

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: COVAX AstraZeneca Vaccines Arrive Nigeria, FG Implements Vaccination Process

Nigeria has received its first doses of AstraZeneca vaccine. The about 4 million doses of vaccine arrived the country through the COVAX facility. This was disclosed by the Presidential Aide, Bashir Ahmad, and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon. Kallon while stressing on the importance of “equal distribution” restated the UN’s support towards curtailing the spread. The National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) would commence vaccination. Sodiq Oyeleke, [Punch News \(2nd March\)](#) reports.

In preparing for the commencement of vaccination, the federal government has developed a strategy that would guide the process. According to the Minister of Health, Ehanire Osagie, the strategy known as T.E.A.C.H would ensure “the effective roll-out of vaccines”. Ehanire explained the proposed traditional method of vaccination using desk review of available data sources, identifying the vaccination sites and rolling out vaccines within the next two years to ensure an equitable distribution of the vaccines. Nike Adebawale, [Premium Times \(March 2nd\)](#) writes.

On the same note, the Executive Director of NPHCDA, Faisal Shuaib, has said that registration for vaccine has commenced online. He mentioned there is an e-portal and also house-to-house electronic registration for the vaccines. Shuaib also stated the vaccine will roll-out in 4 phases with phases 1 for front liners like health workers, and phase 4 for other eligible citizens. [Reuters \(March 1st\)](#) explains. Chike Olisah in [Nai-rametrics News \(2nd March\)](#) gives details of the 4 phases.

The vastly anticipated Covid-19 vaccination is set to launch on March 5th. Shuaib made the announcement at a presidential briefing in the State House in Abuja. Revealing that the vaccination exercise would begin at the National Hospital, Abuja. Shuaib reiterated the process for vaccination and added that about 50% of the population have indicated interest for the vaccines. President Muhammadu Buhari and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo will receive the vaccines publicly. Timothy Choji, [VON News \(March 4th\)](#) and [National Accord News \(March 4th\)](#) report.

Tension Grips as Fuel and Food Scarcity Looms, NNPC Debunks Plans to Increase Fuel Price, CSOs Criticise NLC and TUC ‘s Position, CBN and New Finance Law Supports the Aviation Industry

Disquiet shook the cities of Abuja, Lagos and many other cities across the country over the anxiety of scarcity of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) also known as petrol due to wide speculations of an imminent hike in pump price. This is coming on the background “of an earlier move by petrol marketers to disrupt loading of petroleum products at private depots in Lagos and other parts of the country, in protest against a new payment method”. Reports indicate “panic buying” in several locations across the country causing gridlock with many stranded. Investigations conducted reveal major petrol stations across the country selling at a pump price of N162 – N185 per litre. Oladeinde Olawoyin et al, [Premium Times \(1st March\)](#) and Olakunle Maruf, [Tribune News \(28th February\)](#) report.

Responding to the development, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation has said there will be no increase in the ex-depot price of fuel in March. as there is enough supply to last for 40 days. This was contained in a statement by the NNPC Group General Manager, Group Public Affairs Division, Kennie Obateru. Criticizing reports of fuel hoarding in filling stations by marketers and some shutting down operations, NNPC moved for the monitoring of marketers’ activity as the hoarding could create “artificial scarcity and unnecessary hardship”. Oladeinde Olawoyin and Abdulkareem Mojeed [Premium Times News \(March 1st\)](#) report.

Reacting, marketers have described the scarcity as an alleged attempt by the federal authorities to hike the price of petrol. Explaining, the marketers attributed the scarcity to the rise in global price and foreign exchange. According to the National Public Relations Officer of IPMAN, Ukadike Chinedu, the federal authorities can allegedly act on the impact of the scarcity to hike petrol price. Reports also indicate a hike in transport fare due to the situation. Okechukwu Nnodim et al, [Punch News \(2nd March\)](#) detail.

On the same note, a coalition of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have raised concerns over the deregulation of the petroleum industry and possible return of scarcity of PMS. The conveyer of

the CSO's, Timothy Adedamola, opposed the position of the Nigerian Labour Union (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) on the reverse of deregulation of the downstream sector describing their position as driving "Nigeria's economy into debt". Kingsley Jeremiah, [the Guardian News \(February 28th\)](#) reports.

