

Nigeria Press Review

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Welcome to Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's Nigeria Weekly Press Review

The weekly press review seeks to explore and keep you informed on selected issues relating to politics, business and economy, insecurity, infrastructure and development, health related issues, new trends and matters bothering on COVID-19 and the situation in Nigeria.

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Covid-19: UK to Support Nigeria with Free 16m Vaccine Doses, Brewing Squabble in the Private Sector over Vaccines, States Grapple with Protocol Enforcement and Preservation

The United Kingdom (UK), has disclosed plans to support Nigeria with 16m free doses of Covid-19 vaccines through the COVAX Global Vaccines Facility. According to the British High Commission (BHC), this is in accordance with “the sharing of the first forecasts of countries that would receive Covid-19 vaccines through COVAX’s Advance Market Commitment (AMC)”. Chike Olisah, [Nairametrics \(10th February\)](#) reports.

On another note, reports indicate a brewing squabble among leaders in the private sector on the nature of the alleged purchase of 1m doses of Covid-19 vaccines through AFREXIM by the BUA Group. The BUA Group accused the Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID), of “mischievous and false information” following CACOVID failure to recognize the alleged purchase of the vaccines. CACOVID alleged that there is no agreement between BUA, CACOVID, and AFREXIM. BUA, however, expressed its commitment towards the Covid-19 response. Ebuka Onyeiji, [Premium Times \(9th February\)](#) explains.

Meanwhile, there are growing concerns over the adoption of the Covid-19 Health Protection Regulation of 2021 signed by President Muhammadu Buhari. Reports on investigation carried out indicate non-compliance of the protocols by citizens. State government officials have also stressed on the challenge of enforcing the rules in their states. Officials of state government including Cross-Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Enugu, Niger States have revealed that they would adopt “coercive measures” in ensuring compliance. [Punch News \(9th February\)](#) writes.

Tension as CBN Bans Crypto Currency Operations, IMF Raises Alarm over Naira Value in Open Market

There is growing tension following the ban placed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), on crypto currencies prohibiting financial and non-financial institutions, including Deposit Money Banks (DMB), from processing crypto transactions as well as facilitating crypto exchanges. Stakeholders have expressed their opinion on the issue.

Supporting the move, the Association of Bureaux De Change Operators of Nigeria (ABCON), among others, noted that crypto currency operations risk being exposed to money laundering, fraud, and other criminal activities. The President of ABCON, Aminu Gwadab, stated that the directive would help ensure safe, secured and stable financial system. He called for the regulation of other sector in the financial system. On another note, the former Deputy Governor of CBN, Kingsley Moghalu criticized the move stating that “there are better ways to regulate than adopting knee-jerk approach”. Moghalu faulted the ban, emphasizing on a more approachable policy following its demand in global trend. He cited “lack of regulatory coordination” between the Security Exchange Commission (SEC) and the CBN following SEC’s recognition of digital currencies. Collins Nweze, [The Nation \(8th February\)](#) and Geoff Iyatse, [Guardian News \(9th February\)](#) detail.

Reports indicate that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), drew the CBN’s attention to “fraudsters using crypto currencies to bring into the country hundreds of millions of US Dollars illegally obtained from the USA and other Western economies”. According to Tobi Soniyi and Chucks Okocha in [Arise News \(7th February\)](#), Covid-19 stimulus meant for citizens were targeted. Investigation conducted by This Day News revealed several fraudulent activity and other forms of criminality carried out using crypto currency. On the same note, CBN has commenced investigation into financial institutions offering services to crypto traders. Reports confirm a “breach” as some banks may have violated the regulation that does “not allow them to be involved in unregulated services”. Fikayo Owoeye, [The Cable News \(9th February\)](#) details.

Still on crypto currency, the CBN has maintained its stance on the directive stressing on the need to protect the country’s financial system. This was contained in a statement issued by the CBN. It explained the crypto currency business, reasons for its position, and cited other countries that maintains the same directive. Wazilat Azeez, [the Cable \(7th February\)](#) explains. Crypto operators in Nigeria have begun to comply with the CBN directive. Olumide Adesina, [Nairametrics \(6th February\)](#) and Dennis Ezeri, [Guardian News \(9th February\)](#) reports.

In developing news, the Senate has summoned the CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele and the Director General of the Security and Exchange

Commission (SEC), Lamido Yuguda. The development is coming following a motion titled “CBN’s decision to stop financial institutions from transacting in cryptocurrencies” sponsored by Senator Istifanus Gyang from Plateau State and Adetokumbo Abiru from Lagos State. They stressed on the positive and negative impact of crypto trading and called for an in-depth study in order to weigh the consequences and the opportunities it can create for on the economy. QueenEsther, [Premium Times \(11th February\)](#) details.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has expressed concerns over the naira value in the official market. In the IMF Article IV Consultation with Nigeria, it stressed on the need for a unified exchange rate. It cited an overvalue of 18.5% in the naira market. The article further cited various disparities and recommended solutions to include an increase in Value Added Tax (VAT), among others. Nduka Chiejina and Collins Nweze, [The Nation News \(9th February\)](#) and Oladeinde Olawoye, [Premium Times \(8th February\)](#) write. Reports suggests that Nigeria may have concerns about the recommendation. It is unclear what the next step will be. Alonso Soto writes in [Bloomberg News \(8th February\)](#).

