

Supply suspension: Petrol scarcity hits border towns, fuel now N600/litre

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File copy: A fuel tanker

- Fuel smuggling thrives in Adamawa, Sokoto
- Task force brutalises Idiroko residents

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Residents of border communities in Ogun, Lagos, Adamawa, Katsina and Sokoto states are groaning following the Federal Government's suspension of fuel supply to areas within 20 kilometres to the nation's borders.

On Thursday, the Comptroller General of the Nigeria Customs Service, Hameed Ali, had directed that no petroleum products should be supplied to any filling station within 20 kilometres to the borders.

Investigations by our correspondents in Ogun, Lagos, Adamawa, Katsina, and Sokoto states showed that the government's order had triggered fuel scarcity and hike in the prices of petroleum products.

For instance, investigations by one of our correspondents showed the Federal Government's order had led to fuel scarcity in communities such as Ihunbo, Ilase, Ajegunle, Idiroko and Agosasa in the Ipokia Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Also, at the Seme border in Lagos on Monday, there were fuel queues as only two filling stations were selling fuel.

Many filling stations shut in Ogun

The PUNCH learnt that so many filling stations within 20 kilometres to the border in Ipokia, close to Benin Republic had been shut by the Federal Government's task force on border closure.

One of the residents of Ipokia, Elijah Akinola, in an interview with The PUNCH, accused the security agencies in the area of sabotaging the economy of the country.

He asked, "Can you imagine buying a litre of fuel at the rate of N600? Before we can get fuel for N145 in Ipokia, we will need to go to Owode, which is 28 kilometres away. We don't know what we can do to survive.

"Before the Federal Government's order, they (security agents) used to take bribes from marketers before allowing them to export fuel to Benin Republic. Now that the Federal Government has stopped supply of fuel supply to border communities, we are the ones suffering. Artisans, even medical personnel, are the ones suffering.

One person dies in Ogun

Akinola said in Ipokia that one person died following the inability of a hospital to get fuel to power a generator to perform a surgery on the deceased.

“As I am talking to you, to power generators in hospitals at Idiroko is difficult. Ihunbo, Ilase, Ajegunle, Idiroko, Agosasa and other towns in the Ipokia Local Government Area of Ogun State are affected. There was a patient that died this afternoon (Monday) just because there was no electricity to power machines for medical examinations.”

Another resident, Ajibade Idowu, said the task force, which comprised soldiers, immigration officers and other security operatives, commenced the implementation of the policy in the area on Sunday. But he accused some members of the task force of highhandedness.