

Ohonbamu urges Edo people to support Okpebholo beyond politics

The Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communication, Hon. Paul Ohonbamu, has urged the people of Edo to set aside political differences and rally behind the newly elected Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo to drive the state's development.

Speaking to journalists in Benin City following the decision of the Edo Election Peti-

tion Tribunal, which affirmed Okpebholo's election, Ohonbamu described the governor as a divine gift to the state, capable of delivering remarkable democratic dividends.

He emphasised that the time had come for unity, stressing that Okpebholo's developmental agenda could only be successful with collective support from the people.

Ohonbamu, a former Majority Leader of the Edo State House of Assembly, highlighted Okpebholo's achievements as the first All Progressives Congress (APC) Senator in Edo Central since 1999.

He credited the Governor's rise in politics to his deep passion for improving the lives of ordinary citizens, recalling how he facilitated access to essential services, such as water, roads, and education

during his senatorial tenure.

Describing him as a man of action, rather than words, Ohonbamu assured Edo residents that Okpebholo would exceed the performance of his predecessors.

Citing the Governor's swift actions since assuming office on November 12, Ohonbamu noted that Okpebholo wasted no time in inspecting critical infrastructure, including a

problematic bypass road previously labelled a federal project by the former administration.

"He promptly ordered contractors back to site and launched construction of the state's first flyover, which is already nearing completion," he said.

Ohonbamu also recounted the Governor's long-standing philanthropic efforts, including donations of motorcycles, vehicles,

and support to local vigilante groups, particularly in Esan land.

Despite being a man of few words, Ohonbamu affirmed that Okpebholo is steadfast in fulfilling his promises and called on the people to support and pray for the Governor's success.

He assured Edo residents that their trust in Governor Okpebholo would be rewarded with transformative progress.

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2027: APC Governors visit Buhari amid defections of loyalists to SDP

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Over 50% of Nigeria's earnings spent on fighting insurgency —Senator

Over half of Nigeria's national earnings in recent years have been drained by the fight against terrorism and insurgency, Senator Sunday Karimi has revealed, calling for a united national focus on security over divisive rhetoric.

Speaking in Abuja on Tuesday, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Services condemned fellow lawmaker Senator Ali Ndume for criti-

cising federal appointments, arguing that such comments distract from the country's most pressing crisis—national insecurity.

According to him, "Over 50% of Nigeria's earnings in the last few years are being spent on fighting insurgency," Karimi stated, urging leaders, particularly those from conflict-ridden regions to prioritise solutions to insecurity over political sentiments.

Karimi pointed to the enormous human and financial toll of the insurgency, particularly in the North-East, where countless soldiers and civilians have lost their lives.

He recalled the recent death of a Nigerian Army captain from his own district, who was killed while serving in Ndume's senatorial zone.

"Insecurity has a local solution," he stressed, challenging Ndume to return to his com-

munity and lead local efforts to combat Boko Haram, rather than "playing to the gallery" with public criticisms.

Highlighting his own efforts, Karimi noted that he had facilitated the construction of a military base in Yagba West, Kogi State, and supported logistics for local security operations.

He added a warning that Nigeria's survival is at stake, and that leaders must rally together to face the real enemy which is

insurgency and not each other.

Ndume's original remarks were made during an appearance on Arise TV, where he

accused the Tinubu administration of failing to reflect the nation's diversity in its appointments.

US imports \$643m Nigerian goods in two months —Report

The United States imported \$643.1m worth of goods from Nigeria in the first two months of 2025, just a month before the implementation of new tariffs by the Trump administration.

The tariffs, which take effect on April 9, 2025, have raised concerns about their potential impact on Nigeria's trade.

However, oil and minerals are exempted from the new tariff regime, offering some relief to Nigeria's major export sectors.

Data from the United States International Trade Commission revealed that Nigeria's imports on a customs basis for February 2025 stood at \$286.3m, a sharp decline from the \$423.6m recorded in the same month of 2024.

