

NAIRA REDESIGN CRISIS

Protests rock Lagos, Ogun, Rivers

...scores stranded as many trek long distances

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The ongoing Naira scarcity protests in some parts of Nigeria assume a new dimension on Friday morning, as it spreads to other parts of the country.

In Lagos, many were shocked as protesters occupied the roads from Ojokodu area of Ikorodu Road to Onipanu as early as 5.30 a.m.

A female resident of Apeka, Mrs. Ayoola, said she was caught up in the protest at Owode along the Ikorodu Road by 5.30 a.m.

At Ketu and Mile 12 end of the road, the protesters mounted a barricade on the highway as motorists were locked down between Ketu and Ojota.

Fighting, which erupted in some areas on the popular Lagos-Ikorodu expressway in Lagos State, Saturday Telegraph gathered was against the scarcity of the new naira notes and the hardship the policy has thrown up along with the fuel scarcity.

Suspected touts in Mile 12, Ketu and Ojota areas on the expressway, reportedly took to the road as early as 5.30 a.m. attacking commuters and creating chaos.

A driver attached to one of the cab-hailing firms operating in the state, who does not want his name in print for fear of harassment, said he had to turn into one of the streets due to the chaos.

Reporters monitoring the ongoing fighting in the area alleged they could hear sounds of gunshots.

At Ketu bus stop where the protesters chanted freedom songs, scores of male and female traders from Mile 12 Market, held in the traffic, sat by the road embankment chatting in groups as they lamented on the high cost of commodities.

"This hardship is much. We are dying. We did not beg them to rule us and they came punishing young and old," one of the traders said.

Also at Sabo Roundabout, Ikorodu, irate youths were seen destroying campaign materials and setting burning fires of used automobile tires.

They turned motorists back rudely, telling them to go back and pack their vehicles at home, as according to one of them, "there won't be movement until they give us our money."

Attempting to speak to any one of them became difficult as they soon increased in number, some of them attacking each other.

...Ifo, Ogun State also burns

Commercial activities were on Friday paralysed

as angry residents trooped out to protest the lingering scarcity of the new naira notes of N500, and N1000 in Ifo, Ogun State.

The protest took place at Arigbajo, Abekoko, Bank Bus Stop, Ifo Local Government area of Ogun State.

Residents, who had been going to banks for withdrawal, said they could not access their money.

They were said to have become more agitated when the commercial banks refused to accept the old naira notes as deposits.

The protesters barricaded the Ifo Road, causing heavy gridlock.

With bonfires on the road, the people castigated the President Muhammadu Buhari-led government, accusing the All Progressives Congress (APC) of inflicting hardship on the masses.

One of the protesters, who pleaded anonymity, lamented she does not have money to buy foodstuffs, and her four children have not eaten as at the time of filing this report.

According to her, "This is a problem, my four children are at home; they've not eaten. The painful aspect is that I don't have foodstuffs at home."

In Mowe, the protest turned bloody as one person was allegedly shot dead by soldiers, who were deployed to disperse the protesters that barricaded the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

The victim, a commercial bus driver, identified simply as Ibrahim, was said to be trying to move his minibus away from the road where it was parked when the stray bullets from the soldier hit him.

It was learnt that another lady, who was operating a gambling shop close to the main road, was also hit by stray bullets on the face.

Our correspondent gathered that when some of the protesters were scampering for safety some people sustained varying degrees of injuries.

Immediately the information about the death of the commercial bus driver filtered into town, everywhere became charged as parents rushed to their children's school hurriedly to pick them up. While some shop owners closed their shops for fear of being attacked.

In Rivers, hoodlums hijack protest, attack banks

Hoodlums pretending to be protesting the new naira scarcity, yesterday trooped out from nowhere and started robbing people they met on the road, and attacked shops and banks along Ikwerre Road, in Mile 1 Port Harcourt.

The hoodlums also robbed people in the Mile 3

area of Ikwerre Road, and later moved down to Mile 1, where they later moved through the Education Bus Stop to inner Diobu.

The protest, which started in the early hours of the day, caused some pedestrians to lose their telephones, bags, cash and other items.

Meanwhile, our reporter, who witnessed the scene said policemen have taken over the entire Old Port Harcourt Township, especially Lagos Bus Stop and Churchill.

Three police patrol vans were stationed in front of First Bank to avoid further attacks, as it was learnt that the hoodlums had finalised arrangements to set fire to the bank personal effects, just as the hoodlums looted goods owned by shop owners in the area.

There were gunshots as security operatives rushed to Ikoku Spare Parts Market junction, where the protest started, to restore law and order.

