

Nigeria oil workers strike grounds Abuja

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Vocabulary Key	
Word/Term	Definition
Union	an association of workers organized to protect their rights
Strike	an organized refusal to work as a form of protest
Queue	forming a line to take one's turn
Filling station	gas station
Petrol	gasoline
Casualisation	shifting from full-time employees to part-time workers (who have fewer company benefits)
Outsourcing	obtaining goods or services from a foreign company
Severance	money paid to an employee after being fired

The country once again witnesses another grueling fuel scarcity following petroleum union's protest.

The strike by oil workers has reduced socio-economic activities in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, as motorists strive to grapple with the strike which entered its second day on Tuesday.

Many motorists queued outside filling stations in the capital throughout the night on Monday, till Tuesday morning, to buy petrol following the three-day warning strike embarked upon by members of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG). The junior oil industry workers are demanding action against what they consider "unfair labour practices by some of the multi-national oil companies."

The NUPENG President, Achese Igwe, said that the decision to call out members of the union on the strike was "due to unfair treatment of our workers by some oil companies, including Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), Chevron Nigeria Limited, and Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC)." Accusing the oil companies of unfairly treating Nigerian workers through their policy of casualisation and outsourcing of workers, among other matters, Mr. Igwe said most of the affected workers are not accorded decent welfare, while others who are poorly paid do not have severance allowances.

The oil workers are also asking government to expedite passage of the new petroleum industry law currently pending before the National Assembly for approval and check pipeline sabotage, which is costing the country huge losses.

NUPENG also asked the government for urgent intervention in the tax row between the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and the Nigeria LNG Limited as well as rehabilitation of the nation's roads.

Mr. Igwe said the leadership of the union had directed its members at various depots across the country to stop loading petroleum products, in order to force the government to address their demands. He warned that after the three-day warning strike, the union may be compelled to embark on an indefinite protest if government and the relevant authorities fail to address their grievances.

Impact

There was chaos at major filling stations in Abuja on Tuesday as motorists jostled on long queues to buy petrol. Some of the long queues were seen at the popular mega filling stations in the Central Area owned by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and Conoil, located opposite the NNPC Headquarters.

Some motorists at the filling stations said they were taken unawares, despite media reports about the looming scarcity and impending strike by the oil workers. Commuting in Abuja has now become an odious task with the fuel scarcity worsening the already bad transportation situation experience by residents under the recently introduced transportation system by the Abuja administration.

A taxi driver, who said he had waited outside the Conoil filling station for more than four hours before he was able to buy petrol, urged the relevant authorities to make efforts to meet with the oil workers and address their demands.

The situation is reportedly similar in Kano, Bauchi, Aba, Port Harcourt and many other major cities around the country, as motorists are having a difficult time buying fuel for their normal businesses.

Questions

1. What organization has called for the strike?
2. What ill treatment does the organization claim?
3. For how many days is the strike scheduled to last?
4. What impact is strike having?
5. Do you think the strike was ultimately effective?