

Fuel Price Increase

Is the fuel price increase related to the theft and misuse of public funds by public officers that were disclosed by President Mwanawasa (K3 billion), Deputy Finance Minister (K36 billion) and currently, during the Public Accounts Committee meetings with government ministry heads of department? Or is it related to the recent events where a senior government official reported that Zambia owes a senior Congolese public officer \$7 million for maize he supplied to Zambia in 2001? Theft, misuse of funds and servicing debt increases the cost of goods and services for everyone. Therefore, we need to ask whether the funds that are being realized from this fuel increases are going to mitigate the budget shortfalls caused by the glaring thefts, misappropriation of funds and debt servicing.

In light of these recent revelations of theft, abuse of power and engaging in unnecessary debts servicing (remember the vulture funds), does our nation have leaders with virtue or morality? Do we, as a nation stand for certain principles of which we rarely lose sight of our ultimate objectives? Can the common person be grateful that we have leaders who anguish over the morality of poverty and the responsibility they have for our lives?

Under the situation we are operating on, we cannot endure as a nation. It is the lack of principles and values that have become our greatest threat to a free and prosperous nation. Jeremiah says, "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?" (12:5). If we cannot cope with the basics of internal governance and rule of law, how can we cope with the external invaders? If we have no laws to constraint ourselves, who will make laws that will constraint foreign investors?

Lack of character in those with responsibility and authority is the major reason for our poverty, abuse of power and lack of smooth transition from one political leader to another after elections. A free market economy is dependent upon people being righteous because such people know that doing business is an open door to serve those who the Lord put in their path. They also know that they have a social responsibility to touch the lost, the needy and the hurting lives.

Next time you go to the Gas Station, remember that you're paying high price for the fuel because some public officers have either stolen, or have wasted public resources, or have been careless and lazy in doing their job resulting in billions of public Kwacha being lost.

As a nation, we are confronted with leaders who love to sit in Moses' seat but are not offering relief or redemption from suffering and pain. But there is still an opportunity for us to teach and model Christ life that people learn to live in a vital relationship with God, have strong work ethics and be productive and cause economic growth. If this is what you're doing, then take heart for you will soon acquire a greater return for your service.

Lawrence Temfwe

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