

# FUEL, NAIRA SCARCITY: 3 killed as protests rock Oyo, Edo, Benue, others

● Three feared killed in Edo, many injured, bank ATMs destroyed ● Kwara Police arrest 5, Gov AbdulRazaq sues for calm ● Two vehicles burnt, banks torched in Delta ● Protesters takeover Otukpo-Enugu road ● Oshiomhole responsible for protests — Obaseki

By Dayo Johnson, Festus Ahon, Henry Ojelu, Adeola Badru, Demola Akinyemi, Ozioruwa Aliu, Jimitota Onoyume, Peter Duru, Chioma Onuegbu

At least three persons were killed yesterday as violent protests erupted in states across the country over lingering fuel and naira scarcity. States affected include Edo, Oyo, Delta, Kwara, Ondo, Benue and Akwa Ibom.

While three persons were killed in Edo, many protesters were injured as cars, automated teller machines, ATMs, were destroyed in Oyo, Delta, Kwara and

Benue states over scarcity of old and new naira notes. Reports from the five states captured aggrieved protesters blocking major roads with bonfires, destroying Automatic Teller Machines, ATMs, burning vehicles and grounding commercial activities.

**Oyo: protesters block Eleyele/Ologuneru/Eruwa road**

In Oyo, protesters, most-

ly traders, owners of small and medium scale enterprises, stormed the state secretariat, Ibadan, in protest against fuel and new naira notes scarcity.

The protesters, carrying calabashes containing sacrifice-like items, lamented their hardship as a result of the rejection of the old naira notes for business transactions, while the new notes are scarce to get.

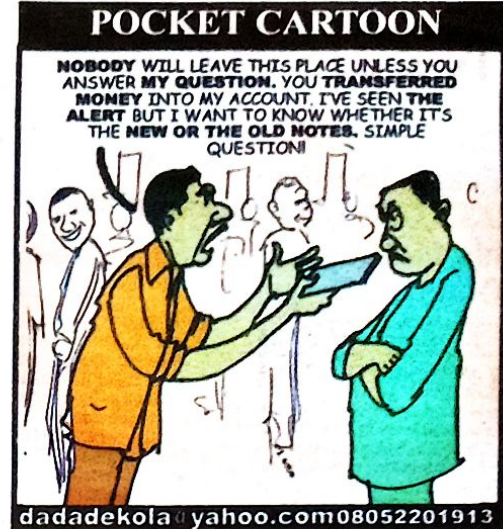
For several hours, security personnel, comprising the Nigeria Police, Amotekun, and Operation Burst, patrolled the streets.

Commercial activities were grounded in some

parts of the city as protesters blocked major roads such as Eleyele/Ologuneru/Eruwa road, disrupting vehicular movements and leaving commuters to trek long distances to their destinations.

They made bonfires of disused tyres on both sides of the highway, and this caused serious traffic gridlock.

Some of the protesters told *Vanguard* that the current cash crunch had created serious pains and agonising moments for them, describing the situation where bank customers could not access their mon-



ey as unfortunate.

*Vanguard* gathered that some banks in Eleyele and Apete were closed to customers, even as the ATMs were also not dispensing money.

The blocked Eleyele/Ologuneru/Eruwa road is the major road that connects Ibadan with Ibarapa zone of the state.

**Kwara: Police arrest 5, Gov AbdulRazaq sues for calm**

In Kwara, the protests started at Oko-Olowo market axis and spread to Oloje, Alore, Omoda and Adangba areas of Ilorin metropolis.

Motorists deserted the roads as bonfires disrupted free flow of traffic. Consequently, commuters were stranded.

The protests also spread to Offa garage roundabout axis as angry youths, residents and marketers took over the streets burning tyres on the main roads.

The entire area, including Ganmo, Kilanko and Offa garage areas were deserted for most part of the day. The situation was, however, brought under control by the state police command, with five suspects arrested.

Our correspondent also sighted a crowd at the CBN office along Offa Road, Ilorin, with their rejected old naira notes, as they were being attended to by officials of the bank.

The state governor, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Rafiu Ajakaye, appealed to the people of the state to remain calm and peaceful, and not give in to any frustration over the naira scarcity.

