

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: PTF warns of 2nd Wave, Schools Default on Covid-19 Safety Measures for Reopening

The Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Covid-19 has warned of an imminent second wave of the Coronavirus. The Chairman of the PTF, Boss Mustapha, asked citizens to be on alert. He urged returning citizens to observe the 14 days isolation, adding that the recent surge of cases in countries has led to the government of these countries to consider another lockdown. Chukwuma Muanya et al, [Guardian News \(22nd September\)](#) detail.

Meanwhile, the federal government has rolled out plans for the full reopening of schools as well as commencement of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). An article by Ebuka Onyeji et al, [Premium Times \(23rd September\)](#) describes a survey carried out on schools sitting for WASSCE in Lagos, Abuja, Borno, Kaduna, Ebonyi, and Akwa Ibom States to assess the safety of students before resumption. The survey revealed that some schools have begun implementing the safety measures, others are yet to fully fulfil the safety requirements.

Earlier, the federal government had issued a list of safety guidelines, for schools to act on which would determine their full reopening. However, the federal government has given state governors the rights to decide when schools will commence operations in their states. Speaking on this, the Minister of State for Education, Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba, reiterated the importance for schools to comply with the measures. Azeezat Adedigba, [Premium Times \(18th September\)](#) writes.

On another note, the Nigeria Center for Diseases Control (NCDC), the Nigeria Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) and their partners are commencing Covid-19 household surveys in Gombe, Enugu, Nasarawa and Lagos States between September and November 2020 to better understand the Coronavirus. The Director-General of the NCDC, Chikwe Ihekweazu, and the Director-General of NIMR, Babatunde Salako stated that the survey will help to fully comprehend the “transmission patterns, the burden of infection in the population, and the age groups most affected”. Moses Emorinken, [The Nation \(22nd September\)](#) writes. However, the Minister for Health, Osagie Enahire, has stated that “10% of all positive Covid-19 cases treated are below the age of

19 years”. [Premium Times \(21st September\)](#) explains.

Covid-19: CBN Slashes Interest Rate to Promote Investments and Economic Recovery, Labour Unions Reject Electricity / Petrol Hike, Threaten Strike

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), has slashed the interest rate following the looming recession of the economy. Disclosing this at the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), the CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele, stated that 6 out of the 10 members in attendance, moved for the reduction of the rate to 11.5% from 12.5%. Alonso Soto and Ruth Olurounbi, [Aljazeera News \(22nd September\)](#) report.

This has been linked to the rising problems in the country and the impact of the novel Coronavirus which have taken toll on the economy. According to analysts, the CBN’s plan to reposition the economy may be affected by “structural factors” such as the federal government’s recent removal of fuel subsidy and increase in electricity tariff among others. According to Oluwasegun Akinwale, a research officer at NOVA Merchant Bank Ltd, “Any policy that focuses on stimulating credit growth alone without a major revamp of the structural bottlenecks in the economy will do little to provide cheaper credit”. Similarly, Razia Khan, a Chief Economist for Africa and the Middle East at Standard Chartered Bank, stated that “the bigger issue surrounds the more immediate drivers of inflation – foreign-exchange bottlenecks that might complicate any effective harmonization plans”. On another note, Alonso Soto and Ruth Olurounbi, a writer and an economist with the [Bloomberg News \(22nd September\)](#) stated that “the rate cut is unlikely to achieve the desired effect and that what is more likely in our view is for growth to continue to be undermined by ongoing currency restrictions, and for inflation to continue to accelerate”.

Still on the rate slash, the CBN said that it also affects its past strategy of maintaining the value of the naira through foreign investments. The CBN said that the “the implication is that traditional monetary policy instruments are not helpful in addressing the type of inflationary pressure we are currently confronted with”. The CBN is faced with the dilemma of the next step to take and its implication on economic recovery. Research Team, [Nairametrics \(23rd September\)](#) explains.

Meanwhile, the CBN has disclosed that it will contribute over N1.8trn from the total sum of N2.3trn allocated to the Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP). Disclosing this at the MPC meeting, Emeziele said that the contribution will be made through financial interventions using the channels of Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs). Charles Abuede, [Business A.M News \(23rd September\)](#) details.

On another note, the planned nationwide protest by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) to shut down economic activities in response to the hike in electricity price and removal of fuel subsidy will commence on 28 September. The President of the NLC, Ayuba Wabba had called for a reversal of the hikes stating that the timing is precarious as the nation battles with dwindling economy and the Coronavirus pandemic. On the same note, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) is collaborating with the NLC on the planned strike. The TUC had last week issued a 7 day ultimatum to the federal government which elapsed on 23 September and was later moved to the 28 September. [Reuters, \(22nd September\)](#) and Azeezat Adedigba, [Premium Times \(23rd September\)](#) detail. However, the National Industrial Court (NIC), has granted an order preventing the labour unions from embarking on the protest. Godwin Tsa, [Daily Sun News \(24th September\)](#) writes.

