

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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Health: Marburg Virus Scares Emerge

Following the first-ever outbreak of Marburg virus disease in Equatorial Guinea, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has declared that Nigeria is at moderate risk of importing the virus into the country. According to the NCDC, the extent of the outbreak in Equatorial Guinea has yet to be ascertained. However, the likelihood of spread in Nigeria following importation is high due to the travel associated with the upcoming national elections. It also said the possibility of importation to Nigeria is high due to a direct flight connection between Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea and the proximity of both countries. On February 13, 2023, Equatorial Guinea confirmed its first-ever outbreak of the Marburg virus disease. The viral infection has also killed nine persons in the country. According to the World Health Organisation, preliminary tests after these deaths were positive for the viral haemorrhagic fever. Lara Adejoro, [The Punch News \(February 24th\)](#) reports.

Nigeria Joins 140 Countries Demanding Withdrawal of Russian Troops, Finnish Authorities Arrest Biafra Agitator, Civil Society Organizations Call for Accountability in Defence Sector, Commonwealth Observers Urge INEC to Conduct Credible Elections, INEC, Security Agencies Declare Readiness for General Elections, IMF Says Nigeria's Index Bias, One Hundred and Forty Six Thousand Observers Will Monitor General Elections

One year after the Russian aggression against Ukraine started, Nigeria and 140 other countries asked Russia to immediately withdraw its troops from Ukraine. The News Agency of Nigeria reports that at the Thursday United Nations (UN) general assembly session, Ukraine got strong backing in a non-binding vote that saw 141 of the 193-member states in support. Seven members opposed, and 32, including China and India, were absent. António Guterres, UN secretary-general, said the one-year mark stands as a "grim milestone", adding that the impact is felt far beyond Ukraine. Guterres said the call for peace was without an alternative, adding that preserving the UN charter must be the common interest of all member states. The UN called for a cessation of hostilities and demanded "that the Russian Federation immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of

Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders". Claire Mom, [The Cable News \(February 24th\)](#) reports.

Former Radio Biafra anchorman and fraction leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Simon Ekpa has been arrested in Finland. Ekpa was taken into custody on Thursday, 48 hours before Nigeria's general elections. Criminal Investigator Tommi Reen from the Central Criminal Police told the news that the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in Finland had a police operation in a private apartment in the centre of Lahti. Reen said the process was connected to an ongoing preliminary investigation but did not comment further on the matter. Nigeria had asked Finland to intervene in Ekpa's activities on ground of incitement to violence. Last week, Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Godfrey Onyeama, invited the Finnish ambassador, Leena Pylvänäinen, to a meeting. Security and intelligence service have linked the kidnapping and murders in the South-East to speeches made by Ekpa. Wale Odunsi, [Daily Post news \(February 23rd\)](#) reports.

Civil society organizations (CSOs), experts and stakeholders in Nigeria's security sector have again raised concerns over the lack of accountability in Nigeria's defence sector. They noted that it is prolonging and worsening insecurity in the country. In addition, they worried that the defence budget has continued to rise astronomically but failed to translate into sustainable security of lives due to pervasive corruption, a significant factor undermining the military's ability to curb security challenges confronting the country. This concern was raised at a one-day CSO and media dialogue organized by the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) in collaboration with the Transparency Defence and Security Program in Abuja. In his opening remarks, Auwal Musa Rafsanjani, executive director of CISLAC, which is also the Transparency International chapter of Nigeria, tasked citizens with setting an agenda for incoming political officeholders to reposition the sector to be more accountable as they head to the polls on Saturday. Freedom Onuoha, a professor in the political science department at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, noted that a total of NGN 11.18 trillion was budgeted for security from 2015 to 2022, in addition to huge allocations from security votes. The expert warned that unchecked corruption in the sector contributes to funds mismanagement, prolonged violence threats, high casualty

rate, personnel mental/health disorder, grave security risks, weak response to the crisis and repeated weapons diversion. Onuoha also tasked the Nigerian government to institutionalise security votes and make it part of the budget for more accountability. Godsgift Onyedinefu, [Businessday News \(February 23rd\)](#) reports.

Four days before the presidential election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reiterated the commitment of the electoral body to conducting a free, fair and credible exercise. INEC chairman Prof. Mahmood Yakubu reechoed this when he received the Commonwealth Observer Mission to Nigeria in his office. Leader of the Mission and former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, during the meeting with Yakubu and some national commissioners in Abuja, said Nigeria is an essential country for the Commonwealth and that they are hopeful the elections will be peaceful, credible and all-inclusive. According to him, the mission will write a report based on their observations and possibly make recommendations. Mbeki added that the success of the polls depends largely on the activities of INEC. He, therefore, stressed the need for INEC to live up to the expectations of Nigerians and the international community in its conduct of the February 25 and March 11 general elections. Oditia Sunday et al., [The Guardian News \(February 21st\)](#) reports.

