

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: FG Lifts Covid-19 Restrictions

Secretary to the Government of the Federation and Chairman of the Presidential Steering Committee (PSC) on Covid-19, Boss Mustapha, has disclosed President Muhamadu Buhari's approval to immediately relax the safety measures and travel advisory following the recommendations of the PSC. The decision was based on clinical and laboratory evidence of a sustained reduction in Covid-19 infection and transmission across the country. Omeiza Ajayi, [The Punch News \(December 12th\)](#) reports.

Nigeria Immigration Service Sets up Passport Desk at Airports, INEC Accuses Politicians of Buying Permanent Voters Cards from Citizens, Nigeria's Import from Russia Crashes by 92%, Atiku, Tinubu and Peter Obi Unveil Economic and Security Plan, World Bank Says Minimum Wage Eroded by Inflation

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) has directed an immediate opening of passport desks in international airports in the country. The directive was towards attending to Nigerians in the diaspora who plan to return home during the holidays. In a statement on Monday, NIS public relations officer Tony Akuneme said the new policy is to ensure a seamless passport process for all Nigerians coming home and desiring to process their passports. The development is coming a few weeks after the NIS directed selected passport offices across the country to work on Saturdays until January 2023 to clear the backlog of applications. Busola Aro, [The Cable News \(December 13th\)](#) reports.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) accused some politicians of buying up Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and financially inducing voters to harvest their Voter Identification Numbers. The commission also said two persons had been convicted for illegally possessing PVCs in Sokoto and Kano states. The Acting Chairman of INEC and National Commissioner overseeing the FCT, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Plateau states, Mohammed Haruna, raised the alarm in Abuja, on Monday, during the launch of the #YourVoteMatters project by election observer group NES-SACTION. It aims to assist INEC in increasing the number of PVCs collected ahead of the 2023 general elections and the number of voters mobilized on election day. Friday Olorok, [The Punch News \(December 12th\)](#) reports.

Nigeria's import from Russia has decreased significantly, hitting a record low this year, as the war in Ukraine persists. The foreign trade report of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) for the third quarter of 2022 released last week showed that less goods were imported from Russia in the quarter than in the second quarter. Additionally, while Nigeria has been importing from Russia, import from Ukraine seems to be significantly affected as the NBS report has no record of any sense from Ukraine. Sam Tunji, [The Punch News \(December 14th\)](#) reports.

Presidential candidates of the three main parties – All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar; and Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi – have unveiled more packages intended to ease the economic, social and security challenges in Nigeria. Speaking at the official flag-off of the presidential campaign for the North West region at the Ahmadu Bello Stadium in Kaduna, Tinubu assured the Nigerians that he would eliminate kidnappers, killers and all troublemakers when he becomes president of the country in 2023. The PDP presidential candidate for the 2023 election, Atiku Abubakar, vowed to address the infrastructure deficit if elected president, saying despite the strategic position of Plateau State in the country, roads linking it with other parts of the country have become death traps and unmotorable. Also, the Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate, Peter Obi, said his party is out to save Nigeria from collapsing. Obi spoke at a rally held at the Confluence Stadium, Lokoja, Kogi State, which witnessed an unprecedented crowd of supporters. [The Leadership News \(December 14th\)](#) reports.

According to the World Bank, Nigeria's inflation growth has deteriorated the NGN 30,000 minimum wage by 55% and widened the poverty net with an estimated five million people in 2022. The multilateral lender said this on Thursday in Abuja at the launch of the Nigeria Development Update for December 2022 and the Country Economic Memorandum. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's inflation quickened for the 10th straight month to a 17-year high of 21.47%. The cumulative inflation between 2019 and 2022 was 55%, households' purchasing power has regressed and the absolute minimum wage in 2022 after discounting for inflation was at NGN 19,355 – in dollar value USD 26 after discounting for both inflation and exchange rate depreciation, Alex Sienaert, Chief Economist at World Bank, Nigeria

said. Zainab Ahmed, Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, said Nigeria needs help because the national and subnational governments cannot provide all the financing required to meet the country's investment to drive development and growth. The minister, who was represented by Ben Akabueze, Director-General of the Budget Office of the Federation, said Nigeria's growth prospects have improved. Still, pre-crisis challenges threaten the post-crisis recovery, resulting in a continuous decline in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, which necessitates drastic reforms. Gbemi Faminu, [Business Day News \(December 16th\)](#) reports.

Senate Asks the Central Bank to Reconsider Cash Withdrawal Policy, House of Representatives Appeal to Foreign Airlines on 200 Per Cent Fare Increase, Oil Markets Asks FG to Prepare Nigerians for Deregulation, Cargo Ships Bound to Nigeria to Pay USD 100 million War Risk Insurance

The Senate has asked the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to considerably adjust the withdrawal limits in response to public outcry on the new policy limiting cash withdrawals as of January 2023. The lawmakers also mandated its Committee on Banking and Finance to undertake aggressive oversight of the apex bank on its commitment to flexible adjustment of the withdrawal limit. The Senate spokesperson, Ajibola Basiru, said feedback from his constituents shows that the threshold set by the apex bank is unrealistic, especially regarding inflation and the cost of living in the country. However, senator Adamu Bulkachuwa opposed the policy, saying it would not enhance security as advocated by colleagues. Furthermore, he said the policy would not be suitable for the country if allowed to go on because rural workers need a lot of money and some people are paid with cash daily. The Deputy Senate President, Ovie Omo-Agege, however, reminded his colleagues that the CBN has every right to implement such policies according to its laws. Queen Esther Iroanus, [The Premium Times News \(December 14th\)](#) reports.

