

# 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 the overall situation in Nigeria.

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### **Federal Government Approves 50% Increase in Cost of Telecoms Services, Dangote Refinery Seeks Court Order to Nullify Petroleum Import Licences of Oil Marketers, NNPC Announces Increase in Petrol Prices, Nigeria's Public Debt Increased by NGN 8.02 Trillion in 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2024**

Reuben Muoka, director of public affairs of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), disclosed that the federal government had approved a 50% increase in the cost of telecommunications services in Nigeria. The new tariff hike comes amid agitations by telecom operators for an upward review of the subsisting tariffs based on the negative impact the economy is having on their operations. The adjustment, capped at a maximum of 50% of current tariffs, was arrived at considering the ongoing industry reforms that will positively influence sustainability. These adjustments will support the ability of operators to continue investing in infrastructure and innovation, ultimately benefiting consumers through improved services and connectivity, including better network quality, enhanced customer service and greater coverage. [Organised labour](#) has come out to reject the approved increase, saying it is unjustifiable and an assault on the welfare of workers. Adeyemi Adepetun, [The Guardian News, \(January 20<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

In a suit filed in the federal high court Abuja by the Dangote refinery, the company seeks to halt the issuance of oil import licences to some oil marketers. The defendants in the suit are, amongst others, the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and A.A. Rano Limited. The Dangote refinery asked the court to nullify the import licences on the basis that they are in violation of the provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) which stipulates that licenses should only be issued when there is a shortfall in local supply. Additionally, the refinery sought NGN 100 billion in damages against the NMDPRA for allegedly continuing to issue import licenses to the NNPC and the other marketers. In response, three of the marketers argued that Dangote refinery does not produce enough to meet Nigeria's daily need and that giving Dangote exclusive control of the petroleum sector would eliminate competition and drive up prices. The matter was adjourned to 30<sup>th</sup> January for hearing. Deborah Musa, [Punch News \(January 20<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has announced a nationwide increase in petrol prices, with costs reaching NGN 990 per litre in Abuja and NGN 965 per litre in Lagos. The price increase follows multiple hikes from depot owners and the Dangote petroleum refinery which raised Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) prices from NGN 899 to NGN 955 per litre resulting in pump prices fluctuating between NGN 1,050 and NGN 1,150 per litre in some areas. Oil marketers warn of potential further increase due to rising global crude oil prices. In response, the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) has issued new licenses to MRO Energy Limited to establish a 10,000 barrels per day refinery in Imode, Delta state, and a similar license to Process Design and Development Limited for a 27,000 barrels per day refinery in Gombe state. Engr. Farouk Ahmed, the chief executive of NMDPRA emphasized that these licenses aim to bolster domestic refining capacity and reduce Nigeria's reliance on fuel imports to address the current challenges in the energy sector. Waliat Musa, [The Guardian News \(January 22<sup>nd</sup>\)](#) reports.

According to the Debt Management Office (DMO), Nigeria's public debt rose to NGN 142.3 trillion as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024, marking a NGN 8.02 trillion (5.97%) increase from NGN 134.3 trillion in June 2024. This rise is largely attributable to heightened domestic borrowing and the adverse impact of exchange rate depreciation on external debt. Although external debt in dollar terms slightly increased from USD 42.90 billion to USD 43.03 billion (0.29%), the naira equivalent surged by 9.22%, rising from NGN 63.07 trillion to NGN 68.89 trillion, reflecting a significant currency depreciation from NGN 1,470.19/USD in June to NGN 1,601.03/USD by September. Domestic debt also experienced notable changes, declining by 5.34% in dollar terms (from USD 48.45 billion to USD 45.87 billion), yet it rose by 3.10% in naira terms (from NGN 71.22 trillion to NGN 73.43 trillion). The federal government (FG) was mainly responsible for domestic debt accumulation which increased from NGN 66.96 trillion to NGN 69.22 trillion. Key drivers included FG bonds, while Nigeria's return to the international capital markets in December 2024 raised USD 2.2 billion through Eurobond auctions, highlighting ongoing fiscal challenges and the urgent need for reforms. Tobi Tunji, [Nairametrics News \(January 22<sup>nd</sup>\)](#) reports.