Amid widespread apprehension and crises occasioned by the new Naira redesign policy and insinuations that it is a ploy to prevent vote-buying, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) yesterday declared that it had concluded plans to conduct the general elections beginning this Saturday. In a similar vein, the Nigeria police force, military high commands, other security agencies and the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) all reassured Nigerians of their readiness to supervise and ensure a peaceful 2023 elections. Addressing journalists at the International Conference Center in Abuja, Yakubu dismissed reports of any planned postponement of the general elections, declaring that the "commission is good to go". Oditia Sunday et al., [The Guardian News \(February 19th\)](#) reports.

The International Monetary (IMF) Fund has said the index weights and basket deployed by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) for the monthly consumer price index need to be updated. It noted that what NBS presents needs to provide a true representative of expenditures patterns. In its

latest report on Nigeria, the IMF stressed the need for the NBS to use new weights from the 2018 National Household Livings Standards rather than the 2003/04 National Consumer Expenditure Survey. It warned that outdated consequences could lead to bias in the index presented by the NBS. The IMF also noted an ongoing effort for an updated producer price index, but its funding is uncertain. However, experts have disagreed with the inflation rate figure presented by the NBS, noting that it is higher than what the statistic agency reveals. Sam Tunji, [The Punch News \(February 1st\)](#) reports.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says more than 146,000 domestic and international elections observers will be deployed for the general elections. Speaking on Tuesday during a briefing with observers in Abuja, Mahmood Yakubu, INEC chairman, said the figure is the largest in the history of Nigeria's elections. Yakubu told the observers that their reports and recommendations highlighting the processes' strengths and weaknesses helped the commission progressively improve. According to him, the progressive improvement in Nigeria's electoral democracy since 1999 draws partly from the accounts of observers. That is why the commission has sent open or specific invitations to national and international observers over the years. For the 2023 general election beginning this weekend with the presidential and national assembly elections, the commission has accredited 196 national or domestic groups, collectively deploying 146,913 observers. Jesupemi Are, [The Cable News \(February 21st\)](#) reports.

18 Political Parties, Presidential Candidates Sign Peace Accord, Police Says it is Investigating Incitement by Governors Over Naira Scarcity, Governor of Kaduna State Alleges Central Manipulated Naira Design Policy, Supreme Court Hears Suit on Naira Redesign, Nigeria Prepares for Next General Elections

All 18 registered political parties in Nigeria signed a peace pact on Wednesday ahead of the 2023 general elections in Abuja. The peace pact, the second in the last five months, was organized and coordinated by the National Accord for Peace under the chairmanship of former head of state Abdulsalami Abubakar. The pact entails that all political parties accept the outcome of the elections or seek legitimate means of redress in the event of divergent positions. Abubakar stressed at the pact

signing the need for all parties to stay committed to the second peace accord, as he observed that some of them disregarded the first accord signed in September, 2022. In his message to the pact signing, former president Goodluck Jonathan stated that the peace accord strategy had consolidated efforts of statutory structures in conducting peaceful and credible elections. He reiterated the importance of signing the accord, which committed all presidential candidates, chairpersons and members of political parties to peaceful elections. Convener of the National Peace Committee, Bishop of Sokoto Matthew Kukah, said the growing international interest in Nigeria's elections is a source of great encouragement, a pointer to how much hope in the country the world has. [Premium Times News \(February 23rd\)](#) reports.

Police are investigating some governors and individuals whose utterances are considered to have incited riots over the Naira redesign policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). The Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Usman Alkali Baba, made this known on Wednesday. He was accompanied to the news conference by the Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, at the end of Wednesday's National Security Council meeting, presided over by president Muhammadu Buhari. According to the IGP, the police have done what is required to calm the situation and stabilize the polity, ensuring there won't be security issues on election day. Speaking on the outcome of the security meeting, Malami said the council resolved that there was no going back on the February 25 and March 11 elections. [Daily Trust News \(February 22nd\)](#) reports.

Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, has accused the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) of withdrawing NGN 2 trillion from circulation and replacing the old notes by minting only NGN 400 billion. He made the allegation on his Twitter handle on Sunday, adding that the apex bank only confiscated the currency against what was obtainable in the currency redesign and swap policy. The governor claimed that what was approved by president Muhammadu Buhari was different from what the CBN did regarding the swapping of the currency. He said President Buhari commended the redesign of the NGN 200, NGN 500 and NGN 1000 notes whereas the CBN only did recolour. Ignatius Igwe, [Channels News \(February 20th\)](#) reports.