This marked a reduction of 32.4 per cent. On a year-to-date basis, customs-based imports fell from \$951.6m in 2024 to \$643.1m in 2025, representing a decrease of 32.4 per cent.

On a Cost, Insurance, and Freight basis, Nigeria's imports for February 2025 stood at \$298.4m, compared to \$436.3m in February 2024, marking a decline of 31.6 per cent.

On a year-to-date basis, CIF-based imports fell from \$979.6m

in 2024 to \$666.3m in 2025, indicating a decrease of 32 per cent.

The customs basis for US trade refers to the value of goods at the point of entry into the United States, excluding costs related to insurance and freight, while the CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight) basis includes the total value of the goods along with the insurance and shipping costs required to deliver the goods to the US.

Despite the drop in imports, Nigeria's trade balance on customs imports for February 2025 improved significantly, rising to \$187.2m from \$77.3m in February 2024.

This represents an increase of 142.2 per cent. On a year-to-date basis, the trade balance moved from a deficit of \$158.8m in 2024 to a surplus of \$44.3m in 2025, marking a recovery of 127.9 per cent.

The total trade between the US and Nigeria for the first two months of 2025 stood at approximately \$1.33bn.

This includes the value of both imports and exports, reflecting the extensive trade relations between the two countries.

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DOCTOR DEGREE OF LAW:

L-R: Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriation, Solomon Olamilekon; Deputy Senate President, Barau Jibrin; Senate President, Godwill Akpabio; Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, and Vice Chancellor, Ekiti State University (EKSU), Prof. Joseph Babatola Ayodele, during the ceremony for the award of honorary Doctor Degree of Law on Senator Opeyemi Bamidele by EKSU Ekiti, in Ado Ekiti.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

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Court adjourns attempted murder, arson case in Benin to May 8

Justice A. N. Erhabor of the Edo State Criminal High Court sitting in Benin has adjourned hearing in a case involving allegations of conspiracy, attempted murder, arson,

and malicious damage to May 8, 2025.

The case, with suit number B63/C/25, is between the Commissioner of Police and the defendants, Ahunmwan

Osaro and Odaro Oviarobo.

During the court sitting, Rose Igbinakenzua, a representative of the prosecution, informed the court that the

charge sheet had not yet been served on the relevant parties.

There was however no legal representation present for the defendants.

As a result, Justice Erhabor adjourned the matter to 8 May 2025 for proper service and continuation of hearing.

The charges stem from an in-

cident on January 1, 2025, in the Iguosa area on Benin - Lagos Road, where Ahunmwan Osaro allegedly set his estranged wife, Tina Uyi, ablaze at her residence.

RATTAWU reaffirms support for Okpebholo's leadership, hails tribunal victory

The Radio, Television, Theatre and Art Workers Union of Nigeria (RATTAWU), Edo State chapter, has reaffirmed its commitment to the administration of Senator Monday Okpebholo, following his victory at the Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal.

In a statement signed by the state chairman, Comrade Raphael Ojeikere, the union congratulated Governor Okpebholo and his Deputy, Hon. Dennis Id-

ahosa, describing the tribunal's judgment as a clear reflection of the people's trust and confidence in their leadership.

RATTAWU expressed hope that the victory would inspire even greater dedication to public service, unity, and purposeful governance across the state.

The union reiterated its resolve to support the governor's agenda and contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of Edo State under the current administration.



PRESENTATION OF LAPTOPS:

Officials of the Presidential Amnesty Programme in group photograph with PAP final year and post-graduate scholarship students at Baze University, during the presentation of laptops to them recently.

Presidential Amnesty programme distributes laptops to final-year, postgraduate scholars

The Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) has commenced the distribution of laptops to its final-year and postgraduate scholarship beneficiaries in partner universities across Nigeria.

This was disclosed in a statement issued on Tuesday by Igoniko Oduma, Special Assistant on Media to the PAP Administrator.

