

Nigeria Press Review

19.02. – 26.02.2021

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: Survey Reveals 1 in 5 Persons Infected in Lagos, Enugu and Nasarawa as 55 Lineages of SARS-CoV-2 Discovered, Nigeria Expects Delivery of Vaccine Doses

As the Corona Virus pandemic continues to take its toll on the country, a survey jointly conducted by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), and the Nigeria Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), between September and October 2020, revealed 1 in 5 persons infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Lagos, Enugu and Nasarawa States. The report of the findings noted a higher infection rate than that of the National Surveillance System. Also, it showed that men have a higher percentage rate of infection than women. It is expected that the survey would be conducted in other states. Sola Ogundipe and Chioma Obinna, [Online Nigeria News \(23rd February\)](#) detail.

Explaining the SARS-CoV-2 variants following the discovery of 55 different lineages, the NCDC stated that the multiple entry of the strains in the country from different locations around the world contributes to the increased transmission in the different states within the country. Some of the strains were detected in Lagos, FCT, Osun, Oyo, Kwara and Edo states between November 2020 and January 2021. Patience Ivie Ihejirika, [All Africa News \(20th February\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the Presidential Task Force (PTF) has disclosed that global records indicate a decline in Covid-19 cases and deaths. The Minister of Health, Osagie Ehanire who made the disclosure added that there is an offer of 300 million doses of "Sputnik V vaccines to the AVATT portfolio would boost availability to 557 million". Ehanire reiterated that all vaccines will undergo testing by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC). [Vanguard News \(23rd February\)](#) details.

On vaccines, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency, (NPHCDA), Faisal Shuaib has disclosed that the first batch of AstraZeneca is set to arrive in the country. Faisal explained the process of the order. Williams Ukpe of [Nairametrics News \(23rd February\)](#) who reported this, also gave a run-down of expected vaccines set to arrive in the country. Also, the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, stated that COVAX vaccine supplies will soon be available in the country. Williams Ukpe, [Nairametrics News \(25th February\)](#) writes.

Senate Confirms Bawa and Ex-Service Chiefs Appointment, set to Pass the PIB in April, Approves Police Funding

The Senate has confirmed President Muhammadu Buhari's nomination of Abdulrasheed Bawa as the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), as well as the nominations of former Chief of Defence Staff, Gabriel Olonisakin; former Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Buratai, former Chief of Air Staff, Ibok Ibas; and former Chief of Naval Staff, Abubakar Sadique, as non-career ambassadors. This is against the backdrop of criticism that have trailed their appointments. The Senate noted that the confirmation was in accordance with the provisions of constitution and based on the experiences of the nominees. On the part of the ex-service chiefs, the Senate Minority Leader, Enyinnaya Abaribe, expressed concerns over the confirmation following previous resolutions raised in the Senate on the removal of the chiefs. Explaining, the Senate President, Ahmed Lawan, noted that the appointment was for a different position. The chiefs were cleared by the Department of State Services (DSS). Dennis Erezi, [Guardian News \(24th February\)](#) and QueenEsther Iroanusi, [Premium Times \(23rd February\)](#) write.

Speaking on the corruption allegation raised last week over the sale of oil trucks, Bawa stated that he was not involved in the sale as he had no jurisdiction in that area. He added that he had a good working relationship with the former acting Chairman of the EFCC, Ibrahim Magu. Bawa also disclosed plans hoping to achieve in office which includes collaboration with security agencies among others. QueenEsther Iroanusi, [Premium Times \(24th February\)](#) explains.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly has restated its commitment to ensure the swift passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) in April 2021. This came as the Joint Ad-hoc Committee of the National Assembly expressed worry over the state of the nation's refineries. During a visit at the Port Harcourt Refinery Company in Rivers State, the Chairman of the House of Representatives Ad-hoc Committee on PIB, Mohammed Mougunu, reiterated that the main aim of the bill is to reform the oil and gas sector. Davies Iheanachor, [All Africa News \(25th February\)](#) reports.

In new reports, the Senate has approved N1.3bn as "the budget for the Nigeria Police Trust Fund

(NPTF) for the 2020 fiscal year". This is coming after considerations on the report presented by Senate and House of Representatives Committee on Police Affairs. Queen Esther Iroanusi gives a breakdown of the approved budget in [Premium Times \(24th February\)](#).