On food scarcity, the Amalgamated Union of Foodstuff and Cattle Dealers of Nigeria (AUFCDN), has embarked on a strike action cutting off food supply to the Southern region. This is coming in the wake of the 7 days' ultimatum issued to the federal government to address several concerns raised by the union which include the loss of lives during the #EndSARS protest among others. Reports indicate that the strike has driven a rise in food prices in the South. However, the State Chairman of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Abdulmumin Ibrahim, has said that its members are not part of the strike. [Sahara Reporters \(March 1st\)](#) writes.

Experts have expressed concerns over the implication of food scarcity in the future. They drew the attention of the authorities on the importance of improving the agricultural sector. The experts stressed on the need for collaboration between the government and private sector in order to improve food production and export. In addition, they emphasized on the need to utilize the available resources like land, manpower and also establish policies that can address the challenge. The experts criticized the government and describe the shortage as a wakeup call for the southerners to improve their agricultural sector. Femi Ibirogbu et al, [Guardian News \(March 4th\)](#) detail. Meanwhile, northern traders have agreed to resume the transportation of food to the south. Oge Udegbonam, [Premium Times \(March 3rd\)](#) explains.

In new reports, the General Manager, Corporate Communication, Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Sam Adurogboye, has confirmed that 25 investors are at the complete stage of acquiring Air Operation Certificates (AOC). Ifeoma Okeke of [Business Day News \(March 3rd\)](#), emphasized on the challenges thrown up by the Covid-19 pandemic for the aviation sector. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) is supporting the sector with foreign exchange for aircraft purposes and the new Financial Act signed into law is now encouraging investors with a zero per cent duty on aircraft and their spare parts.

NASS Restates Commitment towards Electoral Act, PIB, Protest at NASS Complex over Report on Hate Speech and Social Media Bill

Senate President Ahmed Lawan has disclosed that the proposed amendment of the Electoral Act in the first quarter of 2021 may not be attainable. Lawan made the disclosure during an engagement of the Joint Committee on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and Electoral Matters where the Chairman of INEC, Mahmood Yakubu, who cited challenges facing INEC and proposed measures to address them. This contradicts an earlier statement by the Chairman of the Senate Committee on INEC, Kabiru Gaya, who said that the amendment will be implemented before March 2021. Gaya, however, noted that the amendment would be done before June or July 2021. Bode Gbadebo and Emameh Gabriele, [Leadership News \(March 3rd\)](#) report. Yakubu also appealed to NASS on converting existing voting points to polling units. He stressed on the inadequacy of polling units to hold voting activities in the country. However, the President of the Senate, Ahmed Lawan, pledged support towards creating more polling units. [Pulse News \(March 2nd\)](#) details.

Meanwhile, a group of persons were barred from surrounding the NASS complex over a planned protest against the Senate Committee reviewing the social media and hate speech bill, demanding that the reports of the proceedings be made public. Matthew Ogune, [the Guardian News \(March 3rd\)](#), reports that the protesters are urging the chairman of the committee, Opeyemi Bamidele, to make public the panel's report in the past one-year.

The National Assembly (NASS), has restated its commitment towards the speedy passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB). The Chairman of the Joint Committee on PIB, Sabo Nakudu, made this known in an interview with the Guardian News after a town hall meeting in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. He stressed on the importance of the PIB which is critical to all stakeholders and the impact it would have on the oil sector and host communities. Nakudu projected two months for the completion of its passage. Ayoyinka Jegede. [The Guardian News \(March 4th\)](#) reports.

The ongoing PIB has attracted comments from the Delta State Governor, Duoyo Diri. Contained in a signed statement through his Chief Press Secretary, Daniel Alabrah, during a town hall

meeting with NASS members from Yenogoa, Diri faulted the proposed 2.5% revenue derived from oil for host communities raising further concerns on the PIB. He moved for 10% revenue for host communities. [Premium Times News \(March 2nd\)](#) reports.

PDP Faults President Buhari for allegedly Violating Democratic Values, Secondus Faces Corruption Allegations, Brewing Ambitions for 2023 Presidency

A member of the House of Representatives and leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) caucus in the House, Kingsley Chinda, has criticized President Buhari over the arrest of Tanko Salihi Yakassai, a former aide to the Kano State Governor, Umar Ganduje, for calling on the resignation of President Buhari over the security situation in the country. In a signed statement, Chinda criticised the arrest of Yakassai by men of the Department of State Services (DSS) stating that it is "unconstitutional" and violates his basic right to freedom of expression. Levnus Nwabughio, [Vanguard News \(March 1st\)](#) explains.

