

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



Sierra Leone's Parliament building, partially obscured from view by the Harmattan dust.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Wednesday, 3 January 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

Local News

No local newspapers have been published this week, as members of the Sierra Leone Vendors Association have declared their annual holiday.

International News

Hinga Norman Aide Joins PMDC / <i>Patriotic Vanguard</i>	Pages 3-4
Vote for Africa's 2006 Significant Moment / <i>BBC</i>	Pages 5-6
The Most Memorable Events of 2006 / <i>The Inquirer</i>	Pages 7-8
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 9-17
Ban Talks Death penalty on First Day / <i>Reuters</i>	Pages 18-19

Patriotic Vanguard website
 2 January 2006
<http://www.thepatrioticvanguard.com>

Hinga Norman Aide Joins PMDC

- Friday 29 December 2006.

By Theophilus S. Gbenda

As the political tempo in Sierra Leone gathers speed the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) has scored yet another goal in its bid to take over the reins of government from the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), come the 2007 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections.

This time around, the PMDC has captured another big fish in the person of Abu Bakarr Turay(photo) popularly known as ABT, an Investigator assigned to the Hinga Norman Defence Team at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Mr. Turay visited the PMDC head office on Hannah Benka Coker Street in the early hours of Wednesday December 27 2006, dressed in full party colours. He was received by scores of party stalwarts who immediately interpreted his coming over to the party as another big blow to the dying SLPP, and a plus for the PMDC.



In an exclusive interview with him, he revealed that he is shifting allegiance to the PMDC because he sees no bright future for the SLPP, adding that as far as he is concerned, the present SLPP is by all indications vindictive.

He said the likes of former Vice President Albert Joe Demby, Harry Will, Momoh Pujeh and Charles Francis Margai, lost their positions in the SLPP without members of the party knowing any reason for such. He went on to state that the former Coordinator of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and Minister in the Tejan Kabbah led administration, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, got his incarceration under the watchful eyes of the government he selflessly fought to return to power, noting on a rather sad note that to the best of his knowledge, no member of the SLPP has ever paid him an official visit or shown any sign of sympathy to him since his incarceration about four years ago.

Mr. Turay pointed out that if the SLPP as a party could now see Chief Norman as an enemy, then he is afraid for himself. He said the President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah may mean well for the nation, but some people around him have not been adequately informing him about the real situation on the ground.

A typical example he said, was his arrest on August 5 2005 by armed police personnel who raided his residence at 0500 hours, on allegations that he was planning to overthrow the government. He said judging by the way and manner in which the matter was handled, it is possible that the President was unaware of his arrest and the circumstances surrounding it. He went on to refer to his arrest and eight days detention in police custody as mere intimidation because of his affiliation with the detained Chief Hinga Norman. On why he decided to come over to the PMDC, Mr. Turay stated that he loves the PMDC, and is okay with the calibre of people behind it.

"If I truly love my country, I should make up my mind to join forces with those patriotic sons and daughters of the soil who have come together to form the PMDC with the sole aim of ushering positive changes in our beloved country", Mr. Turay said, adding that with the calibre of people behind Mr. Charles Francis Margai, he is optimistic that the party will emerge victorious come the 2007 general elections.

He dismissed claims by certain individuals that the PMDC is made up of frustrated people who defected from the SLPP all because they felt slighted. According to him, even if that is the case, one cannot disown his own brother simply because he is crazy - something he said the SLPP has done. "I don't see myself associating with such a party", Mr. Turay said. He praised the leadership qualities of Mr. Charles Francis Margai, saying evidences are there to show that he is the kind of leader this country is craving for.

Asked whether Chief Norman is aware of his move to the PMDC, he said yes, revealing: "I told him I am going to join the PMDC and he gave me his blessing". According to Mr. Turay, it is just a matter of time, Chief Norman too will openly declare for the PMDC.

Mr. Turay further maintained that he will personally ensure that Chief Norman makes a statement in that direction pretty soon. He said he will ever remain loyal to Chief Norman despite his current predicament. According to him also, some enemies within the SLPP who do not like Chief Norman, are only anticipating his death because they see him as a threat. "I can assure you that my coming over to the PMDC is an indication that Chief Norman is not too far from same", he added. He therefore called on supporters of Chief Norman to begin to pack their bags and bundles for an onward journey onboard

BBC

Saturday, 30 December 2006

Vote for Africa's 2006 significant moment

It has been a dramatic year for Africa which saw the birth of democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has ended in uncertainty for the war-torn nation of Somalia.