"I testify to the inconvenience this development has brought. We are in this together, and we are not missing any opportunity to work with the CBN and the Federal Government to bring ease to the people within reasonable time.

"I admit it has been tough, and we do not take your patience for granted. I sincerely appeal to you to remain calm. We are a resilient people who are popular for our peaceful nature and our history of seeking reliefs with calmness and absolute restraints.

"This is a passionate appeal to the good people of Kwara State. Again, I share in your pains, and I urge you to exercise the highest

*Continues on Page 26*



Kogi State governor, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, and his Kaduna State counterpart, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai during the hearing over the CBN currency policy, at the Supreme Court, in Abuja yesterday. Photo: Peters Oyedele.



## 3 killed as protests rock Oyo, Edo, Benue, others

Continued from Page 5

level of restraints as we surmount this challenge together."

The Emir of Ilorin and Chairman, Kwara State Council of Traditional rulers Dr Ibrahim Sull-Gambani, also appealed for calm, assuring that the state government was on top of the situation.

### Benin boils, three teared killed, many injured

Edo state capital, Benin City, was practically shut down over simultaneous protests against the non-availability of new naira notes and the rejection of old ones.

An early morning attempt by protesters to attack the Benin branch of CBN was foiled by a combined team of policemen, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, with three people teared killed.

The angry protesters were said to have retreated and attacked most banks along Akpakpava, damaging their ATMs and buildings.

No fewer than seven banks were affected.

The protest and attacks on banks occurred simultaneously at Iygbuyokho, Ramat Park area, Uselu Lagos Road, Ugbowo, New Benin, Akpakpava, Sokponba Road and several other areas.

The protesters hijacked trucks which they used to block all the entry points into the city centre, thereby causing heavy traffic gridlock in several parts of the city, including the Government Reservation Area, GRA, as motorists scampered for safety. Those not so lucky had their vehicles destroyed.

The protesters almost overwhelming the security operatives on ground until soldiers arrived and cleared all the road blocks.

One of the protesters who gave his name as Godwin Osemwingie, said he was frustrated when he went out to buy things with his old naira notes but was told by the seller that the notes were no longer acceptable in the country.

He said: "The problem right now is that we went to the bank to deposit my old naira notes, they said they are not accepting it and even the bus drivers are also

rejecting it.

"You cannot buy anything, look at the money, this is Nigerian money and they are rejecting it. How do they want us to survive? We can't buy and we can't sell.

"Even the CBN has rejected the old money from us, why? That is why we are protesting. Look, all this money in my hands is now wasted. We can't even board vehicles now."

The Police Public Relations Officer of the Edo State Police Command Chidi Nwabuzor, said he was waiting for official reports from police officers on the ground for detailed reports.

He said: "The situation of the protest that has been hijacked by hoodlums in Benin is that the Nigerian Police Force, Edo State Command, in collaboration with other sister security agencies, including the state owned security outfit, known as the Edo State Security Network, are working jointly to make sure that the situation is arrested.

"Concerning the issue of killings, I am yet to hear from the officers who are on ground quelling the riot." At press time yesterday, normalcy had been to the state capital, with armed soldiers and other security agencies mounting guard at strategic places.

### Delta: Riotous crowd torch banks, two vehicles in Udu; Police arrest nine suspects

In Delta, rampaging bank customers vent their anger on two banks in Udu local government area, near Warri, as they destroyed some of their facilities.

Two cars in the premises of one of the old generation banks, were completely razed down.

Confirming the ugly incident to the Vanguard, the spokesman, Delta State police command, DSP Bright Edeke, said nine suspects were arrested, adding that the police had condoned off access to the banks.

"I can confirm that two banks were torched, two cars were burnt. Nine suspects have been arrested,

" he said.

Vanguard gathered that the bank customers became riotous when the automated teller machines, ATM, were not dispensing cash and the banks on their parts were not collecting old notes in exchange for new ones.

An eye witness who declined to give his name, said: "I saw when they started destroying the ATMs. When they started marching towards other areas, I had to quickly drive off."

Sources told the Vanguard that staff of the affected banks scampered for safety when customers at their premises became riotous.

The protesters literally took over major roads in Udu area, forcing vehicles to seek alternative routes, having set bonfires on some of the roads.

