

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: Nigeria Yet to Achieve Herd Immunity Target

The World Health Organization (WHO) has placed emphasis on “herd immunity” as the most efficient way to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus. However, one year into ongoing vaccinations, Vanguard News has reported that Nigeria is yet to come close to its 70% vaccination coverage target of June 2022 set for all countries by WHO. According to the National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHDA), as of February 27, 2022, 8.136.554 of total eligible Nigerians targeted for Covid-19 vaccination have been fully vaccinated with two doses, while a total of 131.863.446 were yet to be vaccinated. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control stated (NCDC) that Nigeria, two years into the pandemic, recorded a total of 254.525 confirmed cases with 3142 deaths from 4.442.864 samples tested so far. Sola Ogundipe and Chioma Obinna, [The Vanguard News \(March 1st\)](#) reports.

Nigeria Joins 140 UN Member States to Vote Against Russia, May Well Pay Higher Fuel Subsidy Amid Rising Oil Prices, Debts, FG, Marketers Trade Blame Over Fuel Scarcity, Opens Bids for 4,000 Megawatts Nuclear Plants

The United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday 2, adopted a resolution demanding Russia's immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of troops sent in to invade Ukraine. The resolution criticized the aggression against Ukraine “in the strongest terms” and condemned President Vladimir Putin's decision to put his nuclear forces on alert. Following the resolution, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group disclosed that they would respond to Ukraine's request for urgent financing with about USD 5.2 billion cumulatively. Nigeria's stand on Wednesday is reportedly seen as a historic departure from its non-aligned movement in the politics between the West and Russia. Eniola Akinkuotu and Solomon Odeniyi, [The Punch News \(March 3rd\)](#) reports.

Meanwhile, the Russia-Ukraine war has set oil prices to new highs and the Federal Government may have to pay higher subsidies as higher fuel prices mean higher subsidy. While the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) highly appreciates the rising oil price because it gives hope of higher fiscal revenue, which may help to partly bridge budget deficits, Nigeria re-

portedly might not profit from these developments because of its weak oil production of an average of 1.6 million barrels per day – a level below OPEC quota and far behind the 1.88 million barrels per day benchmark in the 2022 budget. [Sahara News \(February 27th\)](#) reports.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) have released contradictory statements regarding the fuel scarcity all over the country. The NNPC has maintained that the country sufficient petrol in stock while IPMAN disputed their position, saying the long queues visible across the country was evidence of short supply of fuel. IPMAN President Chinedu Okoronkwo disclosed that ex-depot prices by depot operators and the inability of some independent marketers to get products had contributed to the lingering scarcity. However, the Group Managing Director of NNPC maintained that with over 1.8 billion liters of petrol in storage, the queues would disappear in the coming days. Dayo Johnson et al., [The Vanguard News \(March 3rd\)](#) report.

Speaking at the ongoing Nigerian International Energy Summit in Abuja, the Director General of the Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NNRA), Yau Idris, disclosed that Nigeria was at the bidding stage for the construction of nuclear power plants that would generate 4,000 MW of electricity for the country. He explained that Nigeria had been trying to diversify its energy sources since the 1970s, stressing that the additional 4,000 MW would increase the country's generation capacity to about 13,000 MW. Idris further revealed that the NNRA had signed agreements with Russia, Pakistan, France and South Korea to build the capacity of its staff in manning the nuclear plants. [The Sun News Online \(March 2nd\)](#) reports.

National Assembly Rejects Bill Seeking to Create Special Seats for Female Lawmakers, Former Vice President Declares Interest to Contest 2023 Presidential Elections

The National Assembly has rejected a constitutional bill seeking to create special seats for women in the in the National and State Houses of Assembly. The bill seeks to achieve this goal by creating one special seat in each state of the Federation and the FCT reserved solely for women without prejudice to their eligibility to contest in the existing senatorial seats in each state and the

FCT. Despite the support of Aisha Buhari, the wife of President Muhammadu Buhari, and Dolapo Osinbajo, wife of Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, to pass the bill, it failed to get the lawmakers' approval. Ima Elijah, [The Pulse News \(March 1st\)](#) writes.

