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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: Civil Society Organizations Allege Looting of Funds, Facemasks Still in Compliance

A coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) have alleged corruption in the management of Covid-19 funds, saying funds were looted. The CSOs in a report and policy brief released to journalists in Abuja on Wednesday, said the Covid-19 funds and resources, especially donations and multilateral and bilateral grants, bypassed parliamentary budget oversight and government financial management controls and processes. The report, a product of a citizens-led survey conducted in Lagos and Ogun states by several CSOs, specifically focused on Covid-19 funds and spending as well as data on the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Covid-19 efforts. The policy brief also called on the government to improve public information on Covid-19 resources and funds received from international and domestic donors and publish the list of beneficiaries to the public. [Sahara Reporters News \(March 31st\)](#) reports.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is not yet abolishing Nigeria's rules on face mask completely, as the NCDC Director-General, Ifedayo Adetifa, disclosed on Friday. He noted that the Presidential Steering Committee on Covid-19 was leveraging on available evidence such as the continuous downward trend of Covid-19 positive case numbers in the country to revise the Travel Protocol. Adetifa said that the use of facemask indoors or in other high-risk settings such as in public transport was still recommended while the use in outdoor places was now discretionary in the country. "However, the recent Covid-19 surges in many countries have led to questions of whether face masks should be encouraged or required, and for how long", Adetifa said. [The Vanguard News \(April 1st\)](#) reports.

World Bank Projects 95 Million Poor Nigerians in 2022, Suspends Nigerian Firm Over National Social Welfare Fraud, NPC Chairman Stresses the Need for Reduced Population Growth, President Buhari Says Nigeria's Tax System is Inefficient, ECOWAS Court Orders Nigeria to Amend Cybercrime Law

The World Bank has released a poverty assessment report titled 'A Better Future for All Nigerians: 2022 Nigeria Poverty Assessment'. The report noted that the Covid-19 crisis was driving up Nige-

ria's poverty rate, pushing more than 5 million additional people into poverty this year. The World Bank said the number of poor Nigerians is projected to hit 95.1 million in 2022. In 2021, President Muhammadu Buhari claimed that his government lifted 10.5 million Nigerians out of poverty between 2019 and 2021. However, the report noted that Nigeria's growth performance was declining even before the Covid-19 crisis. Between 2000 and 2014, it noted that Nigeria enjoyed a period of sustained expansion, during which the economy grew by around 7 % per year, outstripping the estimated annual population growth rate of 2.6 %. Yet as of 2015, real GDP growth dropped constantly, as the decline in global oil prices induced Nigeria's first recession in almost two decades. "Growth has not recovered subsequently", the bank explained. Oladeinde Olawoyin, [The Premium Times \(March 30th\)](#) reports.

In other news, the World Bank Group says it has suspended SoftTech IT Solutions and Services Ltd. (SoftTech), an information technology solutions company based in Nigeria, for 50 months over corrupt allegations in the National Social Safety Nets Project. The project is designed to provide access to targeted cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households under an expanded national social safety nets system. The global institution also announced a 60-months debarment of the company's Managing Director, Isah Salihu Kantigi. According to the facts of the case, as an individual consultant, Mr. Kantigi made "appreciation" payments to project officials as a reward for his receiving a World Bank-funded consultancy services contract, the World Bank said. Aderemi Ojekunle, [The Cable News \(March 31st\)](#) reports.

The National Population Commission (NPC), organized a workshop for journalists on the National Population Policy (NPP) in Abuja, where it charged media professionals to educate Nigerians on the need for the country to reduce its national annual population growth. The Executive Chairman of NPC, Alhaji Nasir Kwarra, said "we should aim to achieve reduction in fertility rate from the current 5.3 % to 4.30 % by 2030. There is the need to prioritize investments by achieving reduction of national annual population growth rate by two percent by the year 2030." He stressed the importance of funding and resource mobilization for the NPP, adding that the Federal Government and private partners would be at the forefront of ensuring the delivery of the funds. Fortune Ero-mosele, [The Vanguard News \(March 31st\)](#) reports.

