

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: International Flights Set to Resume, FAAN Begins Probe of Alleged Cash Demands by Airport Officials

Following the meeting between President Muhammadu Buhari and the Covid-19 Presidential Task Force (PTF), the Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, has announced August 29 for the commencement of international flights. He stated this via a tweet that the international airports will reopen in batches beginning with Lagos State and the Federal Capital Territory. Nike Adebowale, [Premium Times \(17th August\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has announced that it will begin probe of alleged cash demands by airport personnel on returning evacuated passengers. The statement noted that "As the nation's airports begin to reopen gradually for flight operations, we advise passengers to desist from giving money and to report any official from any agency that requests money under any guise." Abiola Odotola writes in [Nairametrics \(16th August\)](#).

Furore over Nigeria-China Loan Heightens, Minister and Reps Disagree as Government Investigates Abuse of Nigerian Workers by Chinese Company

The growing controversy over the terms and conditions contained in loan agreements between Nigeria and China, especially on Nigeria's sovereignty, has raised attention abroad. The [Kenya Star \(17th August\)](#) reports that "federal lawmakers are demanding a probe into China's lending practices in Nigeria, in the wake of sovereign guarantee clauses in loan agreements that they consider an entrapment of Chinese neo-colonial plans".

Meanwhile, the disagreement between the House of Representatives' Committee on Treaties, Protocols and Agreements and the Minister of Transportation, heightened over figures in commercial contracts signed by the ministry. Speaking at a public hearing in Abuja, the Chairman of the Committee, Nicholas Ossai, said the ministry had signed commercial contracts worth \$33bn without clear cut financing arrangements, and that the probe is to get clarifications on all the agreements. Responding, the Minister of Transport, Rotimi Amaechi, denied having knowledge of any such loan, saying that the ministry had only signed a loan agreement of \$1.6bn

under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, which was being used in the construction of the Lagos-Ibadan rail project that has engaged more than 20,000 Nigerians and 560 Chinese workers. [Premium Times \(17th August\)](#) explains. Amid the loan controversy, the federal government has urged the National Assembly to approve a \$5.3bn Chinese loan request to enable it execute the Ibadan-Kano standard gauge rail line project, so that skeletal operations can commence by mid-September. Olawale Ajimotokan, [This Day News \(16th August\)](#) writes.

On another note, the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) has said that it is investigating allegations of unfair treatment of Nigerian employees at the Chinese owned Inner Steel Company Limited. The Director-General of the FCCPC, Babatunde Irukera, said that "on August 12, the commission became aware of credible reports of unfair treatment of Nigerian employees and that its operatives are investigating it". Francis Arinze Iloani and John Chuks Azu, [All Africa News \(18th August\)](#) report.

Lawmakers Bicker over 774,000 Public Works Programme Job Allocation, Unemployment Rate Rises

The Senate Minority Leader, Senator Enyinanya Abaribe, has reiterated the position of the National Assembly on the 774,000 public works programme of the federal government stating that they are yet to confirm transparency and accountability of the recruitment process, despite the allocation of 30 job slots per member. Deji Elumoye and Udora Orizu, [This Day News \(19th August\)](#) detail.

On another note, the House Minority Leader, Ndudi Elumelu has described the allocation of 30 slots per member as inadequate. According to Elumelu, the number does not recognize their role as true representatives of the people. Olamide Francis, [Daily Times \(18th August\)](#) details. Reacting to this, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Festus Keyamo said that the 30 slots given to each member of the National Assembly was just "a privilege and not a right". Johnbosco Agbarachukwu, [Vanguard News \(18th August\)](#) writes.

Meanwhile, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has revealed an increase of unemployment to 27.1%. This is coming against the backdrop of

the NBS' 2018 report which showed a 4% increase from the 23.1% unemployment rate recorded in the third quarter of 2018. Oladeinde Olawoyin of [Premium Times \(14th August\)](#) provides further information on the labor market statistics of the NBS.

APC DG and Former National Chairman Disagree over Alleged Plans to Foil Party Caretaker Committee's Effort, PDP and APC Bicker over Edo State Election Crisis

Following last week's allegation by the Director-General of the Progressive Governors Forum (PGF), Saliyu Lukman, over plans to frustrate the efforts of the Caretaker Committee and reinstate Adams Oshiomhole as National Chairman of the All Progressives (APC). Oshiomhole has faulted the criticism by Lukman describing his action as a political move by some members of the PGF against him. Terhemba Daka, [Guardian News \(18th August\)](#) explains. Reacting to this, Lukman debunked the allegation stating that the PGF holds Oshiomhole in a very high esteem. Omeiza Ajayi of [Vanguard News \(18th August\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the APC has raised allegations that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is planning to incite religious tension ahead of the Edo State election. The allegation was made by the APC Media Campaign Council Chairman, John Mayaki, who accused the PDP of being insensitive to the cultural and religious diversities in the state. Dapo Akinrefon, [Vanguard News \(18th August\)](#) details. In the same vein, the APC has further accused the PDP of planning to attack the convoy of the Edo State Deputy Governor, Philip Shaibu, as a decoy to blame the APC and gain sympathy from the people. Addressing journalists in Benin City, the state chairman of the party, David Imuse, claimed that armed thugs have been hired by the PDP to damage cars and other items for the media drama that will follow. Tony Osauzo, [Daily Sun \(18th August\)](#) explains. On another note, the APC has called for the investigation of Governor Godwin Obaseki over alleged plans to import arms and thugs, as well as massive shootings during his re-election campaigns. Bisi Olaniyi, [The Nation \(21st August\)](#) reports.