### **Lawyers Oppose Bill Proposing a 5-year Tenure for Judicial Heads, INEC Decries the High Cost of Conducting Bye-elections, 774 Local Government Councils Directed to Open Dedicated Accounts with CBN**

The House of Representatives has introduced a bill proposing a five-year non-renewable tenure for the office of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) and other judicial heads nationwide. Sponsored by Manu Soro of Bauchi state, the bill seeks to amend section 29 of the 1999 constitution (as amended), mandating that judicial officers either retire after five years or revert to previous roles if they haven't reached the retirement age of 70. Proponents argue that this initiative would enhance judicial efficiency and encourage motivation among officers, addressing concerns over prolonged tenures. However, this proposal has faced considerable backlash from legal experts who warn that fixed tenures might politicize appointments, diminish meritocracy, and create inefficiencies. Additionally, disparities between states in judge appointment ages could disrupt fairness in judicial career progression, igniting significant debate about the potential impact on Nigeria's judiciary. The national publicity secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Bridget Edokwe, labelled it unnecessary, advocating for the current retirement age system which, according to her, provides stability. Ikechukwu Sunday, [Daily Post News \(January 22<sup>nd</sup>\)](#) reports.

On Wednesday, during a consultative meeting with party leaders in Abuja, the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu, painted a grim picture of the mounting costs and unpredictability of bye-elections. "Over the last one and a half years, 23 constituencies have experienced vacancies due to death or resignation of members," Yakubu revealed. "These bye-elections are unbudgeted and difficult to plan for. Worse, some of them trigger a domino effect, where one bye-election leads to several more. This is not sustainable." He called for the adoption of global best practices where vacancies are filled without the need for frequent elections. His suggestion triggered mixed reactions from the various political parties. While the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) welcomed the suggestion made by Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) Femi Falana for such vacancies to be filled internally by the political parties, Labour Party (LP) and the New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP) rejected the suggestion, warning of the consequences of sidelining the voters in the process.

LP's publicity secretary Obiora Ifoh argued that "Democracy is about representation. The people must have a say in who stands for them". The All Progressives Congress (APC) called for caution and wider consultations before a decision is made. Mayowa Oladeji, [Ripples Nigeria News \(January 23<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) reports.

The Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) has initiated a pivotal move towards enhancing financial transparency and accountability at the grassroots level. Following a supreme court ruling affirming local governments' autonomy, all 774 councils will establish dedicated accounts with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for direct federal allocations. Bello Lawal Yandaki, ALGON's national president, underscored the significance of compliance, noting that local government councils must provide necessary details to the Federation Accounts and Allocations Committee (FAAC) for smooth payment processes. To ensure proper fund utilization, the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) will monitor the operations, supported by anti-corruption agents from the EFCC and ICPC who will address any financial mismanagement. This initiative aims to resolve the issue of state interference in local government finances and is expected to enhance service delivery and grassroots development. Nduka Chiejina and Augustine Okezie, [The Nation News \(January 20<sup>th</sup>\)](#) report.

### **Insecurity: 86 Persons Dead and Many Injured as Fuel Tanker Explodes in Niger State, Amotekun Corps Mobilise Over 2000 Personnel to Combat Insecurity in the Southwest, Over 100 Terrorism Financiers Convicted in 2 Years, Anambra State Governor Launches Security Outfit and Pledges NGN 5 Million Reward for Whistleblowers, Court Proscribes Lakurawa Sect and Declares them A Terrorist Organisation**