President Muhammadu Buhari spoke at the 2nd National Tax Dialogue on the theme “Tax Harmonization for Enhanced Revenue Generation”. In his speech, the President has expressed concern about the current tax system in the country, characterized by fragmented administration, multiple, sometimes even overlapping taxes. He maintained that “in most tax-efficient nations, tax administrative processes and practices are harmonized within a single system”. President Buhari told participants at the Tax Dialogue that there is an urgent need to maximize domestic revenue within the extant tax policy and laws. He proposed improved tax revenue for the country which will not necessarily impose new tax rates on Nigerians. Juliana Taiwo-Obalonye, [The Sun News \(March 29th\)](#) reports.

The ECOWAS Court of Justice has ordered the Federal Government to amend Section 24 of the Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc) Act of 2015. The Court deemed this necessary to meet obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), a non-governmental organization, challenged the legality and compatibility of the section in relation to the guarantees enshrined in Article 9 ACHPR and Article 19 ICCPR. Responding, the Nigerian Government urged the Court to dismiss the suit on the grounds that it was misplaced and unproven and the reliefs sought were not grantable in law. The Federal Government said the Act was not only in line with Section 45 of Nigeria’s Constitution, but was subjected to the requisite constitutional and legal processes before its passage. Wale Odunsi, [The Daily Post News \(March 28th\)](#) reports.

President Buhari Applauds Defections to APC, APC Elects National Party Chairman, PDP Woes APC Over Chairmanship Election, Governor Wike Declares for 2023 Presidency, House Majority Leader Urges Nigerians to Defend Themselves with Arms

President Muhammadu Buhari at the All Progressives Congress (APC) National Convention on March 26 at the Eagle Square in Abuja celebrated high-profile defectors that joined APC last year. The Presidential Spokesperson, Femi Adeshina, quoted President Buhari as celebrating the defection of three governors and others to the party as part of the major achievements of the outgoing Mai Mala Buni-led Caretaker Committee which has

been running the party for about 18 months. The President’s celebratory remark was despite the recent court decisions sacking some of the defectors for leaving the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the party that sponsored their elections, for the APC. [Premium Times News \(March 27th\)](#) reports.

During their National Convention on Saturday, the All Progressives Congress (APC) elected new party officials that would pilot the affairs of the party until 2026. Thousands of party loyalists from across the country, led by President Muhammadu Buhari, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, National Leader of the party, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, members of the Progressive Governors’ Forum and the leadership of the National Assembly gathered for the much-anticipated convention which elected Senator Abdullahi Adamu as the new National Chairman. President Buhari in his address cautioned the new leadership of the party to guide against the imposition of candidates ahead of the 2023 polls. He expressed satisfaction with the performance of the Governor Buni-led Caretaker Committee for their leadership in the last 18 months and how the party membership had grown from 11 million to its current number of over 41.5 million members. Buhari noted that the progress made so far confirmed that APC is the leading Nigerian political party. Muyiwa Adeyemi et al., [The Guardian News \(March 27th\)](#) report.

Meanwhile, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has mocked the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) over the conduct of its March 26 National Convention exercise which produced Abdullahi Adamu as the party’s National Chairman. The PDP described the ruling party’s event as a “celebration of illegality, corruption and arrogance in failure” which may further deep Nigeria into more economic and social hardship in the coming years. The PDP spokesperson, Debo Ologunagba, said “the composition of the APC national leadership is a clear confirmation that President Buhari has never been committed to the fight against corruption as well as his willingness to further open our national vaults to ravenous treasury looters in the APC”. The opposition party challenged members of the ruling APC to encourage the newly elected Chairman to come clean on his alleged corruption charges committed during his tenure as governor. Samson Adenekan, [The Premium Times News \(March 28th\)](#) reports.

Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike has declared his run for the Presidency, saying he has the capacity to win the 2023 presidential election for the

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). “To remove APC from power, I’m the person who can tell them enough is enough. We must take this power and I’m ready to take it for PDP. God is with us, that’s why APC keeps failing every day. I’m declaring it (presidential ambition) for the first time in Benue. I’m going to run for election,” Wike stated. Addressing the party delegates, he said that most of the presidential aspirants from the party were responsible for PDP’s defeat in 2015. Kehinde Olatunji, [The Guardian News \(March 28th\)](#) reports.