On the same note, David Whitehouse of [the African Report \(11th February\)](#), analysed IMF’s projection on the naira value and the opinion of the Nigeria authorities on the issue. According to him, experts predicted further devaluation of the naira and also high inflation in the first quarter of the year, others emphasized the challenges the exchange rate stirred up. Whitehouse further details IMF’s analysis including recommendations on the way forward. He concluded by stating that there is “no such thing as an optimal level for the naira without a market-based rate that allows businesses to plan for the future”.

Presidency Reacts to Criticism on Ex-Service Chiefs Appointment, NASS Set to Decide on the Appointment of the New Chiefs, US Backs Iwela for her WTO Nomination

As criticism continues to trail President Muhammadu Buhari’s nomination of the former service chiefs as non-political ambassadors, the Presidency has justified the nomination stressing on the “hard work and exceptional sacrifice” of the chiefs during their tenure. Contained in a statement, the presidential spokesperson, Garba

Shehu, faulted growing criticisms from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and others calling for the prosecution of the chiefs. He also charged critics to provide evidence to support their claim. Shehu added that their nomination is a reward for their service and also, it will inspire others if given the opportunity to service. Nasir Ayitogo writes in [Premium Times \(6th February\)](#) details.

Meanwhile, the Senate has acknowledged receipt of the new service chiefs’ nomination by President Buhari. During a plenary session, the Senate President, read the letter sent to the Senate by President Buhari. QueenEsther Iroanusi, [Premium Times \(9th February\)](#) reports. The House of Representatives also set up a 40-man joint committee to screen the new appointments. Members of the committee include the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Standing Committees on Defence, Army, Air Force and Navy among others. Levinus Nwabughio, [Vanguard News \(11th February\)](#) writes.

Still on appointments, the United States (US) has finally backed Ngozi Okonjo Iweala on her nomination as the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), making her the only candidate in the race due to the withdrawal of Yoo Myung-hee, South Korea’s candidate. This is coming following the emergence of Joe Biden as the new US President. This was contained in a statement by the Office of the US Trade Representative. They stressed on Iweala’s qualities and past experience. AFP, [TAIPEI Times \(7th February\)](#) details. Also, Kunle Olaniyi in [BBC News \(6th February\)](#), examines the possible emergence of Iweala as the DG for the WTO. WTO will select the DG on 15 February. Wasilat Azeez, [the Cable. \(8th February\)](#) writes.

Oshiomhole Faults APC Membership Registration as Crisis Rocks the Exercise in South-East, Delta, Others, Fani-Kayode Debunks Rumoured Defection

As the nationwide All Progressives Congress (APC) membership registration and revalidation continues nationwide, the former national chairman of the APC, Adams Oshiomhole has criticized the exercise stating that it contradicts the party’s constitution. He predicts irregularities in process as some members may have died and others decamped. Oshiomhole stated this to pressmen after his revalidation in Edo State. He stressed that he only did this because he “want peace to reign

but in doing this, we have to be careful not to create constitutional breach". Gabriel Enogholase, [Vanguard News \(10th February\)](#) writes.

Reacting, the APC Caretaker Chairman and Yobe State Governor, Mai Mala Buni, has reiterated that the exercise does not violate the constitution. Buni made the disclosure after his revalidation exercise in Yobe State. Buni added that the exercise was contained in Article 9(4) of the party's constitution. He said that the exercise would create a sense of belonging for both new and old members. Jide Orintunsin and Duku Joel, [the Nation News \(12th February\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, reports indicate of erupting crisis during the ongoing registration in several location across the country. There was disruption in the ongoing exercise in the South-East, Delta, Kwara and Osun States. The exercise was suspended in Delta State over leadership disagreement, and Kwara State disclosed an alleged hoarding of registration materials from some members, among others. In the South-East, reports revealed shortage of registration forms and Osun State noted challenges with logistics. Festus Ahoh et al, [Vanguard News \(11th February\)](#) detail.

On the Delta State chapter crisis, it was alleged that the Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege hijacked the registration and also hoarded materials for the exercise in the Delta State chapter. Debunking this, the Delta State APC Director of Publicity, Nick Ovuakporie explained that Omo-Agege is not a member of the registration committee and hence, has no knowledge on the location of the materials. Festus Ahon, [Vanguard News \(12th February\)](#) details.

On another note, the former Minister of Aviation, Femi Fani-Kayode has debunked reports of his alleged defection from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the APC following a meeting with the Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello and Buni. Samson Adenekan, [Premium Times \(10th February\)](#) reports. This contradicts Yahaya earlier claim that Fani-Kayode ported back to the APC as he was a member of the APC before leaving to the PDP. Dennis Erezi [Guardian News \(10th February\)](#) writes.