In the first phase of the initiative, 64 students, including 60 final-year undergraduates, one doctoral candidate, and three master's degree students received laptops at Nile University and Baze University.

Twenty-five students benefited at Nile University, while 39 received theirs at Baze University during presentation ceremonies in two different days.

The PAP Administrator, Dr Dennis Otuaro, had earlier pledged this support during his 2024 tour of the participating institutions. He emphasised the critical role of technology in academic success, particularly for students preparing to complete their final-year projects, theses, and dissertations.

"The office recognises the usefulness of mobile computing devices, especially for students preparing to write their final-year projects, theses, and dissertations," Otuaro noted.

Representing the Administrator at the events were the Acting Head of Administration, Ebikpolade Zorab, and Secretary to the Administrator, Ebimene Jackson.

They urged the students to make the most of the devices and highlighted that they were the first group to receive such support under the current administration.

Dr Otuaro encouraged the scholars to maximise the opportunity, saying: "I advise and encourage you to make good

use of it for your academic progress.

"With these laptops, if you were to make a low grade in your project, we expect that you will score excellent grades because you now have portable computers to enhance your academic endeavours."

He also reaffirmed his commitment to closing the human capital development gap in the Niger Delta and contributing to peace, security, and stability in the region.

Otuaro expressed appreciation to President Bola Tinubu for his continued support of the PAP's educational and vocational training initiatives under the Renewed Hope Agenda.

Dr Charles Ariye, Head of Education at PAP, highlighted that this marks the first time in six years that scholarship recipients are receiving laptops.

He stressed the importance of digital tools in the academic journey, saying, "We are in a digital age. You are doing a lot with your phones, and with your laptop, you can do more."

Registrars of both universities, David Olowola (Nile University) and Professor Abiodun Adeniyi (Baze University), lauded the PAP for the initiative and expressed their commitment to continued collaboration, noting the significance of developing skilled manpower for national growth.

Student leaders Eperetun Gboroteiye (Nile) and Pedro Timotubo (Baze), along with beneficiaries including Oyinyefa Ogiriki, Mina Ikiba, Friday Dunu, and Martha Tuwabere, expressed gratitude for the laptops, acknowledging their potential to enhance their academic efforts.

The distribution forms part of PAP's broader efforts to support the educational development of its scholars by equipping them with essential tools for academic excellence.

Fashion models launch 2025 collections fair in Benin

Fashion models under the banner of Allure Production have launched a strong campaign for creativity as a tool to promote Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and drive societal development.

Speaking on Tuesday in Benin City, the models unveiled plans for the 2025 Fashion Collections Fair, scheduled for May 1st and 2nd, with the goal of bridging generations through fashion and celebrating cultural identity.

Supermodel, brand ambassa-

dor, and creative director of Allure Production, Jojo Dominic, said the upcoming fair would spotlight the creative spirit of the Edo people and beyond.

"The show creates a space where the old and young share the same stage, celebrating years of cultural excellence and innovation," he stated.

He explained that the event would also explore the future of fashion, showcasing everything from modest to luxurious fabrics, giving peo-

ple across all economic classes access to creative designs.

"We are offering up to 60% discounts to make fashion affordable and inclusive," Dominic added.

Dominic urged designers, models, and other creatives to pool their talents in redefining the region's fashion identity.

"Creativity opens doors to opportunities. If we collaborate, we can build a thriving fashion ecosystem that reflects who we are," he said.

The two-day event will feature musical performances, comedy, and cultural ceremonies, blending entertainment with fashion innovation.

The models affirmed that the fair would enhance cultural values, promote dignity and integrity, and generate income for individuals and the wider society.

They called on the Edo State Government and the younger generation to embrace fashion as a tool for economic and cultural transformation.

US imports \$643m Nigerian goods in two...