The ugly situation generated tension across the oil rich city of Warri as banks, stores and several business centres hurriedly closed shop when rumour filtered in that the protesters were marching towards the city.

The state police command spokesman, DSP Edeke, said the police would not hesitate to arrest suspicious persons around any of the affected banks.

### Oshiomhole responsible for protests —Obaseki

\*Obaseki, Shaibu scared of his popularity — Oshiomhole's aide

Hours after the protests, Edo State Government called on Security agencies to arrest and investigate former Governor Adams Oshiomhole accusing him of being the mastermind of the protests.

The Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Chris Nehikhare at a press conference in Benin hinged the allegation on a recent viral video where he alleged that the former governor instructed his supporters to go to town and intimidate perceived opponents.

Nehikhare said: "He (Oshiomhole) should be arrested and made to account for his movement in the last few days. Oshiomhole deliberately instigated the protest and I am sure you are all aware that a few days ago a video showed Oshiomhole instigating people in Benin City to go on rampage and bring anarchy to our state because his government and his party, APC are about to lose the forthcoming election.

"I know part of the reason was the scarcity of the naira but even if that is the case at least all Nigerians should know that the party that is responsible for the policy is the APC and it is the same party that is now destroying PDP billboards in Edo State.

Reacting through his Media Aide, Victor Oshioke, Oshiomhole said: "As we speak, Oshiomhole is in



Customers stormed the Central Bank, Kaduna branch to deposit their old naira notes yesterday. Photo: Olu Ajayi.

Port Harcourt, yesterday (Tuesday) he was in Imo state and he went to all these places from Auchi where he has been campaigning. Is there protest in Auchi or any part of Edo North Oshiomhole is busy campaigning for the APC presidential candidate and his senatorial ticket and did not instigate anybody to riot?

"Oshiomhole didn't make any statement to suggest that anybody should not against anybody. He is busy campaigning to Edo North people for his senatorial ambition and for Tinubu presidential race.

"The Edo state government is rattled and nervous by the acceptance Oshiomhole gets anywhere he goes in Edo state almost eight years after he left office against Obaseki's and Shaibu's government who have failed woefully. If Oshiomhole did not instigate people in the past election in the state, why would he now instigate violence when he is contesting and the people are with him?

### Okowa sues for calm, urges CBN to increase supply

Reacting to the situation, Delta State governor and vice-presidential candidate of Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa, enjoined citizens of the state and other parts of the country to remain calm.

Okowa in a statement by the State Commissioner for Information, Mr Charles Aniagwu, called on the people to remain calm, while also appealing to the Central Bank of Nigeria and the monetary authorities to take further steps to increase money supply in the system.

The governor said: "We appeal to our brothers and sisters across the state to keep calm in spite of the current travails they are going through as a result of the scarcity of naira notes in the country.

"As a government we are not unaware of your sufferings but we appeal to you to be patient with the monetary authorities as they take steps to improve on the money supply in the country.

"We are very much aware

of your pains and concerns, but burning down a bank that employs our people will not augur well for us as a nation even as it will not also solve the problem but will further compound the situation.

"Once again we appeal to you all to sheath your swords while we continue to engage the CBN to ensure more funds are released to the banks in the country."

### Benue: Protesters takeover Otukpo-Enugu road

In Benue, angry youths took over the busy Otukpo-Enugu Highway, mounting barricades at Otukpo roundabout to protest the CBN's cash swap and cashless policy as well as the non-availability of petrol in the district.

The youths, who made bonfire on the highway, obstructed vehicular movements on the road, leaving commuters travelling from the northern part of the country to the east stranded.

Vanguard gathered that trouble started when it was discovered that most of the banks in the town could not dispense cash through ATM machines and across the counters.

This was said to have triggered angry protests by the youths who were said to have been besieging the banks for several days for cash without success.

According to the source who spoke on condition of anonymity, "people have been going to banks to get their money but in the last two week people are finding it difficult to access the money they have in the banks.

"People were being given money in piecemeal and in the last two days, it has become even difficult to get even N2,000 from the banks in town and those who have old naira notes cannot spend it.