A fuel tanker explosion occurred in the early hours of Saturday in Niger state. This blast happened after individuals attempted to transfer gasoline from one tanker into another truck using a generator. The spokesperson for the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Niger state disclosed that so far 86 persons have been confirmed dead, with 52 persons severely injured. Furthermore, 15 shops were destroyed in the explosion. Kumar Tsukwam, a sector commander for Niger state with the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), said that people rushed to scoop up the spilled petrol after the truck overturned. "The

tanker burst into flames, engulfing another tanker," he said. [Aljazeera News \(January 19<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

The governors of the south-west region of Nigeria have mobilised over 2000 personnel to join the south-west security outfit Amotekun corps to flush out criminals within the region. The state commanders of the corps confirmed that plans are underway to recruit more men to strengthen the Southwest Security Network and enhance its operations against bandits, kidnapers and other criminals hibernating in south-west forests and reserves. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed in a survey last December that Nigerians paid a total of NGN 2.23 trillion as ransom between May 2023 and April 2024. The Ondo state Amotekun corps commander who also doubles as the chairman of the commanders in the south-west, Adetunji Adeleye, stated that "The Amotekun rangers are in the forest already to flush out the bandits who may want to use our forests as hideouts." The Corps Commander in Osun, Adkunle Omoyele, stated that the men "are interested in carrying sophisticated arms. The government should come up with a law that will grant us that opportunity". This desire was echoed by the commanders in other states as this will enable the men to better carry out their duties in combating crime in the region. Bola Bamigbola et al., [Punch News \(January 22<sup>nd</sup>\)](#) report.

Speaking at the opening of the 2025 National Anti-Money Laundering, Counter-Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation Summit in Abuja, president Bola Tinubu, represented by secretary to the government of the federation (SGF) George Akume, said that his administration had convicted over 100 financiers of terrorism in the last two years. While he did not disclose the names of any of the convicted financiers, he stated that the strategy was meant to prevent the terrorists from terrorising the citizens. According to him, "By taking away the funds, resources and material support behind Boko Haram and ISWAP, we are denying them the ability to inflict terror on our communities and citizens. We are creating an environment in which our rural areas will thrive once again." Solomon Odeniyi, [Punch News. \(January 22<sup>nd</sup>\)](#) reports.

In a decisive move to address escalating insecurity in Anambra state, governor Charles Soludo has launched "Agunchemba", a new security outfit, alongside a comprehensive framework to complement the efforts of the police and other existing security agencies in restoring peace. Launched on January 18th, the initiative was formalized through the Anambra state Homeland Security Law 2025, establishing a community-oriented vigilante group as a cornerstone of the state's security strategy. To further combat escalating criminal activities, the governor initiated "Operation Udo Ga-Achi," a collaborative security effort supported by 200 patrol vehicles for 2,000 personnel from the major Nigerian security agencies. Soludo incentivized citizens' involvement by offering up to NGN 5 million for whistleblowers who provide information that will aid the arrest of kidnapers or armed robbers in the state and NGN 10 million monthly rewards for communities achieving zero crime. He called upon residents to actively participate in safeguarding their environment, stressing that silence equates to complicity. With these measures, the governor aims to reclaim Anambra's status as one of Nigeria's safest states. Chinagorom Ugwo, [Premium Times News \(January 19<sup>th</sup>\)](#) reports.

The federal high court sitting in Abuja on Thursday made an order proscribing the Lakurawa sect and declaring them a terrorist organisation. This order was made following an ex parte application filed by the attorney-general of the federation (AGF) and minister of justice, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN). The application was made on the grounds that the group had been involved in acts of terrorism, including cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, hostage taking, attack on top government officials, attack on security personnel, propagation of their ideology to the local communities and encouraging the locals to disregard constituted authorities, among others. Granting the order, the presiding judge stated "that an order is hereby made proscribing the existence of the Lakurawa and other similar groups in any part of Nigeria, especially in the north-west and north-central regions of Nigeria either in groups or as individuals by whatsoever names they are called and publishing same in the official gazette and two national dailies." Deborah Musa, [Punch News. \(January 23<sup>rd</sup>\)](#) reports.



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