Ganduje faulted Yakassai's statement and terminated his appointment on grounds that Yakassai "failed to differentiate between personal opinion and official stand on matters of public concern". Defending his arrest, DSS said that the "issue is beyond the expression of opinion in the social media". However, Yakassai has been released by the DSS. Kabir Yusuf, [Premium Times-News \(February 26th\)](#), [Premium Times News \(February 27th\)](#) and [the Cable News \(March 1st\)](#) detail.

Meanwhile, an alleged financial misappropriations charge rocked the PDP in a leaked memo by the party's audit department. The party's National Auditor, Adamu Mustapha, has said that there are restrictions on access to the party's financial transaction since 2017. Reports indicate a faction of the National Working Committee (NWC) raised concerns over the leadership of the PDP's Chairman, Uche Secondus. Secondus was questioned on several allegations. Some members have described the allegations as an attempt to "remove Secondus from office". Others express that he should maintain office until his tenure expires. Dare Odufowokan, and Gbade Ogunwale, [The Nation-News \(February 28th\)](#) detail.

In developing news, there are new reports of brewing ambitions for the 2023 presidency. According to [Sahara Reporters \(March 1st\)](#), the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, has allegedly "begun moves to take a shot at the 2023 presidency". Concern was raised over Malami's influence in the appointment of Abulrasheed Bawa as the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). A close source further alleged that Malami "was desperate to take over the anti-graft agency so that he could make more money and determine candidates for the 2023 elections". [Sahara Reporters \(March 1st\)](#) further speculates a presidential ambition by the past Chairman of INEC, Attahiru Jega. The report alleged that Jega is planning to join the PDP to contest for the 2023 presidential election. Jega had earlier criticized the government over the state of affairs in the country.

In new reports, ahead of the APC National Convention, an APC chairmanship aspirant, Malik Illiasu Abdul, has stated that political positions in the party would be zoned based on unwritten agreement. He mentioned an alleged rule of 8 years for the North and 8 years for the South. Abdul applauded the social intervention programs of the Buhari-led administration and urged youths of the party to align with the progress of the party. Adedayo Akinwale, [This Day News \(March 2nd\)](#) writes.

Insecurity: Fresh Attack in Zamfara as Bandits Kidnap 317, President Buhari Decries Blackmail on his Government

President Buhari has reacted to the latest mass kidnap of school children in the country. He held that "no criminal group can be too strong to be defeated by the government, the only thing standing between our security forces and the bandits are the rules of engagement". He described the activities of the bandits as a ploy to blackmail the government. Nasir Ayitogo [Premium Times News \(February 27th\)](#) reports. Also, a communique issued by the North Eastern Governor's forum (NEGF), revealed the position of six governors, to set up a Joint Task Force to ensure the protection of schools in the region. [Sahara News \(March 5th\)](#) writes.

Still on kidnappings, John Campbell in the [Council on Foreign Relation \(March 3rd\)](#) takes readers back through the flux of uncertainties that shook

Nigeria's security architecture since 2014. What started with the ill-famed armed Islamist gang, Boko Haram, who took credit for the kidnap of 276 schoolgirls at Chibok, leading to an international #BringBackOurGirls campaign, is now described as a game of hide and seek with the federal and state governments denying bargains that has led to payment of ransom to bandits and kidnapers. While more than 100 Chibok girls quietly stomach captivity, it is almost clear that international attention can "cut two ways", either forcing the hand of the authorities to act swiftly or causing more harm on the abductees.

Meanwhile, President Buhari has declared Zamfara State, a no-fly zone and also placed a ban on all mining activities in the state. This was revealed to State House correspondents by the National Security Adviser (NSA), Babagana Monguno, following a five-hour security meeting at the presidential villa, Abuja. Monguno noted that it is

geared towards curtailing insecurity in the state. Terhemba Daka [The Guardian News \(March 2nd\)](#) reports.

On another note, the Nigerian Army (NA), authorities have frozen the bank accounts of 12 officers and 89 soldiers after they absconded from duty during an exchange with insurgents who attacked Marte and Dikwa Local Government Areas of Borno State. The affected parties have also been declared wanted. However, troops have recovered Marte and other communities. Nasir Aytogo in [Premium Times News \(March 4th\)](#) named the officers. Prior, the Chairman, Senate Committee on Army, Mohammed Ali Ndume, has called on the federal government to increase military spending. In an interview with Channels TV, he said that "we have the forces on the ground, but they need what it takes especially more equipment" William Ukpe [Nairametrics News \(March 1st\)](#) writes.

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