"To make things worse, we cannot get petrol in Otukpo and if you see at all, they dispense at about N500 per litre. Our question is did this All Progressives Congress, APC, government take over power in 2015 to inflict hardship on Nigerians?

"Why is this government deliberately punishing the masses? Did we commit

any offence by voting them? "Nigerians are suffering and dying because of this cashless policy and naira swap and the government does not want to listen to the cry of the masses.

"So we all came out today to register our anger and displeasure over the bad governance and anti-people policies we are witnessing in the country which is making life unbearable for us."

Meanwhile it was gathered from security sources in Otukpo that the protesters were later prevailed upon by the Otukpo Divisional Police Officer, DPO, to dismantle the barricade to allow free flow of traffic on the ever busy road.

### Uyo: Commuters stranded as transporters reject old notes

In Akwa Ibom, the Police released several canisters of teargas to disperse thousands of depositors who thronged banks to deposit old naira notes without success.

This came as thousands of commuters were stranded in the metropolis following the rejection of the old N200, N500, and N1000 notes by Minibus and Tricycle operators across the state.

The incident at the state CBN branch caused serious stampede among the depositors as they ran to escape the teargas.

Similarly, policemen barricaded one side of the dualised Aka Road, Uyo, the state capital, after dispersing customer's with teargas at about 11:30am.

An eyewitness told Vanguard that the angry customers were protested because banks refused to work and attend to them since on Monday.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Odiko MacDon, said the policemen were drafted to the CBN when the crowd at the apex bank was becoming riotous.

MacDon responded: "There was a large crowd at the CBN vicinity and the crowd was becoming rowdy. It was almost becoming riotous, so the police as an agency saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, cannot fold their arms and allow break

Continues on Page 27



### Naira appreciates to N461.5/\$ in I&E window

By Elizabeth Adegbesan

The naira yesterday appreciated to N461.5 per dollar in the Investors and Exporters (I&E) window. Data from FMDQ showed that the indicative exchange rate for the window fell to N461.5 per dollar from N461.67 per dollar on Tuesday, indicating 17 Kobo appreciation for the naira.

However, the naira depreciated by N4 in the parallel market yesterday.

Vanguard findings from black market traders showed that the exchange rate for the market rose to N760 per dollar from N756 per dollar on Tuesday.



# News

## 3 killed as protests rock Oyo, Edo, Benue, others

*Continued from Page 26*

down of law and order.

"So the Commissioner of Police, CP Olatoye Durusinmi, deployed officers and men to restore law and order, and that is exactly what happened. Nobody was harassed, or molested; nothing untoward happened"

On whether teargas was used, he said: "I don't have any confirmation of teargas being released, but teargas is used to disperse crowd that is becoming riotous, but I'm not saying that teargas was used."

### Protest in Ondo ground commercial activities

In Ondo, residents protested against the prolonged scarcity of new naira notes and the rejection of old naira notes by commercial banks in the state.

The residents, mostly

youths, marched through the streets in Akure metropolis, Owo and Ondo town.

They barricaded the roads at the popular Akure Motor park roundabout, thereby causing traffic gridlock on the road.

In Akure, commercial motorcyclists, also known as okada riders, took to the streets, barricaded the Oba Adesida Road at the popular First Bank Roundabout Alagbaka area, chanting solidarity songs, causing traffic logjam in the road for some hours.

For fear of attack, commercial banks located in the area quickly closed shop

Speaking with newsmen, one of the protesters who simply identified himself as Kunle, said they were on the streets to let the government and the CBN know that Nigerians were suffering over their ability to spend the old notes and

receive new notes from the bank.

"I don't know what to call this one that is happening in Nigeria, I have my money in the bank, I cannot get it, we are hungry not because we don't have money but because government does not want us to spend the money.

"We have been keeping quiet since, maybe they thought we are comfortable with it, that is why the CBN and Buhari are not doing anything about it."

Addressing the angry protesters, the Olowo of Owo, Oba Ajibade Ogunoye, appealed them to be peaceful and avoid anything that could cause a breakdown of law and order in the ancient community.

The monarch said: "This is, no doubt a trying period in the life of the people of Nigeria and I want to appeal to you not to do anything that will break the law and disrupt the peace of the town."