

LABOUR STRIKE DAY 5

Channels

As the nationwide strike enters day five, the convener of the Save Nigeria Group,



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Pastor Tunde Bakare Friday announced to the teeming crowd at the Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Park in Ojota Lagos that while labour unions meet to deliberate on the outcome of their meeting with government officials on Thursday, the rally will not hold tomorrow and Sunday.

Speaking to the protesters, Pastor Bakare said the decision

is to allow the people rest and give the federal government two days to reverse the petrol pump price to N65 per litre, failing which the protest will continue on Monday.

Two killed in Niger State
The protest over the removal of fuel subsidy turned bloody in Lambata, Gurara Local Government Area of Niger State following the alleged killing of two youths, Yahaya Adamu and Rabiu Abubakar, by the police late Thursday.

The father of one of the deceased, Adamu Ciroma, explained that the boys in Lambata were on a peaceful protest against the removal of fuel subsidy when the police started shooting at the protesters and in the process killed the two youths while many others sustained various degrees of injuries.

However, the Niger State police public relations officer, Richard Ogunche in a telephone conversation with channels television in Minna denied the killing of the youths but confirmed that there was a confrontation between the police and the protesters in Lambata, noting that an assistant superintendent of police sustained a serious injury during the fracas.

He however stated that a total of 212 persons had been arrested following the violent protest that broke out in the state on Wednesday. Medical Association pledges continued support for labour

The Nigerian Medical Association says it will continue to align with the demands of the organised labour for the reversal of the pump price of fuel which was ill-timed. A statement jointly signed by the president of the association, Doctor Idris Omede and the secretary, Doctor Bala Audu says the association will, however, continue rendering emergency services in all health facilities in view of casualties that have been reported from various protest sites including death.

The association appealed to the federal government to forestall further losses in any form by reverting to the N65 per litre of petrol in line with the request of the Nigeria Labour Congress, the Trade Union Congress, civil society organisations, and professional associations including the Nigeria Bar Association. They further appealed to the government to be prudent and reduce cost of governance, make the refineries functional, ensure accountability with verifiable audit in all sectors, tackle monumental corruption in the downstream sector of oil and gas operations and other sectors of the economy.

Akure comes alive gradually
Economic activities are gradually picking up in Akure, the Ondo State capital. Some commercial motorists and motorcyclists are plying the roads following the directive of the national executive of the National Union of Road Transport Workers; though they complain of low patronage and difficulty in purchasing petrol even at the exorbitant rate of up to N150 per litre. Few stations sell fuel in the evening time, some of them charge extra N100 as fee to power generators to pump fuel.

While few shops are open for business government offices and most private business places remain closed. Armed mobile policemen and civil defence officers are stationed at Cathedral junction, along Oba Adesida Road, while police anti-crime patrol vehicles keep roving the major streets to maintain peace and order in the city. Owerri, the Imo State capital, remains calm as organised labour and civil society groups carried out their peaceful protest round the metropolis, joined by physically challenged people in the state on day five of the nationwide strike. Addressing the rally Friday, the acting chairman of the Nigerian Labour Congress in the state, Obinna Okafor commended the national leadership of the Nigerian Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress for standing their grounds in the meeting held with the presidency Thursday night, adding that they have shown absolute loyalty to the Nigerian masses and have proven that the decisions taken is for the good and progress of the Nigerians.

He reiterated that the union will not back down on their stand of ensuring that the federal government reverts the price of fuel to N65 per litre.

A trip round the Owerri metropolis and its suburbs showed that some filling stations have increased the price of fuel from N150 per litre to N170 per litre. Transporters and private vehicle owners have expressed dissatisfaction on the new development, saying it has brought more hardship for the masses.

Meanwhile economic activities are beginning to pick up more than ever as some residents said they are tired of staying at home. They also called on the state government to urgently implement the palliative measures it promised to cushion the effect of hike in transport fares.