Following the report of a leaked video of Oshiomhole and the President's Chief of Staff, Ibrahim Gambari, allegedly discussing the arrest of unnamed persons, the spokesperson of the PDP, Kola Ologbondiyan, said that the video confirmed

the alleged plot by the APC to create political unrest during the election. [Sahara Reporters \(19th August\)](#) explains. Responding, the presidential spokesperson, Garba Shehu has debunked the allegation describing the video as "an ingenious patchwork of mischief, extracted from an innocent conversation focused on the emerging incidents of violence in the run-up to the election." Nasir Aytogo, [Premium Times \(19th August\)](#) reports. However, the Chairman of the PDP, Prince Uche Secondus has urged President Buhari to take swift action in addressing the video as the political situation in Edo State is deteriorating. Leon Usigbe, [Nigerian Tribune \(21st August\)](#) explains.

Insecurity: El-Rufai Condemns Media Reports of Kaduna Crisis, Hundreds Kidnapped by ISWAP in Borno

The Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai, has condemned media coverage of the Kaduna crisis stating that the situation in the state is no different than the crisis of other states in the north-western zone. Speaking at a meeting with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), El-Rufai said that the crisis was being misinterpreted and hyped in the media. Mohammed Lenre, [Premium Times \(17th August\)](#) explains. However, El-Rufai has announced the deployment of Nigerian Army special forces to combat the security challenges in the state with more focus on southern Kaduna. Dina Matengo, [CGTN News \(15th August\)](#) details.

Meanwhile, Jihadists terrorist linked to the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have taken hundreds of hostages in a town in the North-East zone. The attack was carried out as displaced persons returned to their homes following the directive of the Borno State authorities. [Guardian News \(19th August\)](#), details.

In a new development, the federal government has approved the sum of N13bn to start-off the community policing initiative to tackle insecurity in the country. Olalekan Adetayo, [Punch News \(21st August\)](#) details.

ECOWAS: Nigeria Threatens to Sue Ghana over the Closure of Nigerian Businesses, Malian President Resigns Following Military Coup

Nigeria has warned Ghana to stop the harassment of Nigerian citizens residing in the country.

Ghanaian authorities had closed Nigerian business for alleged violation of trade regulations. Adedayo Akinwale writes in [All Africa News \(18th August\)](#). The incident, which is said to be a breach of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol of free trade movements, has sparked outrage in the Nigerian media as Nigerians have embarked on protest in Abuja. John Alechenu [Punch News \(19th August\)](#), William Ukpe [Nairametrics \(19th August\)](#), and David-Chyddy Eleke, [This Day News \(19th August\)](#) report.

Meanwhile, the President of Mali, Ibrahim Bou-bacar Keïta, and Prime Minister Boubou Cissé have been arrested by soldiers in a coup in Bamako, Mali. [BBC News \(19th August\)](#). This is coming barely hours after the briefing from the former Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, to President Muhammadu Buhari on the political crisis in Mali. Olelekan Adetayo, [Punch News \(18th August\)](#), and [Vanguard News \(18th August\)](#) detail. Jonathan led the special envoy of the ECOWAS mediation team charged with the responsibility of resolving the lingering political crisis in Mali.

Jeune Afrique of [The African Report \(17th August\)](#) details. However, ECOWAS has suspended Mali and also directed member states to close its land and air borders to the country. Vincent Ikwuomola details in [The Nation News \(19th August\)](#). In a similar vein, the African Union (AU) has suspended Mali over the forceful overthrow of the government. [Deutsche Welle \(19th August\)](#) detail.

Meanwhile, the AU, United Nations (UN), European Union (EU) and others have condemned the overthrow of the Malian government. [Aljazeera News \(18th August\)](#) and [Reuters \(19th August\)](#) detail. Supporting the AU, UN and ECOWAS stand for the return of political order, President Buhari said that the forceful takeover could spiral a devastating consequence for the West-African sub region. Lawrence Olaloye [New Telegraph News \(21st August\)](#) reports. Malian soldiers under the National Committee for the Salvation of the People have said, however, that the coup is not about holding power but to organize elections. [Aljazeera News \(19th August\)](#) and [BBC News \(19th August\)](#) explain.

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