outgone year, 2025.

Dr Abdul in his New Year message signed by the Media Officer of the federation, Mr Amaechi Agbo, thanked the stakeholders for identifying with weightlifting in the year 2025 which galvanised the sport to record medal hauls in both regional, continental and international engagements.

"I want to, first and foremost, thank the Almighty God for granting us the grace to see the New Year 2026. The year 2025 was a good one for us in the weightlifting family because we invested a lot and had good rewards.

"We participated in regional, continental and global competitions and held the flag of our nation high. We took part in many competitions including becoming Africa Champions after conquering the continent during the Senior African Weightlifting Championships held in Mauritius. Our athletes excelled in other engagements including the most recent one being the 4th Africa Youth Games in Launda, Angola last month.

"The success stories we had in the year 2025 are products of the immense support the federation received from the National Sports Commission, the

● Rolls Out Achievements in Outgone year

Nigeria Olympic Committee, the Media and all stakeholders who supported us in one way or the other. On behalf of the Board of Nigeria Weightlifting Federation, I want to express my appreciation to you all for being there for us in the outgone year. We invested and we had returns on investments," Dr Abdul said.

The Nigeria Weightlifting Federation witnessed exponential increase in the number of medals won in a calendar year by amassing a total of 49 gold, 14 silver and 7 bronze medals across seven regional, continental and global competitions during the year under review.

The federation began the year by featuring at the 2025 Senior African Weightlifting Champi-

onship in Mauritius from 20th - 28th April. The contingent returned home as Champions of Africa after amassing a total of 10 gold, 4 silver and a bronze medal to top the overall medals table.

At the Africa Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championship in Accra, Ghana held between 15 and 23 August, 2025,

the federation returned home with 9 gold medals.

The feat was followed swiftly during the Commonwealth Weightlifting Championship in India from 24 to 30 August, 2025 where the federation showed global dominance by winning 4 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze medals.



TEAM NIGERIA

AFCON 2025: FECAFOOT president Eto'o accuses referees of favouring some teams, calls for Integrity

FECAFOOT president Samuel Eto'o has raised concerns over refereeing standards at the ongoing 2025 Africa Cup of Nations, accusing match officials of favouring certain teams ahead of Came-

ron's quarter-final clash with hosts Morocco.

The Indomitable Lions are set to face the Atlas Lions on Friday in a high-stakes encounter, with a place in the semi-finals at stake.

However, Eto'o, a former Cameroon captain and Barcelona striker, has publicly questioned the neutrality of officiating at the tournament.

Speaking ahead of the crucial tie, the president of the Cameroon Football Federation called on the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to ensure fairness and transparency in refereeing decisions.

"The CAF must absolutely guarantee the integrity of the referees until the end of the competition," Eto'o said.

He further alleged that some teams have benefited unduly from officiating decisions during the tournament.



FECAFOOT PRESIDENT SAMUEL ETO'O

AFCON 2025: France leads birthplace statistics among tournament players

France has emerged as the most represented country of birth at the ongoing 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), according to official tournament data.

Out of the 658 players participating in the competition, no fewer than 107 were born in France, a figure that places the European nation well ahead of all others in terms of players' birth statistics.

A significant concentration of these players were born in the Île-de-France region, which accounts for 45 of the France-born footballers currently featuring at the tournament.

The region, known for its

strong football development structures, continues to play a major role in producing players who represent African national teams.

Ivory Coast ranks a distant second on the list, with 29 AFCON players born within its territory, highlighting the contrast between France's diaspora-driven influence and domestic player production on the continent.

The statistics further underline the long-standing impact of migration, dual nationality, and European football academies on African national teams, a trend that remains prominent at AFCON 2025 in Morocco