Nigeria's 140m people stood up to be counted in their first census in 15 years and big names like Liberia's Charles Taylor discovered they were not beyond the law.

Football fans feasted on the African Nations Cup and Ghana got pulses racing by making it through to the second round of the World Cup.

World headlines, meanwhile, were dominated by the mass African migrant exodus to the Canaries; Madonna's adoption of a one-year-old in Malawi and China's growing influence on the continent.



Read the shortlist below and vote on the right

But now it is time for you to decide what you think was Africa's most significant story this year from a shortlist selected by BBC **Focus on Africa** listeners.

TOP AFRICA STORIES 2006

DR Congo: elections



Joseph Kabila became DR Congo's first freely elected leader in 40 years winning a tense presidential poll in October, bringing hopes of peace to the war-ravaged nation.

Liberia: arrest



Former Liberian leader Charles Taylor was taken into custody by the UN-backed court for Sierra Leone after a dramatic escape attempt in Nigeria. His trial for war crimes starts next year in the Hague.

Nigeria: third term



Nigeria's Senate quashed any further presidential hopes for President Olusegun Obasanjo in May by throwing out a bill to amend the constitution to allow third terms.

South Africa: rape trial



South African politician Jacob Zuma was acquitted of rape charges, but apologised for not using a condom, a revelation that caused shock in a country where millions are infected with HIV.

Sudan: Darfur crisis



As the crisis in Sudan's Darfur region entered its third year, May's deal failed to quell the violence that has spilled into Chad and the government remained impervious to international pressure.

Uganda: peace talks

VOTE RESULTS

What was Africa's most significant moment of 2006?



27.67%

Nigeria third term rejected

| 12.54%

Jacob Zuma's rape trial

| 5.47%

Failure to deal with Darfur

| 31.71%

Ugandan rebel peace talks

| 5.03%

2942 Votes Cast

Results are indicative and may not reflect public opinion

The Inquirer (Monrovia)

Friday, 29 December 2006

The Most Memorable Events of 2006

The Inquirer (Monrovia)

OPINION

By Charles Crawford

In consonance with the tradition of this paper to reflect on the most memorable events at the end of each year, we would like to retrospect the two most memorable events of the year 2006.

You may agree with me that the two most memorable events of the year 2006 were the inauguration of Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Liberia's 23rd President who has now gone down in history as the first female President of Liberia yea the Continent of Africa; and the arrest and subsequent imprisonment of the former President, Charles Taylor on charges of war crimes and crime against humanity.

On Monday, January 16, 2006, President Sirleaf took the oath of office to steer the affairs of the nation for six consecutive years as enshrined in the Constitution. Seven world leaders and a score of dignitaries representing their respective countries, governments and organizations graced this colorful event that was held on the grounds of the Capitol Building.

Declaring the birth of national renewal as she took the oath of affirmation in the presence of some of her African colleagues, scores of international figures and Liberians, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf vowed to wage war on corruption; reconcile all Liberians, bring about good governance; accountability and transparency in government's operations, etc, etc.

African leaders who graced the inauguration of the nation's 23rd President were Presidents Olusegun Obassanjo of Nigeria, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, John Kufour of Ghana, Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone, Blaise Campaore of Burkina Faso, Ahmed Toumani Toure of Mali, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Paul Chassingbe of Togo.

Amongst the high profiles in attendance at the colorful event were the First Lady of the United States, Mrs. Laura Bush and Dr. Condeleeza Rice, U.S Secretary of State.

Another memorable event of the year 2006 was the arrest and the imprisonment of Liberia's former President, Charles Taylor.

In August 2003, Mr. Taylor relinquished power to his Vice President, Moses Blah, to seek asylum in Carlabia, Nigeria as part of the Accra Peace Deal that was brokered by former leaders of the defunct warring factions, political parties, civil society groups and stakeholders in the city of Accra, Ghana in August 2003 with the assistance from the international community.

Following two and half years of his stay in Carlabia, the dust was finally settled for his arrest and subsequent turn over to the United Nations backed Special War Crime Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone, to face the 17 charges of War Crime and Crime against humanity which were later reduced to 11 counts Charges.

"God willing I will be back," were the last words that came from the mouth of former President Taylor before turning over the mantle of authority to Mr. Blah at the induction ceremony that was held in the Parlors of the Executive Mansion on August 11, 2003.

