

Kenya fuel demos turn violent



Security personnel arrest a man during a public transport strike over fuel prices in Nairobi, Kenya, yesterday. PHOTO/COURTESY

The protests erupted after Kenya's Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority announced a fresh fuel price increase last week, amid a nationwide transport strike yesterday.

BY THE CITIZEN REPORTER

At least four people have been reported dead as protests over rising fuel prices escalated across Kenya yesterday, disrupting transport and business activities in several towns and cities.

The unrest coincided with a nationwide matatu strike that stranded thousands of commuters and forced many people to walk long distances to work after public transport operators suspended services from midnight.

In Nakuru, police reportedly shot dead one person as demonstrations intensified over the rising cost of fuel and the transport shutdown.

In a separate incident in Kimbo, Ruiru, three people died and two others were injured after boda boda riders travelling at high speed collided while allegedly attempting to evade a roadblock erected by protesters, according to witnesses.

Police also fired tear gas to disperse protesting youth near the Kencom ar-

ea in the central business district of Nairobi, while some demonstrators burned tyres and blocked roads leading into the capital, worsening traffic congestion.

The protests erupted after Kenya's Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority announced a fresh fuel price increase last week, with petrol prices rising by as much as 23.5 percent following another increase last month.

The latest adjustments have been linked to global supply pressures caused by the ongoing conflict involving Iran in the Middle East.

Under the new prices, super petrol in Nairobi now retails at KSh214.25 (Shs6,162.26) per litre, up from KSh206.97 (Shs5,952.87), while diesel rose sharply to KSh242.92 (Shs6,986.87) from KSh196.63 (Shs5,655.47). Kerosene remained unchanged at KSh152.78 (Shs4,394.26) per litre.

The Transport Sector Alliance had earlier announced that vehicles affiliated with its member associa-

INFLATION RISK

The demonstrations followed last week's fuel price review by the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority, which raised petrol prices by Sh16.65 (Shs478.880) per litre and diesel by KSh46.29 (Shs 1,331.39) per litre.

Diesel prices have now risen by over KSh80 (Shs2,300.96) a litre in the past two review cycles, significantly increasing costs for transport operators, manufacturers, retailers and logistics firms heavily dependent on road transport networks.

Higher transport costs are expected to feed directly into inflation through increased prices of food, manufactured products, farm inputs and retail goods over the coming weeks.

Transport operators have accused the government of overburdening businesses and consumers through taxes and levies embedded in fuel prices despite worsening economic conditions and stagnant household incomes.

tions would stop operating in protest against the latest increase, arguing that higher fuel costs had made operations unsustainable.

The strike paralysed transport services in major towns, including Nairobi, Mombasa, Kitengela and Kisii, raising fears of supply chain disruptions, especially in the coastal port city of Mombasa.

Thousands of commuters, including school children, in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret and towns were left stranded as matatu operators, truckers, boda boda riders and taxi associations joined the nationwide protests, triggering long walks and severe traffic disruption.

Kenya's Finance minister John Mbatia said the government was planning talks with transport operators in an effort to resolve the crisis, adding that the current fuel prices were already subsidised.

But the latest price increases have deepened pressure on businesses and households already struggling with elevated taxes, rising electricity costs and stubbornly high prices of essential commodities.

Several Kenyans expressed frustration over the soaring cost of living, saying rising transport fares and food prices had placed households under growing financial pressure.