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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: PTF Condemns Fraudulent Dealings Across Vaccination Centers and Restates Position on Safety-Status of Vaccine, Nigeria Set to Launch Locally made Vaccines

The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Health, Abdullaziz Abdulahi, at the joint national briefing of the Presidential Task Force (PTF), on Covid-19, revealed reports of alleged fraudulent dealings across designated vaccination centers in the country. Abdulahi said, "everyone will be vaccinated free and everyone will eventually be vaccinated. There is no need to pay to be vaccinated." He conveyed the outcome of a meeting with the AstraZeneca Group as "reassuring the safety and efficacy of the vaccine against Covid-19". [Vanguard News \(March 22nd\)](#) reports.

On the same note, the Executive Director, National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), Faisal Shuaib, gave reports on the ongoing vaccination exercise across the country. Shuaib said, "at this stage, it is important to address Nigerians that so far 122,410 people have been vaccinated with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in Nigeria. No Nigerian so far has developed any known severe side effects following vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine." He restated the government's position to collaborate with the Pharmacovigilance team of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Moses Emorinken, [The Nation News \(March 23rd\)](#) reports.

In new reports, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and Chairman of the PTF on Covid-19, Boss Mustapha, hinted at the latest development of two locally manufactured Covid-19 vaccines by scientists. Mustapha said, the vaccines were currently undergoing clinical trials and certification. He described the latest development as a significant milestone to the fight against Covid-19 in Nigeria and serve as an inspiration to other scientists. Innocent Oweh, [Independent News \(March 23rd\)](#) writes.

NASS Set to Commence Constitutional Amendment, Summons CBN Governor and COAS over Transparency of \$1bn Arms Purchase

The House of Representatives, Ad-hoc Committee on Constitution Review, during its retreat on Monday 22 March, revealed its commitment to prioritize electoral, judicial and local government reforms, in the ongoing constitutional amendment

process. The Deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Ad-hoc Committee, Idris Wase revealed that state creation and women participation will be given special attention by the committee. Wase said, "this is about our nation-building. We have the opportunity to write names in gold. Whatever we are going to do here, we should be guided by the fact that Nigeria needs very critical reforms at this very particular moment and time." Jacob Segun Olatunji, [Tribune News \(March 22nd\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the House Ad-hoc Committee investigating the purchase of arms and ammunition for the military and paramilitary in Nigeria, directed the Central Bank Governor, Godwin Emefiele, and the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Ibrahim Attahiru, to appear before the House over queries of arms purchase. The chairman of the Committee, Olaide Akinremi (APC, Oyo), expressed the committee's displeasure over the failure of Emefiele and Attahiru to appear before it. Jacob Segun Olatunji, [Tribune News \(March 23rd\)](#) reports.

Bank of Industry to Launch \$1bn Economic Recovery Scheme for MSMEs, CBN Retains Lending Policy Benchmark, NNPC Restates Position to Rehabilitate Petroleum Refinery, President Buhari's Border Closure Policy in Hindsight

The Bank of Industry (BOI), concluded a \$1bn syndicate term loan to support Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSME) in the country. The Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment who acted as a supervisory body disclosed at the Quantum Mechanics Limited MSME Survival Fund Capacity Program in Abuja. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo, said "the loan is to further improve the capacity of the bank to effectively support MSME's – across key sectors of the Nigerian economy – with affordable loans of medium to long-term tenor, alongside moratorium benefits." Walter Ukaegbu, [Sun News \(March 23rd\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) Governor, Godwin Emefiele, has announced the CBN's position to retain the lending rate at 11.5 per cent. The announcement followed a divided vote by members of the monetary policy committee, who voted for an increased benchmark lending rate to check inflationary pressure across the country. Emefiele urged commercial banks to maintain easy access to loans in order to increase economic output. Ayodeji Adegboyega, [Premium Times News \(March 23rd\)](#) reports.

