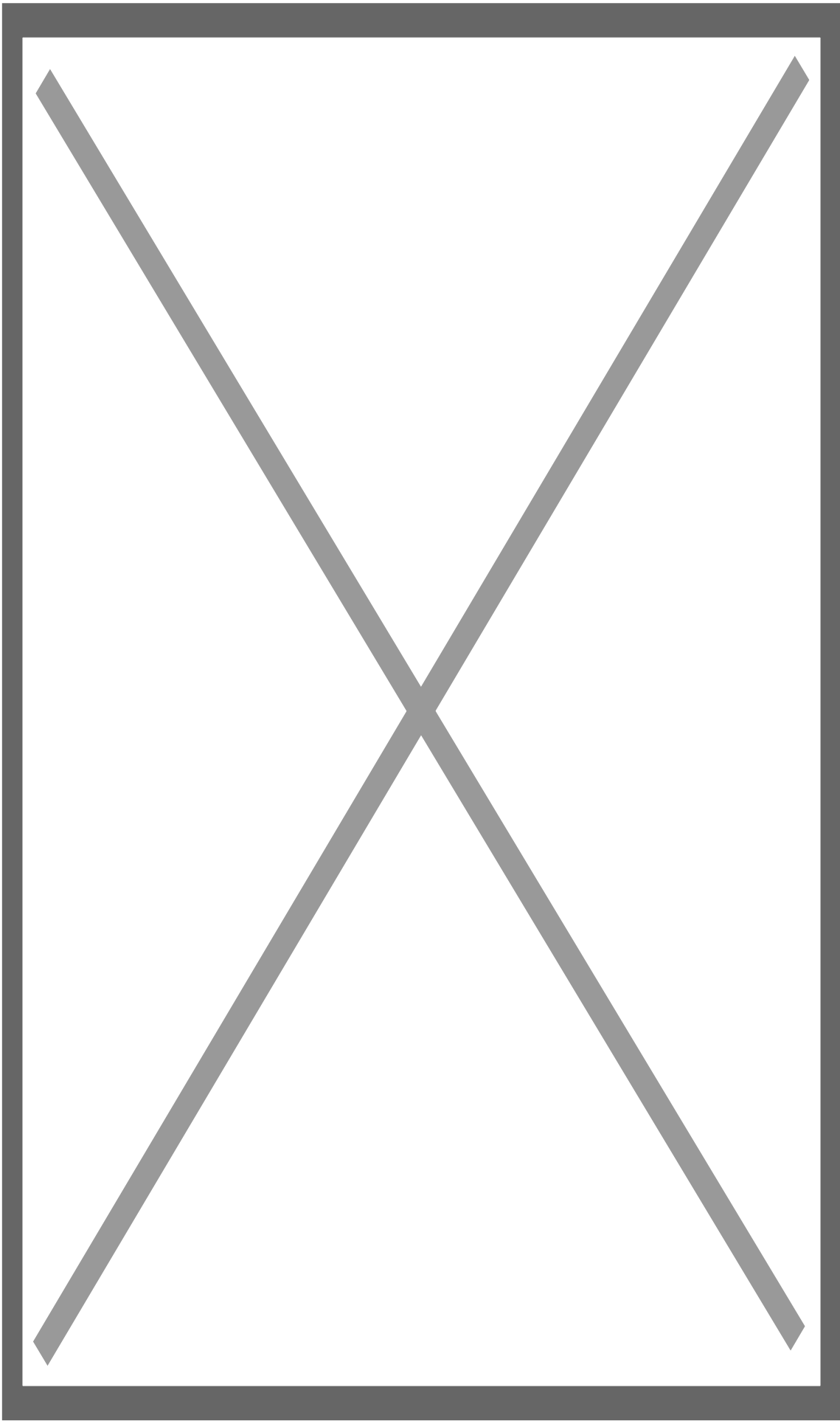


Anger boils in Italy as fuel prices rise again

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The average price of unleaded gasoline at the pump in Italy has once again surged, increasing by over fifteen cents?

Rome, January 5 (RHC)-- According to media sources in Rome, the start of the New Year has brought bad news for the Italians. The average price of unleaded gasoline at the pump in Italy has once again surged, increasing by over fifteen cents - that is about fifteen percent more compared to December 31st.

The latest hike is due to the expiration of measures introduced in May to mitigate the nefarious effects on Italy's economy of an exceptionally high increase in the cost of energy that followed the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The price of unleaded fuel stands now at about one point eight Euros per liter while that of diesel has reached almost two Euros.

Experts fear fuel prices might even increase further after February fifth, when a European Union ban on Russian oil product imports kicks in as part of sanctions against Moscow over the war in Ukraine. This follows a ban on Russian crude that took effect in December.

With a population of fifty nine million and about forty million circulating vehicles, it is easy to understand how vital is the role of road transport in Italy: it accounts for three-quarters of all land transportation of goods. It goes without saying that the country's rising fuel costs for both petrol and diesel will have dreadful consequences for medium and small businesses and for everyday people.

Higher fuel prices further swell living costs for people in Italy, as electricity and gas bills have increased by about three hundred percent since September. Italy was expecting to raise almost ten billion Euros from measures targeting the super profits made by energy companies that benefited from the surge in oil and gas prices. So far only one-quarter of that amount has been paid to the tax office.

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