Experts Express Concerns on the Rising Food Inflation, VP Argues for Sustainable Food System, FG Reduces Vehicles Duties to Control Inflation

As inflation continues to rise following the surge in the prices of food and food items, experts have offered their opinion on the way forward. David Whitehouse in the [African Report \(22nd February\)](#) suggested "cross-border" trade as a way to cushion the effect of food inflation in the country. Examining the inflation, Whitehouse noted that this is the highest record seen since 2008. He highlighted the effort by the federal government to mitigate the effect by reopening the border, but also referred to experts who predicted further rise in 2021. He also analysed the impact of the Farmers/Herders crisis on the rise. Whitehouse also noted a recommendation by an analyst who drew the federal government's attention on the impact of climate change on food production.

On the same note, more experts have raised alarm on the threat that trade restriction and climate change pose to the country's food supply. The experts cited food shortage, hunger, malnutrition as negative effect for food-import dependent countries. Further concerns pointed out by the Nigerian Metrological Agency (NiMet), indicates that crop failures, and climate change amid the security situation in the country are problem causing factors for the fall in food supply. Research conducted showed that trade restriction and stockpiling could create "global food price spikes and severe local shortages during times of threat". Using key export crops like Wheat, Rice and Maize, the research noted that food restrictions will increase the prices of these major crops and the shocks will be "devastating". Femi Ibirogba, [Guardian News \(23rd February\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo has stressed that "Nigeria has to act fast to develop a sustainable food system as it faces a population growth that is handsomely ahead of its economic growth figures". Disclosing this at the virtual United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS),

organised by the Nigerian government in collaboration with the United Nations, the dialogue was set to ascertain the challenges in the food system and proffer a long-term solution. Osinbajo stressed on the need to resolve this as the country's population continues to grow. Also speaking, the Minister for Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed, mentioned some of the policies in place set up by the government to tackle the situation and also eradicate malnutrition. There were also recommendations to expand the scope and scale of the strategies in place, implement mechanized farming to boost agricultural productivity among others. Abdulkareem Mojeed, [Premium Times \(24th February\)](#) reports.

In addition, Ahmed disclosed that the "federal government has taken immediate steps to address the issue of inflation in the economy through the reduction of import duties on commodities affecting food and transportation". Ahmed said that it was contained in the 2021 Finance Bill. She disclosed that the main area of concern is food and transportation. She spoke on the rising inflation and explained the need to reduce duties on vehicles. Deji Elumoye, [This Day News \(25th February\)](#) reports.

Tension as APC and PDP Make Party Moves ahead of the 2023 Elections, Reps Disclose that APC Membership Registration Delays Electoral Act Amendment

There is growing tension as the All Progressives Party (APC) is allegedly moving to field some prominent members of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Reports indicated that the National Chairman of the APC Caretaker Committee, Mai Mala Buni, and Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State are negotiating the terms to bring in Governor Bello Matawalle of Zamfara State, Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State and the Governor of Cross River State, Ben Ayade. In addition, further disclosure revealed that there were attempts to field the Governor of Enugu State, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, who allegedly turned down the offer. Reports claim that Governors Matawalle, Bala and Ayade have shown great interest. Former President Jonathan declined the offer alleging "great risk". Eniola Akinkuotu in [Punch News \(22nd February\)](#) cited that the attempts are geared towards gaining ground in the 2023 elections. According to her, APC is seeking to secure at least 3 South-South States.

Meanwhile, fresh insight into the meeting between Jonathan and the PDP's Reconciliation and Strategy Committee led by Bukola Saraki 2 weeks ago, reveals Jonathan complained that "the PDP left him in the dark, without any role assigned to him". According to Chuks Okocha, [This Day News \(22nd February\)](#), Jonathan said that the APC took advantage of the situation and persuaded him to join the party despite public claims by the APC, contradicting this. The report also disclosed that Jonathan pledged his unwavering support to the PDP and is optimistic for future roles.

On another note, the disagreement between the leadership of the PDP and its caucus in the House of Representatives has been resolved following the meeting between Prince Uche Secondus and the Minority House Leader Ndudi Elemelu. Secondus handed over the affairs of the party to Elemelu as his 1-year suspension was lifted. He charged Elemelu and other members of the House to project unity in dispersing their legislative duty in the House. Dirisu Yakubu, [Vanguard News \(24th February\)](#) writes.

Still on party politics, members of the House of Representatives have cited that the APC membership registration/revalidation exercise has been responsible for the delay in the Electoral Act amendment. The amendment which came up in 2020 was delayed because some House members under the APC were indisposed due to the membership exercise. The Chairman of the House Committee on Media and Public Affairs, Benjamin Kalu, while restating that the amendment is top priority in the National Assembly, said that the amendment will be done on or before June 2021. However, the APC has extended its membership exercise till 31 March. Disclosing this, the interim National Secretary, John Udoedehe noted that the extension will enable the APC to address the challenge of shortage of materials across the 36 states. Leke Baiyewu and Tunde Oyekola, [Punch News \(25th February\)](#), and Samson Adenekan, [Premium Times \(21st February\)](#) explain.