Former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar formally declared his intention to run for the 2023 Presidential election, maintaining that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is in a better position to offer Nigerians that desirable leadership and that this is what he wanted to offer. "I want to offer solutions to our problems", he affirmed while meeting with stakeholders. Atiku explained that his decision followed the need for good governance in Nigeria, pointing out that he had all it takes to salvage the country from the numerous challenges facing it. Ochogwu Sunday, [The Daily Post News \(March 3rd\)](#) reports.

Electoral Act 2022: INEC Releases New Dates for 2023 General Elections, Citizens Divided Over President Buhari's Amendment Pursuit, Special Adviser to Senate President Applauds NASS and President, Opinions and Comments on the Newly Signed Act, Realism of Implementation on Citizens, Saraki, CSO's, Commend President Buhari Over Signing of Electoral Act, PDP Chieftain Criticizes Signed Electoral Act

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has announced new dates for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Presidential and National Assembly elections will now take place on February 25, 2023, while governorship and State Assembly elections will be held on March 11, 2023. INEC explained the new dates followed the signing of the amended Electoral Act by President Muhammadu Buhari on Friday, 25. Tunde Oguntola, [The Leadership News \(March 4th\)](#) reports.

Citizens have been caught between supporting President Muhammadu Buhari's call for amendment of the electoral Act and insisting it be left unaltered. Buhari wrote to the Senate to amend the newly signed Act, drawing the attention of the lawmakers to section 84(12), deeming it unconstitutional. The contentious issue bars political appointees from voting or standing for election in conventions and primaries unless they resigned about 180 days earlier. Buhari explained that the practical application of section 84(12) which "subjects serving political office holders to inhibitions referred to under Section 40 and 42 of the 1999

Constitution, stating that it was imperative to note that the only constitutional expectation from serving political office holders that qualify by extension as public officers within the context of the Constitution is resignation, withdrawal or retirement, at least 30 days before the date of the election, as provided in Section 6(1)(f) of the 1999 Constitution". The article at hand explores different lines of arguments on the matter. Joseph Onyekwere et al., [The Guardian News \(March 4th\)](#) reports.

Ola Awoniyi, Special Adviser on Media to the Senate President Ahmad Lawan, praised the role of the 9th National Assembly in getting President Muhammadu Buhari to sign the Electoral Act Amendment Bill into law and its responsiveness to the yearnings of the Nigerian people. His opinion piece seeks to record the extent the current Assembly under Ahmad Lawan has gone to deliver an electoral law that "for the first time in our recent history arrived to almost universal applause". He commends the 9th Assembly for making the electoral reform bill a top priority in its Legislative Agenda. The bill, essentially an amendment to the law made in 2010, suffered a monumental setback on the eve of the 2019 polls, largely due to the bad working relationship between the Executive and the 8th National Assembly. Awoniyi further praises President Muhammadu Buhari for demonstrating good faith by signing the bill despite his reservations about a particular clause that affects political appointees: "Buhari's observation that the provision, in his opinion, contradicts the provisions of the Constitution, would have been enough reason for him to withhold assent again. But he opted against that, due to the cordial relationship between the National Assembly and the Executive." [The Daily Post News \(February 28th\)](#) reports.

Political commentators expressed a different view. Director of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Idayat Hassan, has maintained that there was no need to alter the Act since it was in line with tenets of democracy. This was as two former Senators from Kogi State, Dino Melaye and Alex Kadiri, asked the National Assembly to ignore President Muhammadu Buhari over his complaint on the Act. Melaye added for consideration: "My take is that the National Assembly should disregard the suggestion of the President. If after they have amended the Act to suit the Presidency, they do it a second time, then that means the National Assembly has confirmed itself to be a department of the Presidency". Similarly, the National Coordinator of the Human Rights Writers

Association of Nigeria (HURIWA), Emmanuel Onwubiko, warned against the amendment. He maintained that the extant provision of the law is a safeguard to prevent the hijacking of the electoral process by incumbents to the detriment of Nigerians. Adamu Abuh and John Akubo, [The Guardian News \(February 28th\)](#) reports.

