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## **Zimbabwe Inflation almost 1,600%**

By Staff Reporter

Inflation in Zimbabwe has continued to spiral upwards, leaping to a record annual rate of 1,593.6% in January.

Electricity, gas and other fuels were the items that contributed most to the year-on-year inflation rate, according to the Central Statistics Office.

On a month-on-month basis inflation jumped by 45.4%, compared to the 36.3% rise seen in December.

Zimbabwe has also been hit by an unemployment rate of more than 80% and chronic shortages of food and fuel.

Political tensions are rising as urban workers have been hit by the soaring costs of consumer goods, public transport fares and medical fees.

### **'Agitated' Workers**

Doctors and nurses have been on strike since last month, crippling state hospitals and they have now been joined by some teachers and university lecturers.

Last weekend, the top union representing government employees demanded a review of all civil servant salaries, and said if the demand was not met the "agitated" workers would consider protests.

Critics blame President Robert Mugabe's politically-driven policies including the seizure of land from white commercial farmers.

But President Mugabe says Western countries have sabotaged the economy to punish his government for the land seizures.

Zimbabwe's rate of inflation, which the government has dubbed its number one enemy, is the highest in the world.

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