True to his words, he came home on a Nigerian Presidential aircraft on Wednesday March 29th 2006 but only to find himself being arrested and handcuffed on his own soil for charges of war crime and crime against humanity.

The day before Mr. Taylor's arrest, the Nigerian government announced that he has disappeared from his asylum residence in Carlaba, Nigeria. According to the Nigerian government, Mr. Taylor and his family left Carlaba for an unknown destination.

This news did not go down well with the international community that was pressing for Mr. Taylor's prosecution by the Special Court. And so, pressures from all quarters within the international community were mounted on Nigeria for the location and turn over of Mr. Taylor to the court.

Heeding to pressures, the Nigerian government announced during the morning hours of March 29, that its securities have arrested Mr. Taylor in a town bordering Nigeria with Chad, and that modalities were being worked out for his possible extradition to Liberia.

The Presidential aircraft that brought Mr. Taylor to Liberia touched the Roberts International Airport in Margibi County in the afternoon of the same date (March 29,2006). But upon his immediate arrival, he was arrested by UNMIL military personnel who were acting upon the orders from the UN backed Special Court and sent to the court in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Due to threats the Taylor's trial in Freetown posed to the peace and security in the Mano River basin, the trial was therefore changed from Freetown to The Hague in the Netherlands.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 2 January 2007

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

Five Police Officers Deployed to Liberia

Harare, Dec 31, 2006 (The Herald/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --THE 16th group of Zimbabwean police officers deployed to the United Nations contingent in Liberia left Harare yesterday to take over from their compatriots who recently completed their tour of duty. Acting Police Commissioner Godwin Matanga yesterday bade farewell to the five police officers. The total number of officers deployed so far is 94. "The handover and takeover scenarios that have become of the Zimbabwe Republic Police in the United Nations mission in **Liberia** is good testimony of the United Nations faith in our police officers," said Deputy Commissioner Matanga, who is responsible for operations.

From Warfare to 'Panpan': Liberia's Ex-combatants Help Ease Transport Problem

12/31/06 FrontPageAfrica.com--Gbarnga, Bong County - Liberians both at home and abroad witnessed the participation of thousands of youths during the fourteen years of bloody civil war. Most of the young Liberians killed and destroyed the infrastructural assets of their country. Thanks to the 15,000-strong UN Force in Liberia, the rebels have been disarmed. While most of them are in schools, scores of others have embarked on other positive ventures – one particular drawing interest is transportation. Most of the ex-fighters used their DDDR Packages to purchase mini motor cycles widely known as "panpan" for transportation purposes something which the Liberian government has lauded.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivorian rebels snub Gbagbo bid to bypass peace plan

BOUAKE, Ivory Coast, Jan 1 (Reuters) - Ivory Coast's northern-based New Forces rebels on Monday rejected a bid by President Laurent Gbagbo to bypass a U.N.-backed peace plan and hold direct talks with them. Gbagbo announced his own plans on Dec. 19 to end the partition of the cocoa-growing country after a 2002/03 civil war, including direct talks with the rebels, in what was widely interpreted as a further snub to the U.N.-backed process. But in a New Year's statement on Monday, New Forces leader Guillaume Soro made clear any talks would have to follow the process laid out by U.N. Security Council resolution 1721, adopted in November, which hands broad control of reunification and organising delayed elections to an interim prime minister.

Chocolate may become more expensive in 2007 as cocoa prices rise

By **Danielle Rossingh**
 Bloomberg
 Tuesday, January 2, 2007

LONDON — Cocoa prices gained in London after a breakdown in peace talks between rebels and the government of Ivory Coast, the world's biggest producer of the beans. Rebels have rejected attempts by the Ivory Coast government to hold direct negotiations rather than holding talks through the United Nations, Al Jazeera reported, citing the rebels. Cocoa prices have gained 8.4 percent in London and almost 12 percent in New York since the beginning of November, when the UN said it was "seriously concerned" by clashes that had occurred in Abidjan, the commercial capital of the West African country.

Local Media – Newspaper

Press Union of Liberia Denounces President's X-Mas Gift

(The Inquirer and Daily Observer)

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) has defended as brilliant, the decision by some media institutions to reject the US\$500 checks from President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf for "Christmas party."
- In a statement, the Union considered the move by some media managers to return the President's gift as a strong courage and will to resist attempts to further subject the press to public ridicule.
- The PUL also condemned journalists who "shamelessly" signed for and expended the money without regards for their code of ethics.