But just as the protest along Ikwerre Road started to fizzle out, another protest erupted in the town axis of Port Harcourt, where protesters and hoodlums attacked three commercial banks in Churchill and others along Aggrey Road.

But just as the hoodlums appeared to have gained the upper hand, policemen shot sporadically into the air and eventually forced them to make a retreat into the nearby waterfronts.

Normalcy returns to Lagos, Sango Ota...as BRT buses withdraw operations

After the early morning confusion that broke out on Friday along Ikorodu Road following the pains created by the ongoing currency swap and cash-

less policy, calm has returned to all the affected areas.

Many residents of the Ikorodu, Mile 12 and Ojota areas of Lagos State, had their journeys cut short as protests broke out in the areas.

Motorists and passengers were forced to make a return journey to Ikorodu as heavy gunshots rented the air about 6.30 am.

However, calm has completely returned to the affected areas as people are now going about their businesses.

Surveillance of Mile 12, Ojota and Ketu show the heavy presence of stern-looking heavily armed security operatives.

Meanwhile, there were no BRT buses on the road giving the impression that their services were withdrawn from the road.

One of the drivers, who pleaded anonymity, said the move was proactive to forestall the vandalism of the buses by an irate mob.

Recall that a total of 80 BRT vehicles were destroyed during the #EndSARS protest in Lagos State.

This comprised 23 big buses and 57 medium-sized buses. 57 of the 80 buses were at the Oyingbo Terminus.

In Ogun, the situation was almost degenerating when a team of policemen from the Ojokoro Divisional Headquarters, led by Divisional Police Officer, CP O. Olotin arrived to pacify the irate protesters, who were already growing into a wild mob.

Before Olotin directed his men to quench the fires by pouring water, motorists were turned back and traders around the area had closed shops.

Despite the restoration

of calmness in most places where there had been riotous protests earlier in the day, many traders, who force-closed their shops for safety, were too afraid to go back to their shops.

A popular food canteen owner around Beckley Estate, Okokoro, said there was no point opening a shop in the afternoon.

She said the policy had paralyzed business as payment for meals served in her shop became difficult most times.

According to her, even when she subscribes to a cashless policy, lack of infrastructure in terms of internet connection will be a major impediment to its success.

She says issues will soon assume an overwhelming dimension unless banks improve service delivery.

The situation at Abule Egba, Agege Abattoir, and Fagba Junction in Ojokoro LCDA; Ilepo Oke-Odo, and Kantangowa under Agbado-Oke Odo LCDA also remained normal when our correspondent visited around 1 pm.

But residents say there had been riots with heavy bonfires and a near-confrontation between security agents and protesters.

...police confirm incident

Meanwhile, the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, confirmed the unrest. He made this known via his Twitter handle.

Responding to a tweet asking the PPRO to confirm the rumour, Hundeyin replied: "It is true. Our men are there. Reinforcement units have been deployed."

"Stay safe out there as we closely monitor and manage the situation."

The ongoing scarcity of the naira notes took a dangerous dimension on Thursday morning as no fewer than three persons lost their lives following violent protests that erupted in parts of Nigeria.

Earlier in Benin City, the Edo State capital, angry residents, who could not access their monies in commercial banks, took to the streets in protests that led to loss of lives after security forces fired live bullets and teargas to disperse the unruly crowds.

The body of one of the protesters was deposited in front of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) amid sporadic gunfire and teargas from policemen and soldiers.

The protesters had attempted to break into the state branch of the CBN located along Akpakpava Street, in Benin City, where most commercial banks are located.

No fewer than seven banks were attacked by the angry, surging crowds, which equally set bonfires along the major road of Akpakpava and other adjoining streets.

The angry protesters also unleashed their anger and frustration on any Automated Teller Machines (ATM), at sight.

It took the intervention of heavily combined armed security personnel to disperse the protesters as they cleared the road of burnt tyres to allow other road users to pass.

Along Akpakpava, one of the protesters said: "How do you expect people to survive? People have money in banks and they cannot access it because of one useless policy."

"People don't accept old naira anymore and we don't have new naira. We don't have food in our house; we are tired."

Another protester said: "They are doing this to cancel the coming elections."

"We cannot continue like this; the country belongs to all of us. Why do we suffer for no fault of ours?"

The Edo State Police Public Relations Officer, Chidi Nwabuzor, when contacted, also confirmed the incident.



L-R: Program Director, Dataphyte, Adenike Aloba; Executive Director, DEAN Initiative, Semiye Michael, during the presentation of the Election Eyewitness Observation Report on the 2023 INEC's Mock Election, in Abuja ... yesterday