The House of Representatives has appealed to foreign airlines to reopen cheaper layers of fares for the Nigerian market. The implication is that a six-hour economy class ticket that erstwhile sold for an average of NGN 600.000 now sells at between NGN 2 million and NGN 3 million. The business class variants sell for between NGN 3.5 million and NGN 5 million, depending on the destination and

airline of choice. This week, International Air Transport Association (IATA), the clearinghouse for over 290 global airlines, listed Nigeria in the top five markets with foreign airlines' blocked funds (excluding Venezuela). Nigeria is estimated to hold the lion's share of USD 551 million; Pakistan, USD 225 million; Bangladesh, USD 208 million; Lebanon, USD 144 million and Algeria, USD 140 million. IATA's Director General, Willie Walsh, insisted that governments must remove all barriers to airlines repatriating their revenues from ticket sales and other activities in line with international agreements and treaty obligations. Wole Oyeade, [The Guardian \(December 12th\)](#) reports.

Stakeholders in the nation's downstream sector have urged the government to negotiate with Nigerians on deregulation to reduce the inefficient oil subsidy, address the local energy crisis and mitigate further shocks that the global economy may bring next year. According to the Major Oil Market-ers Association of Nigeria (MOMAN), Nigerian institutions have a diminished capacity to deal with the current local energy crisis adding that disruption in any part of the supply chain causes ripple effects and results in queues at stations. Vice President of Crude and African Markets, Argus Media, James Gooder, explained that lower oil prices have made deregulation easier to approach. However, freight and other issues remain significant, as prices are not static. He reiterated MOMAN's position on the need to prepare the consuming public for the effect of deregulation, adding that the volatility in the oil market cannot be predicted, even though prices are low now. Femi Adekoya, [The Guardian News \(December 13th\)](#) reports.

Despite Nigeria being delisted from the piracy red list, cargoes destined for the country will continue to pay USD 100 million on war and ransom risk insurance. The war-risk phenomenon was applied to countries with an established high rate of piracy, such as Somalia. However, due to the involvement of Niger Delta bandits in militant activities and the general state of insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria was included in the list of war-risk countries. According to Oceans Beyond Piracy's 2020 report, the total cost of additional war risk area premiums incurred by Nigeria-bound ships transiting the Gulf of Guinea was USD 55.5 million in 2020, while 35% of vessels transiting the area also carried other kidnap and ransom insurance totaling USD 100.7 million. Director General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Bashir Jamoh, has said the International Maritime Organization hinged the removal on the

sustained reduction or total eradication of attacks on ships coming to Nigeria. Adaku Onyenucheya, [The Guardian News \(December 14th\)](#) reports.

Insecurity: Policeman, Three Gunmen Killed in Attack on INEC Office, Security Chiefs Meet Over Election Insecurity, INEC Increases Police, DSS, Army Presence at State Offices

A police officer was, on Monday, killed when shooters attacked another office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Owerri, Imo State. This incident is coming just one week after shooters shot another INEC office in the Oru West Local Government Area of the same state, making it the eighth attack on the commission's facilities within the last four months across the country. The shooters were said to have thrown an Improvised Explosive Device into the INEC facility, which destroyed several offices and vehicles parked on the premises. However, police operatives stationed at the commission's office were said to have engaged the hoodlums in a shoot-out, which resulted in the death of the police officer. Chinagorom Ugwu, [The Premium Times News \(December 12th\)](#) report.

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Usman Baba, on Tuesday met with heads of operations of security agencies in Abuja to deliberate on election security ahead of the 2023 general poll. The meeting was in furtherance of the IGP's critical plans to ensure free, fair and credible elections in the country. It said the strategic engagement with

all heads of operations of national security agencies in the country was held at the instance of the IG at the Force Headquarters, Abuja, to deepen further inter-agency collaborative initiatives towards guaranteeing secure polls. Meanwhile, the Federal Capital Territory Police Command, in a statement, assured residents of their safety before, during and after the festive period, stating that the proactive deployment, which consisted of all intelligence and tactical assets at the command's disposal in addition to inter-agency collaboration, was occasioned by the need to ensure that crime and criminality won't increase. Kingsley Nwezeh, [This Day Live News \(December 14th\)](#) reports.

Following his directive for an increased presence of security personnel at offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) across states, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Usman Baba, ordered the police commissioners to ensure adequate deployment of personnel, assets, and supervisory officers from other security agencies scheduled for election duties. As a result, in a joint operation, operatives of the police, army, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence (NSCDC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and other security agencies remain visible in INEC offices both at state and local government levels. However, at some local government offices of INEC, less than two policemen were sighted. In contrast, at the state offices, men of the police, NSCDC and the Department for State Services were seen on standby day and night. Attahiru Ahmed, [The Tribune News \(December 15th\)](#) reports.

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