Police Turn over Kidnapped Girl to Guinean Security

(Daily Observer)

- [sic:] The 21 year-old woman who was arrested six days ago for her alleged involvement in the trafficking of a little girl was on Saturday turned over to Guinean security authority. Also turned over was the motorcyclist who brought them into Liberia. The victim was also turned over to the Guineans.
- The 21 year-old woman, Kou Moilay, was arrested on 26 December while negotiating to sell a teenage girl she had abducted or kidnapped from Guinea.

Armed Robbers Attack WHO Staffer

(The Inquirer)

- [sic:] More than five well armed men last Friday morning attacked the residence of a senior staff of the World Health Organization (WHO), Edvida Neblett Barclay, in the Paynesville community and took away several valuable items.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 9:45 am)*

Government to Enact New Anti-Corruption Law

- In a statement released at the weekend, the government said it plans to enact new laws to criminalize acts of corruption and impose penalties for illicit enrichment both before and after conviction and said an anti- corruption institution would be set up to investigate and prosecute all corrupt cases in coordination with the justice ministry.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Campaign to Weed out Illegal Press Attaches at Liberia's Foreign Mission Launched

- Speaking to reporters at the weekend, Information Minister designate, Dr. Laurence Bropleh disclosed that the government has launched a campaign against illegal press attaches operating at Liberia diplomatic missions abroad with the aim to discourage foreign mission personnel from acting beyond their scope of operations.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Civil Service Agency to Introduce Biometric Identification System

- In an interview, the Director General of the Civil Service Agency, Dr. William Allen disclosed that there are plans to introduce a Biometric Identification System in the civil service records of the country to resolve the problem of ghost names on government's payroll and undermine the duplication of names in the public sector.
- Dr. Allen said the new technology would require that the fingerprints and other features of each civil servant be reflected in his or her records.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Taylor Confidant wants Audit of National Patriotic Party Government

- A former Bomi County Representative during the Taylor regime, Mr. Sando Johnson, has called for an audit of the financial records of the former National Patriotic Party government to establish the guilt or innocence of that government which was perceived to be highly corrupt.
- Mr. Johnson recalled that the European Union conducted audit on key agencies during the Taylor's era and wants government look at the report for possible action.

Speaker Snowe Envisages a more Objective Legislature

- In an interview, Speaker Edwin Snowe says the House of Representatives would be much more objective in the discharge of its duties during the New Year. He said the first sitting of the Lower House was a period of orientation for lawmakers and said the second sitting would be a period of critical discussion on issues and not what he described as "grand standing".

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 30 December 2006

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

Why the TRC is dying slowly for Lack of Support

Front Page Africa
29/12/2006

In the Analyst News release published on December 21, 2006, the Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Liberia Cllr. Jerome Verdier called on Liberians and the international community for support and added that the failure of the TRC would pose a threat to peace and national reconciliation. The hard truth is the TRC is dying slowly for lack of support because its mandate is characterized by the following inconsistencies and omissions.

Liberian Amputees to Lock Horns with Sierra Leoneans Sunday

Front Page Africa
29/12/2006

Monrovia - The recent war in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone did not only kill thousands of people but left many people with amputated legs. Though most of these people were fighters, some were innocent civilians who suffered the war. For Sierra Leone the story is different. The Revolutionary United Front Rebel which was alleged to have received more warlike supports from Charles Taylor intentionally amputated the legs of hundreds of innocent citizens of Sierra Leone. Now that the war is over in both sisterly countries, the amputees of both countries have decided to get involved in several ventures including sports. In an effort to improve their well-being and enhance their social and economic reintegration, the NCDDRR have put in place measures to provide opportunities for them to acquire formal education and vocation skills training, and enhance the psychosocial component for rehabilitating and reintegrating the physically challenged former combatants. Perhaps this is what prompted the NCDDRR with support from UNDP to stage an international football tournament for single-legged amputees in the West African Sub-Region.

International Clips on West Africa

(No Related Stories Found)

Local Media – Newspaper

(No newspaper published today)

STAR RADIO (News culled from website today at 8:30am)

Opposition Liberty Party wants Review of Central Bank Act

- In an interview, the Acting National Chairman of the opposition Liberty Party, Israel Akinsanya, called on the National Legislature to critically review the Act creating the Central Bank of Liberia and all other acts promulgated by past regimes.
- Mr. Akinsanya also called for the Executive Mansion to ensure transparency in the distribution of the three million United States dollars initially allocated to Nimba, Bong and Grand Bassa Counties by Mittal Steel for development purposes.