Insecurity: 1,525 Killed in 6 Weeks as Stakeholders Lament on the Security Situation, FG Works towards Revision of ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, FG, Lawan, Others Express Commitment in the War against Insecurity

As the insecurity in the country continues to worsen, Clifford Ndujihe of [Vanguard News \(22nd February\)](#) reports that about 1, 525 persons have been killed in the first 6 weeks of 2021. This was revealed following an investigation carried out by Vanguard and information obtained from the Nigeria Security Tracker, a project of the Council on Foreign Relations' Africa programme. According to the Ndujihe, the figure is six times higher than in December and equals 50% of all casualties recorded in 2019.

Stakeholders have berated the situation in the country. Kemi Adebayo in the [Guardian News \(24th February\)](#) quoted SB Morgan Intelligence which attributed the rising insecurity in the country to the proliferation of small arms and ammunition. She cited other factors that contributes to the situation to include human and drug trafficking among others. Discoveries revealed about 87.5% citizens in possession of weapons. Adebayo mentioned the process of weapon procurement, distribution points and transportation in Nigeria. She highlighted findings from other studies conducted on arms and gave a cost estimate for different ammunitions. In addition, she cited significant details from various studies conducted by experts on the country's challenges to include activities of insurgents which left many dead, economic effects, particularly the impact on the oil sector, electoral conflicts, unemployment among others, which adversely contributed to the escalating security situation in the country. Adebayo advised the federal government to "improve border security, economic empowerment, active intelligence gathering, better community policing, stronger ammunition control policy while peace makers for conflict resolution strategies are deployed", in order to address the situation.

On the same note, the Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike, has faulted illicit drugs for the deteriorating security situation in the country. This was contained in a statement signed by his Special Assistant, Media, Kelvin Eberi, after a visit from the Chairman and Chief Executive Office of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Mohammed Buba Marwa at the Government House, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Wike criticized the federal government for not addressing the root causing of insecurity rather focusing on the crimes. He stressed on the importance of tackling illicit drugs and disclosed plans to collaborate with the NDLEA. Mike Odiegwu, [the Nation News \(23rd February\)](#) reports.

On another note, governors of the country have berated the situation. The Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF) has stated that banditry was designed to destroy Nigeria. Stressing on the abducted children last week, the Chairman of the NGF, Kayode Fayemi, called for collaboration between the federal and state governments in handling the situation. This is coming as the Chairman of the Northern Governors Forum (NGF), Simon Lalong, drew attention to the proliferation of arms in the country. Wole Mosadomi and Mary Therese-Nanlong, [Vanguard News \(24th February\)](#) reports.

Still on insecurity, the federal government has said that it is working towards amending the ECOWAS protocol on free movement of humans and cattle within the region to address banditry. This was disclosed by the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed. Mohammed stated that most perpetrators of the crimes were not citizens but people coming from other countries due to the provisions of the ECOWAS protocol. He cited some factors that have contributed to these challenges and noted the federal government commitment towards reviewing the protocol. [Guardian News \(20th February\)](#) explains.

Also, Senate President Ahmed Lawan and the service chiefs have reassured citizens of their commitment in the fight against insecurity. Lawan

said that “a considerable level of success would be achieved in tackling security problems in the country within two months”. This is coming following a meeting between Lawan, President Buhari and other stakeholders. He spoke of efforts by the federal government and the National Assembly to enhance the Armed Forces as well as contributions from the National Executive Council (NEC) to support their efforts. He charged state and local governments as well as other stakeholders to reinforce their efforts towards their obligation to protect lives and properties.

Johnbosco Agbakwuru, [Vanguard News \(23rd February\)](#) and Henry Umoru, [Vanguard News \(23rd February\)](#) report.

In new reports, President Buhari has “ruled out the possibility of granting amnesty to bandits, kidnappers and insurgents in the country. This is due to mounting pressure from citizens calling for amnesty for bandits. Represented by the Chief of Staff, Ibrahim Gambari, at the joint security meeting of Northern State Governors’ Forum, Northern Traditional Rulers Council and delegation from the federal government in Kaduna State, President Buhari said that criminals should be treated as criminals. He cited the impact of insurgent activities on the state of the nation and added, that security agencies are working towards addressing the issue. Nasir Ayitogo, [Premium Times \(25th February\)](#) explains.

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