Past Leaders Indicted, US Probe places Obasanjo, Jonathan, and Atiku under Bank Surveillance, Eni/Shell court trial ongoing

Leaked documents of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN), an agency of the United States (US), Department of Treasury have indicted past leaders of the country. New evidence pointed out transactions of world leaders, terrorists, drug dealers, among others who are now under investigation. The discoveries revealed how funds were moved through shell companies. The findings were made after a 16-month collaboration of 400 investigative journalists in 88 countries. Former Vice-President and past presidential candidate for the 2019 general elections, Atiku Abubakar, and his family members have been placed under international bank surveillance due to the fresh discoveries. The transfer tracking by Habib Bank Limited New York (HBLNY) monitoring system, linked Atiku, Rukaiyatu Atiku Abubakar, Amina Atiku Abubakar, and others to an alleged fraud when the Guern-

sey Trust Company Nigeria Limited (GTCN) transferred over \$10m through U.S. banks on behalf of Atiku. Taiwo Hassan Adebayo, [All Africa News \(21st September\)](#) details.

Reacting, Atiku described the FINCEN news as "old false stories". He added that the sequence of events reported did not indict any of the allegations and it is unthinkable to be assumed as one. [Guardian News \(22nd September\)](#) reports. He also said that the resurfacing reports in the media had "local political motivation" following the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) win by the governor of Edo State, Godwin Obaseki, who won the recent Edo State gubernatorial election. Taiwo Hassan Adebayo, [Premium Times \(22nd September\)](#) reports. In a similar vein, the FINCEN discoveries also revealed that Former President Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan, were investigated by the US authorities over the Malabu OPL245 scandal. Though the Deutsche Bank Trust Company America (DBTCA) revealed there were no transactions involving Obasanjo and Jonathan, other Nigerian citizens have been linked to it. Oladeinden Olawoyin, [Premium Times \(22nd September\)](#) explains.

In new reports, an article by Christopher Le Bec in [The African Report \(24th September\)](#) examines the ongoing corruption case of Eni and Shell, and the trial of the Eni Chief Executive Officer, Claudio Descalzi, over a \$1,1bn bribe paid for the acquisition of the exploration licence for the OPL 245 offshore oil block in Nigeria. An Italian Court has to preside over the case. Prosecutor Fabio De Pasquale demands severe punishments for executives from two oil companies and for several Nigerian, Italian and Russian middlemen. Eni's executive is now supposed to present his defence "in one of the largest corruption cases in the oil industry's history". It is expected, however, that the outcome of the case will be determined by the stance of the Italian Government.

Edo Election: Obaseki Wins Edo State Gubernatorial Election, Buhari Congratulates Obaseki

The Governor of Edo State, Godwin Obaseki, has emerged the winner of the Saturday, 19 September gubernatorial elections held in Edo State. Obaseki who ran under the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) polled a total of 307,955 votes while Ize Iyamu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), polled 223,619 votes.

Williams Uke, [Nairametrics \(19th September\)](#) reports. Reacting, the APC in a first reaction rejected the result declared by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), on the grounds of “alleged strong-arm tactics in the process” and “foul play”. Head of the Edo State APC Media Campaign Council, John Mayaki, also alleged fabricated numbers in votes and unlawful arrest of APC voters. [Vanguard News \(20th September\)](#) and Clifford Ndujihe et al, [Vanguard News \(21st September\)](#) detail. President Muhammadu Buhari has meanwhile congratulated Obaseki on his win. He commended the election process and reiterated his commitment to free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria. [Premium Times \(20th September\)](#) reports. On the same note, former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, PDP party governors, PDP members of the House of Representatives, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), and many others have congratulated Obaseki on his re-election citing a “triumph in democracy” and the “end of godfatherism in Nigeria”. Olalekan Adetayo et al, [Punch News \(22nd September\)](#) write. Also the Chairman of the APC National Caretaker Committee, Mala Buni, while commending the efforts of the former National Chairman of the APC, Adams Oshiomhole, stated that the electoral process was peaceful and marks a victory in Nigeria’s democracy. He said that the APC remains committed to winning the Ondo State elections. [Premium Times \(22nd September\)](#) explains.