Over 500 Fishermen Threatened to Stage Protest March

- During a meeting held in the Township of West Point, a slum of Monrovia, over five hundred fishermen threatened to stage a peaceful march to draw government's attention to their plight.
- The fishermen alleged that they have reported to government on several occasions the presence of foreign fishing vessels on Liberian waters but the government's agencies responsible are silent on the issue.

UNMIL Ghanaian Soldiers Accused of Brutalizing two Liberians

- [sic:] Two Liberians, Jerry Gontee and Sidiki Keita have accused UNMIL Ghanaian soldiers of brutalizing them on suspicion of theft.
- The men claimed they went near the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Company (LPRC) for scraps when they were arrested and taken to the Ghanaian Base in Gardnersville and humiliated.
- Police authorities have refused to detain the men because of their condition. The police also refused to press charges until the men were treated.

Four Illegal Aliens Arrested In Sinoe

- Immigration authorities in Sinoe County have arrested four aliens for illegal residence.
- The Immigration Commander in the County, Col. Abaoyomi Santi, said some of the aliens have been residing in the county for nearly fourteen years and are involved in illegal business transactions there.

UN Refugee Agency on Repatriation of Liberian Refugees

- Speaking at an honouring programme, UNHCR Representative to Liberia, Mr. Mengesha Kebede, said the biggest challenge of the agency is the total repatriation and resettlement of Liberian refugees and said that no programme around the world could be compared to that of Liberia.
- Mr. Kebede said the UNHCR has rehabilitated and constructed over seventy-two clinics across the country.
- The Executive Director of the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission appealed to the UN Refugee Agency for logistical support to enable the commission implement its statutory functions.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Weah Karpeh at karpeh@un.org.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 27 December 2006

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

Federal U.S. judge to rule on Firestone treatment of Liberian workers

Running Africa – (source: The Mercury News) – December 27 2006 - The wake-up call comes each morning before 4:30. In the dark, 6,000 weary men follow the faint beams of flashlights to their assigned spaces on a massive farm of rubber trees. As night melts into day under the harsh West African sun, each worker will tend to as many as 650 trees, collecting sap in a pair of metal buckets hanging from a wooden pole that he balances on one shoulder. In one backbreaking day he'll collect several hundred pounds of the sap, better known as latex, to be shipped to the United States to make tires, surgical gloves, condoms and countless other goods.

Liberia gets \$25 million for electricity in Monrovia

12/27/06 - News Service Reports

Monrovia - The Liberian government's efforts to restore electricity to the capital Monrovia got a boost Tuesday with a US\$25.2 million contribution from the international development partners, according to official sources. A memorandum to consummate the project was signed Tuesday in Monrovia between diplomats from Norway, the European Commission (EC), the United States and World Bank, and Liberian officials. According to the agreement, the money will be used to supply electricity in the capital and its suburbs.

Soldiers get 15m makeover to pull Army out of the past

Source: IRISH INDEPENDENT Date: December 27, 2006--IRISH soldiers are to get a 15m makeover to bring their personal equipment into line with other modern armies. They will get new accessories including state-of-the-art body armour, ballistic helmets and battle vests which will better protect the soldiers when they embark on dangerous missions such as in Liberia.

International Clips on West Africa

Review: Details: Diamonds are forever... or not: The human cost of mining for

bling has set Hollywood against the diamond industry

Source: THE OBSERVER Date: December 24, 2006 --As the song goes, diamonds are a girl's best friend - and like all best friends they were bound to fall out sooner or later. A big dirty (sparkle-free) spat between Hollywood and the diamond industry has been triggered by the new Leonardo DiCaprio movie Blood Diamond .A Warner Bros production, directed by Ed Zwick, it is set against the backdrop of civil war in Sierra Leone in the 1990s and highlights the issue of 'conflict diamonds' - fought over and also illegally mined to finance fighting in under-developed countries.

Ivory Coast reopens disarmament talks with rebels

YAMOUSSOUKRO, Dec 27 (Reuters) - The military heads of **Ivory Coast's** New Forces rebels met with army chiefs on Tuesday for the first time since a new U.N.-backed peace plan, in a bid to relaunch the disarmament process in the West African state. Efforts to reunite the world's top cocoa growing nation -- divided into a government-controlled south and a rebel north since a short 2002-2003 war -- have been mired in political squabbling which has derailed efforts at disarming the opposing factions.