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Nigeria's exports on a domestic and foreign Free Alongside Ship basis amounted to \$473.6m in February 2025, slightly down from \$501m in February 2024, representing a decline of 5.5 per cent.

On a year-to-date basis, F.A.S.-based exports fell from \$792.8m in 2024 to \$687.4m in 2025, marking a decrease of 13.3 per cent.

The United States recorded a trade deficit against Nigeria only in January 2025, according to data from the United States Trade in Goods report.

The report showed that the US posted a deficit of \$143m in January but recorded a surplus of \$187m in February. This positive shift resulted in a year-to-date surplus of \$44m.

The data revealed that Nigeria's exports to the US rose significantly in February, amounting to \$474m compared to \$214m in January.

This marked an increase of 121.5 per cent. On a year-to-date basis, Nigeria's exports to the US totalled \$687m, showing a strong recovery after a slow start to the year.

US imports from Nigeria, however, recorded a decline. In February, imports were valued at \$286m, down from \$357m in January, representing a decrease of 19.9 per cent.

Year-to-date, US imports from Nigeria amounted to \$643m, indicating a reduction in import volume compared to the previous month.

The shift in trade dynamics between January and February highlights a reversal of the deficit trend seen at the start of the year.

In January, the US recorded a deficit as imports from Nigeria exceeded exports. However, in February, increased exports and lower imports led to a surplus.

The United States imported crude oil worth \$413.57m from Nigeria in the first two months of 2025, according to data from the United States Trade in Goods report.

The data shows that the total volume of crude oil imported from Nigeria during this period was 5.3 million barrels.

Crude oil accounted for approximately 64.31 per cent of the total imports from Nigeria to the US, which stood at \$666.3m in the first two months of the year.

This highlights the significant role of crude oil in Nigeria's export portfolio to the US.

In February 2025, the volume of crude oil imported from Nigeria to the US was 1.8 million barrels, valued at \$142.2m.

This marked a significant drop from January 2025, when the volume was higher at 3.5 million barrels, valued at \$271.4m.

The data revealed that the

value of crude oil imports fell by 47.6 per cent month-on-month.

The year-to-date customs value of crude oil imports from Nigeria stood at \$413.6m as of February 2025.

Month-on-month, the data shows that the customs value of imports in February was significantly lower than in January.

The C.I.F. value of crude oil imports from Nigeria to the US was \$146.2m in February, compared to \$278.2m in January.

The cumulative C.I.F. value for the first two months of the year stood at \$424.4m. The month-on-month analysis shows a decrease of 47.4 per cent in the C.I.F. value between January and February.

While oil and mineral exports remain exempted from the new tariffs, analysts have expressed concerns about the potential impact on other sectors.

Agricultural and manufacturing goods, which previously benefitted from the African Growth and Opportunity Act, are likely to face increased competition and higher costs.

In a related development, Nigeria's Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, has said the recent 14 per cent tariff imposed by the United States on Nigerian exports will have a negligible effect on the Nigerian economy.

Edun stated this at the inaugural Corporate Governance

Forum organised by the Ministry of Finance Incorporated in Abuja on Monday.

While recognising the seriousness of escalating global tariff conflicts, Edun emphasised that Nigeria remains relatively insulated from severe impacts, given the exclusion of oil and mineral exports—Nigeria's primary exports to the US—from the tariff.

He highlighted the comparatively moderate 14 per cent tariff as favourable when placed alongside Vietnam's 46 per cent and China's 34 per cent tariffs.

"Nigeria's exports to the US were N1.8tn, N2.6tn and N5.5tn in 2022-2024, respectively. Fortunately, oil and mineral exports accounted for 92 per cent, implying oil and mineral exports amounted to N5.08tn in value, while non-oil was just N0.44tn. Consequently, the tariff effect on exports is negligible if we sustain our oil and minerals export volume."

However, Edun admitted the government's economic management team is closely monitoring the global situation.