In a similar vein, the United States (US), has commended INEC and security operatives of their efforts during the election. In a statement, the US Mission in Nigeria hailed Obaseki, Iyamu and other actors for their stance on peace. It criticized reports of electoral offences during the election. Mary Ugodaga, [The Cable News \(23rd September\)](#) writes. On election offences, the Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth, and Advancement (YIAGA), disclosed in its preliminary report, some details of election violence in some parts of Edo State. YIAGA revealed several incidences to include ballot snatching, vote buying, disruption of accreditation, intimidation of election observers among others. YIAGA stated that it deployed 500 observers to monitor the election. Ebuka Onyeji, [Premium Times \(19th September\)](#) writes. On the same note, the Coalition of Whistleblowers Protection and Press Freedom (CWPPF), has called for an investigation into an alleged attack of journalists during the election. CWPPF criticized security officers for failing to protect journalists. They called for an improvement in the forthcoming

Ondo State gubernatorial election slated for 10 October. Samuel Akpan reports in [The Cable News \(22nd September\)](#).

Meanwhile, INEC has issued a certificate of return to Obaseki for his second tenure in office. Speaking during the process, Obaseki called for support from Oshiomhole and Iyamu in developing the state. He commended President Buhari for ensuring free and fair election. Gabriel Enogholase, [Vanguard News \(22nd September\)](#) explains.

Insecurity: Gbajabiamila Speaks on Security Threat to Nigeria’s Existence, President Buhari Calls for Peace in Kaduna, UK Lawmakers Write Commonwealth on Insecurity in Nigeria

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila, has expressed concerns over the security situation bedeviling government’s efforts in ensuring the safety of lives and properties in the country. Declaring open a 2-day retreat on promoting effective legislation and oversight of the security sector in Nigeria, organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in collaboration with the House Committee on National Security and Intelligence, Gbajabiamila stated that citizens are losing their “faith” in the government over the constant insecurity affecting their daily lives, and as such these challenges should be addressed. James Kwen, [Business Day News, \(24th September\)](#) and Tordue Salem, [Vanguard News \(24th September\)](#) report.

As the security situation in the country continues to worsen, President Muhammadu has called for peace in Kaduna State. In a statement by the Special Adviser to the President on Media, Femi Adesina, President Buhari called on citizens to cooperate with security agencies and the government in restoring peace to the state. He stated this at the virtual opening of the Fifth Kaduna Economic and Investment Summit. [Leadership News \(22nd September\)](#) writes.

Meanwhile, the President of the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU), Luka Binniyat has reacted to the response by President Buhari on the killing of Christians in southern Kaduna State to President Donald Trump, where he described the killings as a “cultural thing”. Binniyat questioned if paying ransom was a cultural thing as citizens in the area paid up to “N420m as ransom

to Fulani herdsmen in 2019". He criticized the government for the escalating insecurity in the state. [Sahara Reporters \(23rd September\)](#) writes.

Also, Members of the House of Lords, the British upper legislative chamber, have raised concerns over insurgency and the farmer/herder crisis in Nigeria. A letter addressed to Patricia Scotland, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, states that the "failure of the federal government to protect Nigerians was a breach of its obligations under the Commonwealth Charter". The legislators made reference to the accusation of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Freedom of Religion or Belief "elements of the Nigerian government may be complicit in violence". They called for an investigation into the situation. Jemilat Nasiru, [The Cable News \(23rd September\)](#) explains. Reacting, the federal government has condemned the information based on which the letter was written. In a statement, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, alleged that some sources that formed the foundation of the letter are anti-democracy. Expressing the government's commitment in ensuring security, he called for cooperation from the lawmakers. Olalekan Adetayo et al, write in [Punch News \(25th September\)](#).

On another note, the federal government has approved the commencement of Abuja-Kaduna flight. This is due to the insecurity bedeviling the Abuja-Kaduna routes. Aero contractor has com-

mencement operation with 4 flights weekly. [Sahara Reporters \(21st September\)](#) writes. Still on insecurity, the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) has commenced the demolition of about 2,400 structures along the railway corridor leading to the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Kukwuaba- Wuye District. This is coming following the attack of a train on test run last week. The Director, Department of Development Control, Mukhtar Galadima, stated that the demolition will help curb the in security in the country. On the same note, chairman of the FCT Task Force on Sanitation, Ikharo Attah, has stated that the area was known for several crimes and expressed sympathy on persons affected by the demolition. Omeize Ajayi, [Vanguard News \(22nd September\)](#) details.

Meanwhile, an article by Eric G. Berman in the [Council of Foreign Relations \(18th September\)](#) looked at the state of the Boko Haram conflict, concluding that the terrorist group won't be eradicated soon. Arms stockpiling has indicated a long-term threat. The many successful attacks on the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and co-deployed national armed forces "have netted Boko Haram millions of rounds of ammunition, thousands of assault rifles and assorted firearms, and hundreds of military vehicles, including armored tanks and self-propelled artillery". Berman called "states and organizations that contribute troops, military equipment, money, and political support for ongoing efforts to counter Boko Haram [...] to reassess their current approaches to combatting the threat".

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