Following mixed reactions towards the Federal Government's plan to spend \$1.5bn on the rehabilitation of the Port-Harcourt Refinery, the Minister of state for Petroleum, Timipre Sylva, revealed that the government is moving forward with plans to fix the refineries. According to the minister, "the rehabilitation of the Port Harcourt refinery will not significantly add to the nation's debt burden." Sylva further noted that subsidiaries of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), will contribute financially to rehabilitate the refinery, placing completion time at 18 months. [Sahara News \(March 22nd\)](#) reports.

In developing news, Sampson Kwarkye and Michael Matongbada in the [Daily Maverick News \(March 22nd\)](#), give a recap on the impact of President Muhammadu Buhari's Land Boarder Closure and the fight against smuggling in the country. Nigeria, alongside the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), brought together finance and trade ministers and it didn't resolve the situation. President Buhari decried an increase in smuggling since the partial reopening of the boarder and the country's industrial production of rice and maize is weak. However, the Benin-Nigeria border's porosity have allegedly forced citizens to source products from Benin Republic, where they cost less and custom clearance processes are easier.

PDP Withdraws 2023 Presidency Zoning Arrangement, Spotlight on President Buhari's Legacy

Ahead of the 2023 Presidential elections, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have set up an election review committee to recommend solutions to return the party to power. Governor Bala Mohammed, the chairman of the committee, conveyed the committee's resolution, that the presidential ticket should be void of a zoning arrangement. Mohammed said, "they are arguing that a rotational presidency is a way to go based on the arrangement of the party's constitution. Fair enough, yes, but current circumstances will not make that possible." [Sahara News \(March 22nd\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, Ruth Oluroubi, writes in [The Africa Report \(March 23rd\)](#), evaluating President Muhammadu Buhari's presidency. Oluroubi describes the incumbent's government as one with "missed opportunities and inaction, with a promise to return

peace and security and fight corruption across the country." Oluroubi added that, six years since president Buhari promised 'change', the country has attracted domestic and international audience, seeking progressive transformation to propel the country forward.

Chief of Defence Staff Restates Military's Offence against Bandits, Minister of Defence Blames Bandits, Kidnappers, for Nigeria's Critical Security Situation, NDLEA Partners Immigration Service on Drug Trafficking

The Chief of Defence Staff, Lucky Irabor, at the National Defence and Security Summit in Abuja, has revealed that the military will target illegal occupants of communities, forests and countryside. Irabor said, "our strategic objectives are manifold and imbued to neutralise non-state-actors and other agents of violence in our communities, forests and countryside to stabilise the security situation across the nation." He stressed that the Armed Forces of Nigeria would return peace to different parts of the country. [Sahara Reports \(March 23rd\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Defence, Salihi Magash, gave hints that the resurgent terrorist attacks, banditry and kidnappings across the country have put the country in a critical situation. According to the minister, political instability, economic underdevelopment and social inequalities are not unrelated to insecurity in the country. Magash said, "in light of these realities, the Federal Government of Nigeria has used a multilateral approach with our contiguous neighbors over the years, as well as multi-dimensional domestic efforts." Ada Ada, [Daily News \(March 22nd\)](#) writes.

In new reports, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), has expressed its readiness to partner with the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), to track drug lords and traffickers from the country to anywhere in the world. This is coming after the NIS launched a Data Command and Control Center earlier this month. The chairman of the NDLEA, Mohammed Buba Marwa, said: "No doubt, the NIS database will be of immense use to us in NDLEA in our efforts to track drug barons and traffickers wherever they may be hiding across the world and we'll take advantage of the new technology deployed by the NIS." Odita Sunday, [The Guardian \(March 23rd\)](#) reports.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Dr. Vladimir Kreck, Resident Representative
Vera Ali, Administrative Assistant and Adams Adamu, intern / Editors Press Review

Nigeria Office

www.kas.de/nigeria

www.facebook.com/kas.nigeria

vladimir.kreck@kas.de / vera.ali@kas.de



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