Referring to different stakeholders, the author calls the signing of the amended Electoral Bill into law a significant milestone in the nation's electoral history as it would aid the growth of democracy and party politics. Marking a new chapter for the Nigerian electorates who have increasingly become disillusioned with the electoral process, which can be seen in the increasing apathy among eligible voters, the recently amended Electoral Act provides for the structure of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), its powers and guidelines for registering voters, procedures for the conduct of elections, the registration and regulation of political parties, electoral offences and the determination of election offences. At the same time, political scientist Kunle Okunola has expressed concern about INEC's capacity to implement the law, while warning that the political elite should not use the loopholes in the law to destroy the import of it which is to smoothen the electoral process and avoid electoral ambiguity. According to him, "the electoral law is long overdue for the cleansing of our electoral process that has been bedeviled by so much electoral manipulation. The law, if duly enforced, will definitely sharpen the electoral system and bring about sanity". Iwok Iniobong, [The Business Day News \(March 2nd\)](#) reports.

Former Senate President Abubakar Bukola Saraki has commended President Buhari for the signing of the amended Electoral Act. Saraki further hailed the National Assembly and civil society organizations for remaining persistent in their claim for a new law that guarantees free, fair and peaceful elections. The former Senate President noted that the new Electoral Act opens up a platform for a debate of solutions to the problems of insecurity, creation of jobs, strengthening of the economy and cementing national unity. [The Eagle Online News \(February 25th\)](#) reports.

Similarly, a coalition of civil society groups has commended President Muhammadu Buhari for signing the Electoral Bill into law, describing the signing of the bill as a huge milestone in Nigeria's quest to consolidate electoral democracy. The coalition of 25 organizations further described the

new Act as incorporating innovative provisions that would enhance the credibility of Nigeria's electoral process, signifying a new era in the history of elections in Nigeria. Queen Esther Iroanusi, [Premium Times News \(February 26th\)](#) reports.

Former Nigerian envoy to Algeria and Philippines and chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Orefo Nnamdi Onochie, who has declared to run for the Presidential elections in 2023, has criticized the signing of the Electoral Amendment Act, 2021 by President Muhammadu Buhari. Unsupportive of the removal of the possibility of direct primary election by political parties in selecting their candidates, he stated that the populace should restrain from jubilating over an Act that removes the most important clause. Onochie described the actions of Buhari as insensitive, unprogressive and retrogressive. Chijindu Emeruwa, [The Daily Posts News \(February 28th\)](#) reports.

Insecurity: FG Says 70 % of Armed Forces Engaged in Domestic Duties, United Nations Warn of Maritime Threat, INEC Says Insecurity Threatens 2023 General Elections

During the 2022 Security Meet Business Dialogue Series held in Lagos, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha, stated that the Federal Government's 2022 budget for all security agencies, excluding its statutory contribution to the Police Trust Fund, was N 2.41 trillion. He further disclosed that "close to 70 % of Nigerian Armed Forces personnel are engaged in policing duties across the 36 states of the federation". Chief of Defence Staff General Lucky Irabor said that over 23,000 repentant Boko Haram combatants had surrendered their arms to the Nigerian military and were now undergoing a reintegration programme under the government's Operation Safe Corridor. Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Michael Olawale-Cole cited calls for open and frank dialogues as a critical factor in addressing the nations' security challenges. Dike Onwuamaeze, [This Day Live News \(March 2nd\)](#) reports.

The United Nations Counterterrorism Centre (UNCC) has warned Nigeria, Togo and Ghana, among others, on the threat by some extremist groups to take control of key maritime infrastructures in the African ports, moving from piracy to terrorism. The UNCC advised countries in West Africa to emulate Nigeria by using drones as a viable option in counter-initiatives. UNCC further noted

that terrorist groups were exploiting the existing gaps in border protection by making use of maritime travel in both East and West African waters. [The News Telegraph News \(March 2nd\)](#) reports.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has cited the increasing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a challenge to the conduct of the 2023 general elections. INEC disclosed that the displacement of some persons and

the recreation of their constituencies and polling units was impossible. Thus, the Commission has decided to adjust the dates for the 2023 general election to ensure compliance with the provisions of the amended Electoral Act. INEC Chairman Yakubu Mahmood confirmed the new dates were in conformity with the Commission's aim of ensuring certainty in its electoral calendar. Samson Adenekan, [Premium Times News \(February 26th\)](#) reports.

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