The Supreme Court resumed sitting on the Naira redesign suit on Wednesday. It is the court's first sitting since president Muhammadu Buhari violated its February 8 order to continue using the old NGN 200, NGN 500, and NGN 1.000 banknotes. A seven-member court panel had ordered that the February 10 deadline set for ending the validity of the old banknotes be suspended. The court also ordered that the old banknotes should circulate alongside their newly redesigned versions, pending a further hearing in the case. But in a direct insult to the Supreme Court, Buhari on February 16 directed in a national broadcast that only the old NGN 200 notes would remain valid, while the old NGN 500 and NGN 1.000 currency notes had ceased to be legal tender. Following all submissions by the various plaintiffs, the Supreme Court fixed 3 March for judgement in a suit filed by several state governments challenging the Naira redesign policy. Ameh Ejekwonyilo, [The Premium Times News \(February 22nd\)](#) reports.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said a total of 87.209.007 Nigerians out of 93.4 million registered citizens are eligible to vote, being the number of collected Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs). Lagos State is leading for the number of PVCs collected with 6.214.970. Kano is second with 5.594.193; Kaduna came third with 4.164.473, followed by Katsina having 3.459.945 and Rivers coming fifth with 3.285.785 PVCs collected. Ekiti recorded the least PVCs contained with 958.052. President Muhammadu Buhari, on Thursday, arrived in Daura, his hometown of Katsina State, ahead of Saturday's elections, for the first time since 2003 not being on the ballot. Preparing for the elections, the federal government last night ordered the closure of Nigeria's borders for their conduct. This was made known in a communiqué from the office of the Comptroller General (CG) of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Isah Idris. He stated that Nigeria's land borders will be closed effective 00:00 hours (midnight) on Saturday to 00:00 (midnight) hours on Sunday. Furthermore, ahead of the polls, social media giant Meta, formerly known as Facebook, has disclosed its readiness to remove the most severe kinds of misinformation from Facebook and Instagram and other content that could contribute to imminent violence or physical harm is intended to suppress voting. Collins Olayinka et al., [The Guardian News \(February 24th\)](#) report.

Insecurity: Police Say About 10 Banks Destroyed in Ogun Riot, Six Suspected IPOB Members, One Police Officer Killed in Attack on Police Facility, Labour Party Senatorial Candidate Killed in Enugu

Ten branches of commercial banks were destroyed during a riot in Ogun State on Monday, according to the police. Daily Trust reports that the riot were attributed to the scarcity of Naira, with several persons barricading roads and setting bonfires. It later escalated to other parts of the metropolis as rioters burnt down banks, invaded the council secretariat and carted away with the mace. Governor Dapo Abiodun, on Tuesday, visited the affected area for an on-the-spot assessment of buildings and property affected by the unrest, with a declaration that the state government would go after those involved in the arson and wanton destruction of the public property. The governor further appealed to the people to go about their regular businesses peacefully, saying that adequate security would be provided by law enforcement agencies. Peter Moses, [The Guardian News \(February 21st\)](#) reports.

A police officer was, on Sunday, killed when suspected members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) attacked the police divisional headquarters in Oyi local government area of Anambra State in the South-East. The police spokesperson in the state, Tochukwu Ikenga, who disclosed this

in a statement on Sunday, said six of the IPOB members were killed by police operatives who repelled the attack. Ikenga, a deputy superintendent of police, said the IPOB members alongside its militant wing, the Eastern Security Network, invaded the police facility in several vehicles. The police spokesperson said the hoodlums were armed with rifles and improvised explosive devices. The attack came barely 24 hours after shooters bombed another police divisional headquarters in the state's Idemili North local government area with three police officers getting killed in the attack. Chinagorum Ugwu, [The Premium Times news \(February 19th\)](#) reports.

Unknown shooters have killed and burnt the senatorial candidate of the Labour Party for Enugu East Senatorial District, Oyibo Chukwu. The shooters also killed five supporters who were with him inside his car, setting the car ablaze afterwards. The incident happened on Wednesday evening in Enugu South local government area. The governorship candidate of the Labour Party, Chijioke Edeoga, confirmed the incident. Several members and supporters of the party had been injured and property worth millions was destroyed by shooters believed to be working for the ruling party in the state. Meanwhile, efforts to get a reaction from the Enugu State Police Command were unsuccessful, as the command's spokesman could not be reached when filing this report. Raphael Ede, [The Punch News \(February 22nd\)](#) reports.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Marija Peran, Resident Representative
Adams Adamu, Project Assistant

Nigeria Office
www.kas.de/nigeria
www.facebook.com/kas.nigeria
marija.peran@kas.de / adamu.adams@kas.de



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