The House of Representatives Majority Leader, Alhassan Ado-Dogwu, has advocated for the bearing of arms by citizens. The debate was on the floor of the House concerning the growing insecurity in the country, during which emotions ran high in the chamber. The Majority Leader maintained that “Nigerians must be allowed to take arms in defence of their innocent souls; to defend their hard-earned resources and properties, because it is like a monumental failure. If the security agencies have failed, then Nigerians should not be failed; Nigerians should not be seen as failures.” Ado-Dogwu also took a swipe at the leaders of the nation’s security architecture for failing to answer the invitation by the leadership of the House on Wednesday over the recent attack on the Kaduna International Airport and an Abuja-Kaduna train. Leke Baiyewu, [The Punch News \(March 31st\)](#) reports.

Insecurity: Military Contains Attack on Kaduna State Airport, Terrorists Attack Abuja to Kaduna Train, Second Attack on Train Launched 24 Hours Later, Security Forces Allegedly Ignored Intelligence Warning

On March 26, over 200 terrorists invaded the Kaduna International Airport located in Igabi Local Government Area in Kaduna State, disrupting operation and killing one security personnel of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency. They attacked the VHF Omnidirectional Range equipment site at the airport and killed a security man guarding the facility. According to the aviation systems integrator Systems Interface, the VHF Omnidirectional Range is “a short-/medium-range radio navigation system used to aid aircraft in determining their flight position and direction in relation to their destination using”. The attack forced the airport authorities to temporarily shut down activities while the military battled the suspected terrorists. However, a combined team of anti-banditry military personnel and a crime investigation unit

of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) Aviation Security Department swiftly intervened for a rescue operation, with one casualty reported in the incident as the acting General Manager for Corporate Affairs of FAAN, Voke Ivbaze, confirmed. Okechukwu Nnodim et al., [The Punch News \(March 27th\)](#) report.

The Kaduna State Government and the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) have confirmed a terrorist attack on a Kaduna-bound train coming from Abuja on Monday early night between Katari and Rijana communities. The bandits planted explosives on the train track and stopped it before firing gunshots at passengers as they tried to open the door. In a statement signed by Samuel Aruwan, the Commissioner Internal Security and Home Affairs, the State Government said the evacuation of the trapped passengers had been concluded but search and rescue operations continued. The NRC in the meantime has clarified the number of passengers on the train and confirmed that 398 passengers had purchased tickets while 362 passengers had actually boarded the train. Mohammed Babangida and Abubakar Ahmadu Maishanu, [The Premium Times \(March 29th\)](#) reports.

In a new development, terrorists have launched a second attack in Kaduna within 24 hours from Monday’s rail track explosion. The terrorists planted Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) on the tracks, forcing the train heading to Abuja from Kaduna to stop. Although details of the second attack remain mostly unclear and casualties couldn’t be confirmed so far, Innocent Ajiji, President of the Nigeria Union of Railway Workers, confirmed the development to newsmen. According to him, the extent of the damage is yet to be determined. An eyewitness said the bandits who were wielding dangerous weapons asked the travelers to come out of the wagons. President Muhammadu Buhari on Tuesday, again ordered service chiefs to deal ruthlessly with terrorists, adding that they should be more decisive and not spare anyone unlawfully wielding weapons. Muiyiwa Adeyemi et al., [The Guardian News \(March 30th\)](#) reports.

The Managing Director of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC), Fidat Okhiria, has confirmed that the NRC was written to stop the evening train. He explained: “They wrote to us that they suspected that they wanted to attack the train but that was in December/January”. If that were the case, the NRC should find a solution to it; yet he maintained that stopping the train was not the solution. Daily

Trust News firmly gathered that the Kaduna State Security Council and the leadership of the 1 Division Nigerian Army headquarters had also separately requested the NRC to suspend the late-hour shuttle between the two cities, an advisory that was however ignored. Similarly, in a February 17 intelligence report, one of the security services had alerted of the arrival of “over 80 well-armed

bandits” from the camp of notorious Zamfara bandit, Bello Turji, into Buruku Forest in Chikun Local Government of Kaduna State and establishing presence. A senior security source in Kaduna confirmed to Daily Trust to have received reports of movement of Turji’s men to Kaduna, saying however that the intelligence was not authenticated. [Daily Trust News \(March 31st\)](#) reports.

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