

Hungry protesters take to the streets

Thousands of anti-government demonstrators on Thursday marched through Harare under close surveillance by armed police in the first rally since a deadly crackdown on an election protest in August. The event, which was held with police approval, was organised by the main opposition MDC party, which says it was cheated of victory in the 30 July election. In a mass demonstration two days later, six people died when security forces opened fire on the protesters. A **Business Day** report notes that **much of yesterday's anger was focused on the current economic problems**, with people struggling to cope with dramatic price rises and shortages of essentials such as bread, cooking oil and petrol.

Meanwhile, the Kgalema Motlanthe Commission has finished gathering oral evidence through public hearings into the post-poll violence. It issued a statement saying it has started compiling its final report and recommendations to be presented to President Emmerson Mnangagwa. A report on the **allAfrica** site notes that several witnesses, including relatives of the deceased, army and police commanders and leaders of the opposition have testified. **The commission has also come under fire for not inviting Mnangagwa and Vice-President Constantino Chiwenga** to give evidence. Human rights lawyer and opposition activist Doug Coltart accused the commission of not giving many victims the opportunity to testify. 'I am deeply concerned that the commission has closed its hearings without hearing the testimony of 15 victims whose affidavits were "lost" and were never given an opportunity to be heard,' he said.

For the past two weeks there have been long, winding queues countrywide. The most affected are motorists with petrol-driven engines. At a queue that stretched for a kilometre in Bulawayo's central business district, Charles Moyo said he had spent most of the night waiting for fuel. 'It's now morning and I have to go to work so my daughter who just finished exams will come and take over. There's hope that by midday there will be fuel because this is the only station that has been consistent since the shortages started a few months ago,' he said. A report on the **News24** site notes that **black market dealers have resurfaced but their fuel is only sold in hard currencies**. 'We smuggle it from Botswana because there is less red tape compared to Beitbridge. We only take dollars, pulas and rands. For a litre of petrol we charge R20,' said a dealer. Government sources say there is less than a week's supply of fuel and signs of the acute shortage were already showing with some big service stations in Harare going for days without supplies.