

Bolivia load shifting

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FILE - Handwritten sign with messages that read in Spanish: "We demand solutions from the government", "Arce, don't starve us" and "Solutions, not more problems", hang from vendors' stalls at a street market in La Paz, Bolivia, Oct. 21, 2024.

FILE - Former President Evo Morales participates in an offering to Mother Earth before leading a march to Bolivia's capital, as part of a political dispute with current President Luis Arce and to protest his handling of the economy, in Caracollo, Bolivia, Sept. 17, 2024.

FILE - A woman walks past a mural featuring socialist leaders, from left; former Bolivian President Evo Morales, late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara, at the bus terminal in Sacaba, Bolivia, Nov. 20, 2024.

Across what was once South America's second-largest producer of natural gas, everyone is searching for fuel. Long lines of vehicles snake for several kilometers outside gas stations all over Bolivia. Some queues don't budge for days. Bolivia's fuel crunch follows a currency collapse that is increasingly disrupting economic activity and everyday life for millions of people, hurting commerce and farm production and sending food prices soaring. Mounting public anger has sent crowds into the streets in recent weeks, piling pressure on leftist President Luis Arce to ease the suffering ahead of a tense presidential election next year.

EL ALTO, Bolivia (AP) -- Fuel is rapidly becoming one of Bolivia's scarcest commodities.

Long lines of vehicles snake for several kilometers outside gas stations all over Bolivia, once South America's second-largest producer of natural gas. Some of the queues don't budge for days.

While frustration builds, drivers like Victor Garc a now eat, sleep and socialize around their stationary trucks, waiting to buy just a few gallons of diesel -- unless the station runs dry.

"We don't know what's going to happen, but we're going to be worse off," said Garc a, 66, who inched closer to the pump Tuesday as the hours ticked by in El Alto, a bare-bones sprawl beside Bolivia's capital in the Andean altiplano.

Bolivia's monthslong fuel crunch comes as the nation's foreign currency reserves plummet, leaving Bolivians



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unable to find U.S. dollars at banks and exchange houses. Imported goods that were once commonplace have become scarce.

The fuel crisis has created a sense that the country is coming undone, disrupting economic activity and everyday life for millions of people, hurting commerce and farm production and sending food prices soaring.

Mounting public anger has driven crowds into the streets in recent weeks, piling pressure on leftist President Luis Arce to ease the suffering ahead of a tense election next year.

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