"We are going back to the drawing board to look at our budget all over again because we have to see what changes have been made in the assumptions that underlay the production of that budget and the reality over the first quarter and even projected into the future," he said.

It was reported that the new-

Stakeholders urge Rivers to harness ocean resources for economic growth

The Chairman of the Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Rivers Council, Mr Amechi Okonkwo, has called on the state government to prioritise its vast

maritime resources in order to position itself as a leading blue economy hub.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2025 Correspondents' Week in Port Harcourt, Mr Okonkwo, expressed

the need for the state to embrace sustainable use of ocean resources to drive economic development, create jobs, and improve living standards.

He noted that sectors such as fisheries, tourism, and mar-

itime transport currently contribute about 35 percent to the state's GDP.

He emphasised that infrastructural development, good governance, and stakeholders engagement are essential to

unlocking their full potential.

The event, themed "Blue Economy: Starting Steps for Rivers State and "Enhancing the Economic Welfare of Journalists in a Period of Economic Crisis," also featured support from key stakeholders.

Dr Chinyere Nwoga, the President of the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (PHCCIMA), commended journalists for their longstanding partnership with the busi-

ness community, urging them to continue to uphold truth and justice.

She highlighted shared values between PHCCIMA and the media, including transparency and adherence to global best practices.

In his remarks, the state NUJ Chairman, Comrade Paul Bazia, praised the Correspondents' Chapel for spotlighting the blue economy, aligning it with the union's development communication goals.



TRADE AND TARIFF CHALLENGES:

Director-General, World Trade Organisation (WTO), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (middle), flanked by Peru's Minister of Production H.E. Sergio González Guerrero (3rd left), and his team, when Guerrero led his team to WTO to discuss present trade and tariff challenges and their possible impact on Micro, Medium and Small Enterprises.

Senior church leaders urge christian women to win souls, seek God's presence

Senior church leaders have called on Christian women to renew their commitment to soul-winning and to deepen their relationship with God as a vital part of their spiritual journey.

Senior Rev. Mrs Mary Igbere made the call while preaching on the topic "Desiring God" at the ongoing Women's Convention of the Christ Chosen Church of God International (CCCCOG).

She reminded the congregation that what truly counts in life is the work done for God, which will be judged in the end.

She urged the women to return to their first love—God—and to trust Him completely, warning them to avoid self-pity and instead, embrace faith in divine redemption.

Reinforcing the message, Rev. Mrs Apple Dikeocha, who spoke on the theme "Looking Unto God," encouraged the

women to rely solely on God as their ultimate source.

She assured them that those who keep their focus on God will never be put to shame or face life's challenges alone.

She warned that many who stray from God begin chasing miracles, instead of cultivating a genuine relationship with Him, which ultimately leads to the loss of His power and presence.

The convention featured an

enlightening Bible quiz competition, which added to the spiritual impact of the event.

At the close of the service, the women took their evangelism efforts into the community, holding a powerful and transformative outreach crusade at Western Boys High School.

The event offered them the opportunity to share the gospel beyond the church walls and advance the work of God's Kingdom.

Firm to partner Edo govt on affordable housing for civil servants

Legacylux Homes and Construction Company Limited, a real estate firm based in Benin City, has expressed its intention to collaborate with the Edo State Government to provide affordable housing solutions, particularly for civil servants.

During the official unveiling and endorsement of the

company's brand ambassadors, the Chief Executive Officer, Hon. M.O. Onaiwu revealed the firm's plan to ensure widespread home ownership through a mortgage scheme offering repayment periods of up to 30 years.

The company caters for various income groups, offering one to five-bedroom bungalow

options.

Onaiwu highlighted the firm's commitment to integrity, discipline, and high standards, positioning itself to compete globally.

He also stated the company's readiness to partner with other state governments to ease the housing crisis affecting public servants across Nigeria.

Legacylux, he added, offers flexible land payment plans ranging from six to twelve months, making homeownership more accessible.