In new reports, the Governor of Ebonyi State has reiterated that the APC will jointly take a decision on the idea of an "Igbo Presidency". The call for zoning has heighten over the weeks with individ-

ual urging political parties to zone the 2023 presidential ticket to the South-East. Umahi highlighted the impact of the APC in the South-East as there are growing interest from residents in the region to join the party. Adedayo Akinwale, [This Day News \(11th February\)](#) explains.

Insecurity: Stakeholders Express Concerns over Security Situation, Senate Charges Presidency to Review ECOWAS Free Movement protocol, 19 Northern Governors Back Call for Open Grazing Ban, FG Reacts to the Call for a Fresh #EndSARS Protest

Following the deteriorating security situation in the country, stakeholders have continued to express concerns over the situation. The National Assembly (NASS), asked President Muhammadu Buhari to direct the National Security Adviser (NSA), Babagana Monguno, the service chiefs, and the Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, to restructure the country's security architecture towards improving help in the fight against insecurity. They gave recommendations after resolutions on the next line of action in tackling the issue. Deji Elumoye and Adedayo Akinwale, [This Day News \(11th February\)](#) reports.

On the same note, the Speake of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabamila faulted the federal government for the its failure to address the security situation in the country. Gbajabamila alleged that the failure has generate a " culture of self-help in matters of internal security that portends grave danger for the nation's continued existence". He made the disclosure in the House while delivering his speech on the resumption of legislative duties. He stressed on the government's responsibility to protect. Gbajabamila emphasized on the impact and challenges encountered as well as the effect of the situation on citizens. He expressed commitment by the legislature to address the challenges bedeviling the nation. Adedayo Akinwale, [This Day News \(10th February\)](#) and Toye Akoye et al, [The Nation News \(11th February\)](#) explain.

Also, the Senate has charged the federal government "to review the ECOWAS protocol on the free movement of people and goods to check irregular immigration and smuggling of firearms into the country". This is coming amid the debate on the security situation in the country. The Senate also expressed concerns over the illegal possession of fire arms in the country. They called for

reinforced effort from the federal and state governments in the fight against insecurity. Abdul-lateef salau, [Daily Trust \(10th February\)](#) reports.

On another note, further concerns have been raised on the Farmers/Herders crisis. Following mounting criticisms on President Buhari's alleged silence on the issue, the special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, has reiterated President Buhari's stance on the issue. In an interview on Channels TV, Adesina said that President Buhari has declared that anyone who "carries arms unlawfully should be arrested and prosecuted". [Sahara Reporters, \(10th February\)](#) writes.

Meanwhile, governors of the 19 Northern states have joined the call for the ban on open grazing. This is coming against the escalating security situation in the country. the governors proposed the adaptation of a ranching model for Herders. This was contained in a communique signed by the chairman of the Northern Governors Forum (NGF), Simon Lalong. The governors warned of an adverse effect from the growing call for the ban of open grazing. They called for support from the federal government to states in order to address the issue. On the same note, the governor of Edo State, Godwin Obaseki criticized the alleged "attempts to politicize the security situation in the country". Obaseki also condemned reports of Herders carrying arms. He spoke of plans to create grazing areas for Herders and also expressed commitment towards addressing the ongoing security crisis in the state. The Ohaneze group who also joined the call, urged for caution in order "to stave off another civil war in the country as apt". Anayo Okoli et al, [Vanguard News \(10th February\)](#) reports.

In developing news, reports disclose plans by citizens to embark fresh #EndSARS protest in Lagos. Activists have renewed last year's call urging citizens to troop out on a street protest on Sunday

14 February. The citizens faulted the federal government over an alleged failure to address the 20 October killings at the Lekki Toll Gate. AFP, [Guardian News \(9th February\)](#) details.

Reacting, the Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed said there are "advanced reasons why the federal government would not fold its hands and allow the staging of another round of protests under the banner of the #ENDSARS movement". Speaking at a press conference, Mohammed made reference to the hijack of last year's protest by miscreants who wreaked havoc in the country. He acknowledged the rights of citizens to protest and also revealed that the federal government is "keenly watching the role being played by the various social media platforms in this renewed clamour for violence in the country". Sonni Daniel writes in [Vanguard News \(11th February\)](#).

Meanwhile, the Federal High Court in Abuja has ordered the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to unfreeze the accounts of 20 #EndSARS promoters. The 90-days freeze order placed on the accounts expired on 2 February and the accounts are yet to be unfrozen despite the withdrawal of the case in the court by the CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele. The judge presiding over the case issued an order to withdraw after legal teams of both the CBN and the 20 defendants decided to end the case. Ade Adesomoju, [Premium Times \(10th February\)](#) reports.

In new report, officials of the Lagos State Environmental Tasks Force accompanied by policemen and persons suspected to be thugs have burnt down a community whose residents witnessed the October 20 shooting at the Lekki Toll Gate. The witnesses had revealed the officers allegedly shot live ammunition directly at the protesters. This revelation contradicts the claim that blank rounds were shot in the air. The residents noted a 24-hour quick notice was issued to them. Nicholas Ibekwe, [Premium Times \(10th February\)](#) details.

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