

Fresh round of fuel crisis hits Nigeria

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bution problem.

In Kaduna and its environs, petrol has been scarce in the last two weeks, leading to a near paralysis of economic activities. Some petrol stations have cashed in on the scarcity to sell petrol at between N100 and N105 per litre just as four litres of the commodity sell at between N750 and N1,200 in the black market.

Ibadan

In Ibadan, motorists and residents of the city spent endless time on long queues in some of the filling stations dispensing petroleum products.

Some major and independent marketers have capitalised on the situation to sell the product at N100 per litre as against the approved price of N65.

Most of the filling stations visited by *Vanguard* were either not selling to customers or selling at exorbitant prices. Investigations carried out revealed that 80 per cent of the filling stations have fuel but refused to sell to customers.

Vanguard gathered that some major marketers at Mokola used the cover of darkness to sell the product to some desperate customers.

According to those who were forced to buy the products, the marketers usually sell fuel between 3.00 and 4.00am while they complain in the daytime that they could not lift fuel from the NNPC depot at Apata.

When *Vanguard* got to the filling stations, the approved fuel price of N65 was seen on their fuel dispenser meters. Sources further disclosed that they would

just see the litres of fuel sold and calculate it at N100 per litre.

Akure

In Akure, long queues resurfaced at filling stations across Akure, the Ondo state capital yesterday. Reason for the scarcity of the commodity was unknown as dealers kept sealed lips when interviewed.

About five stations across the state capital dispensed fuel yesterday leaving motorists to queue endlessly at the stations. The NNPC mega station dispensed the commodity to motorists but the queue at the station was endless despite selling from six pumps.

Vanguard gathered that some of the dealers after selling for two or three hours closed shop under the pretext that they had exhausted their consignments. Because of the rowdy situation in the filling stations, others preferred to shut their gates to motorists hanging a "No fuel" sign on their gates.

Osogbo

The acute shortage of petrol which started in Osun State at the weekend yesterday assumed crisis dimension as most commuters were stranded as a result of their inability to get transport to their destinations.

It was observed that virtually all the filling stations — including those owned by both independent and major marketers — were without petrol.

In Osogbo, apart from the NNPC mega station along the Express bypass which had a long queue, only two filling stations — Oando located at Ota Olaiya and Mobil at Okefia — were dispensing fuel to customers as at

the time of filing this report.

Some of the managers blamed the situation on their inability to lift fuel from Ibadan depot of the NNPC.

Petrol fire kills one, injures 10

In Kaduna, one person was confirmed dead while 10 others were injured when a house which was used as an illegal depot for petroleum products caught fire in Kaduna on Monday night.

The incident occurred at the Abakpa area of Kaduna metropolis where two drums of petrol, some jerry cans of the product and one drum of gas were stored. The owner of the mud house was simply identified as Malam Aminu (30).

The body of a girl whose name and age were not immediately known was removed from rubble of the house by the parents yesterday just as other victims of the inferno were said to have been rushed to some undisclosed hospitals within the city.

When newsmen visited the scene of the fire disaster yesterday afternoon, volunteers were seen removing some burnt items from the house even as charred drums, plastic gallons as well as burnt motorcycle parts believed to have been used for the illegal fuel business littered the scene.

Speaking on the fire incidence, the Tafida (Chief) of Abakpa, Alhaji Usman Abubakar confirmed that the fire occurred as a result of illegal petrol business in the house.

No cause for panic — DPR

When contacted, Mr. Billy Agha, the Acting Director, Department of Petroleum Resources explained that he does not think there was any cause for panic, noting that the situation must be a result of distribution problem.

"When there is a distribution problem, it builds up and affects the chain. But it eventually clears up," he said.

He also dispelled concerns on the lingering confusion over the current status of government's removal of fuel subsidy noting that discussions were ongoing and that the status quo remains.

Vanguard reported last week that seeming confusion over the current status of government's plan for the deregulation of the downstream sub-sector of the Nigerian oil industry was a harbinger for full blown fuel scarcity.

Following the removal of subsidy, marketers proceeded to import and stock petroleum products believing that the removal implied tacit approval for full blown deregulation of the sub-sector.

In February, landing cost of imported premium motor spirit (PMS) was N59 per litre owing to drop in prices on the international market.

It would appear the prevailing downward incline of the price curve at the time, bought the consumer some measure of respite, which appears to have run its course following the seemingly upward incline of the price curve on the international market.

Currently landing cost of PMS is about N70 per litre, an indication that marketers cannot import and sell petrol at the regulated price of N65 per litre especially given the removal of subsidy by government.

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JTF kills six militants in Rivers

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militants around Fair Buoy area of the Bonny waterways. The vessel was also attacked Monday night, according to the JTF statement.

Col Abubakar expressed worries over the attitude of the militants, saying he could not fathom why they would attack those whose causes they claimed to be championing.

"The same people who claim that they were fighting to emancipate their people, are the same people raping, robbing and kidnapping the people."

He assured that the JTF would continue to do its best to rid the region of brigands and hoodlums.

Ex-lawmaker laments
However, a former legislator

in Rivers State, Hope Ikiriko, has lamented the negative impact of militancy and kidnapping in the region. Noting the huge setback militancy was causing the region, Ikiriko, a former chairman of the Rivers State House of Assembly ad-hoc committee on kidnapping said the activities of the miscreants had become a thing of concern to all who genuinely desired the development of the region.

The former legislator spoke when he played host to Igbuduya council of chiefs and the Ndi Igbo traditional chiefs in Rivers and Bayelsa states, saying in some areas, the brigands had forced contractors handling road and other big projects to abandon them, a situation he said is lamentable.

Gov Amaechi arrests
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