The event included the endorsement of popular entertainers Atere Ohizuanjeme Ohis and MC Olofofo as brand ambassadors, and free registration of contractors.

NURTW affirms support for Etsako Central chairman Cephas Yakubu

The Etsako Central Chapter of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) has paid a solidarity visit to the Chairman of the Local Government Council, Hon. Cephas Yakubu, in a show of loyalty and support for his administration.

Leading the delegation, the Union's Chairman, Mr Moses

Aleogho, thanked God for His continued mercy and favour upon Hon. Yakubu and his team.

He praised the Chairman's resilience and commitment to governance, pledging the union's steadfast support for the current administration.

Mr Aleogho further reaffirmed the union's loyalty and

encouraged its members to stay dedicated to the development of the local government, urging them not to allow distractions to hinder their efforts.

In his remarks, Hon. Cephas Yakubu expressed gratitude to the NURTW for the visit and encouragement.

He reiterated his adminis-

tration's commitment to implementing policies that would uplift transport workers and promote the welfare of the entire local government.

The Chairman offered prayers for the continued safety and protection of all NURTW members, especially as they carry out their duties on the roads.

New Edo Police Commissioner assumes office, pledges community-focused security

CP Monday Agbonika has officially assumed duty as the new Commissioner of Police in Edo State, taking over from CP Betty Enekpen-Isokpan Otimenyin, who served just 72 days as the first female Commissioner of Police in the state.

Addressing journalists in Benin City on Tuesday, CP Agbonika outlined a community-inclusive approach to policing, promising to strengthen Community Safety Partnerships to improve security.

He revealed that he had already met with the Inspector-General of Police, IGP Kayode Egbetokun, and received a

full security briefing upon his arrival.

As the 50th Commissioner of Police in the history of the Edo State Police Command, he pledged to collaborate with traditional institutions, civil society, the media, Civil Defence, and other security bodies to enhance safety across the state.

Ahbonika expressed optimism about working with Governor Monday Okpebholo and Edo citizens to tackle pressing security challenges.

His predecessor, CP Otimenyin, had taken over office on January 27, 2025 following the retirement of CP Umoru Peter Ozigi.

2027: APC Governors visit Buhari amid defections of loyalists to SDP

State governors elected on the platform of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) have visited former President Muhammadu Buhari at his residence in Kaduna State.

The delegation was led by the Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma, who is the Chairman of the Progressive Governors Forum.

The meeting between the governors and the former president was held behind closed doors.

Addressing journalists after the meeting, Uzodinma said the visit was to check on Buhari's well-being and to pay him homage, describing the former president as the father of the APC.

He stated that the governors were pleased to find him in good health and expressed gratitude to God for the opportunity to see him.

"We came to pay former President Muhammadu Buhari a courtesy visit. You know former President Muhammadu Buhari is the only former President produced by the APC," Uzodinma said.

"We came and saw him in good health. We fraternised with him; we stayed with him and are ready to go back to our various businesses. We met with him and he is well pleased with

our party. He expressed surprise about our visit. We are happy and thankful to Almighty God because we met him in good health. He is our father in politics. He is well pleased with our party and all of us, his children."

Uzodinma added that the visit was significant, especially after the period of Ramadan, Lent, and the Eid-el-Fitr celebration, saying it was an appropriate time to reach out to the former leader who served for eight years under the APC banner.

"He (Buhari) is well pleased with our visit. Members of our forum are pleased with him. We met him in good health because you know that our party, APC, is the largest party in Africa and is the ruling party, the only party with 21 governors. The party is strong, and we will continue to work hard to make it stronger," he said.

Kaduna State Governor, Uba Sani, who was part of the delegation, also praised Buhari for his support for both the APC and President Bola Tinubu.

"We are here along with other APC governors to visit former President Muhammadu Buhari.

"We are happy with the way former President Buhari is supporting our party and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu," Sani stated.