Local Media – Newspaper

Government and Partners Sign US\$25.2M Electrification MOU

(The Analyst, Heritage and The Informer)

- The Liberian Government and its partners in the emergency power initiative (EPP) last week signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of phase two of the programme.
- By the signing of the MOU, several parts of the city and many other suburbs will be lit as soon as possible.
- The project which is valued at US\$25.2m was signed between the government and the Royal Government of Norway, the European Commission, the United States of America and the World Bank at the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy.

Executive Mansion Thrashes Speaker Snowe's Claims

(The Analyst, Heritage and Public Agenda)

- The Executive Mansion has thrashed claims by Speaker Edwin Snowe that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was masterminding attempts by some members of the Legislature to impeach him.
- Addressing journalists recently, Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Badio said the allegations by Speaker Snowe were untrue and that the President's primary preoccupation remains the creation of jobs for the people and not to engage in "petty politics."

Health Workers Threaten Strike Action in Rivercess County

(The Analyst)

- Some 120 health workers in Rivercess County have threatened to strike if their names were not included on the government's payroll.
- The County's Health Administrator, Joshua Cotie, said that only 20 of the health practitioners are on the government's payroll while the remaining 100 workers are volunteers.

Government Close to Arresting Ex-Chairman Bryant on Corruption Charges

(Heritage and The Informer)

- Justice Minister Counsellor Frances Johnson-Morris said Tuesday that the Government was not far from arresting former Transitional Head of State, Charles Gyude Bryant, for his alleged involvement in corruption during his two-year tenure.
- Mr. Bryant and several of his former officials were indicted by an ECOWAS audit report for supposedly stealing more than nine million United States dollars.

18 International Companies to Invest Over US\$44M in Liberia's Economy

(The News)

- [sic:] The Chairman of the National Investment Commission (NIC) Richard V. Tolbert has revealed that 18 international companies have expressed interest to invest over US\$44m in the Liberian economy.
- Mr. Tolbert said the companies, when established, would create jobs for more than 500 persons, adding that the government was working out the technical details with the companies.

17 Drug Suspects Escape from Police Cell

(The Inquirer)

- Seventeen suspects recently arrested for allegedly dealing in illicit drugs have all escaped from a prison cell at the Headquarters of the Monrovia City Police.

ECOWAS Foreign Ministers Recommend Lifting of Sanctions on Liberia

(Daily Observer)

- Foreign Ministers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) meeting in Ouagadougou have recommended the lifting of all sanctions on Liberia to enable the country benefit from its resources.

Police Disrobes Officer for Murder

(The Inquirer)

- The Liberia National Police has disrobed Patrolman Solomon M. Karn for his alleged involvement in a scuffle which led to the death of a man identified as Vasco Obe.
- Police Inspector General Muna Sieh told a news conference Tuesday that officer Karn who was assigned in Kakata, Margibi County, has been turned over for investigation.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 9:45 am)*

Seventeen Inmates Escape from Prison

(Also reported on Star Radio and ELBS)

Government Threatens to Arrest Illegal Scrap Dealers

- A Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy release said government will arrest scrap dealing companies and individuals involved in illegal scrapping activities.
- The release said some scrap companies are engaged in the "random destruction" of salvageable assets and threatened to cancel all contracts with scrapping companies found violating government's regulations on scrap materials.

(Also reported on Star Radio and ELBS)

Thirteen Female Prisoners Released following Presidential Pardon

- The Liberian Government yesterday released thirteen female prisoners from the Monrovia Central Prison after last week's presidential pardon for minor offenders. The government said it freed the women for lack of "sufficient" evidence to successfully prosecute them.
- However, there are doubts as to why the government freed only women from the Monrovia Central Prison whereas there are hundreds of men.

(Also reported on Star Radio and ELBS)

STAR RADIO *(News culled from website today at 8:30am)*

UN Refugee Agency Hands Over Projects to Government Today

- A release issue in Monrovia yesterday said, UNHCR-Liberia in collaboration with its implementing partner, African Concern International, is expected to hand over several projects to the Government today, Wednesday.
- The projects worth over US\$30,000 include the Bong Mines Police Station in Fuama District, Doblí Island Public School in Heindi, the Quinta Bridge and a hand pump in Zangbiana village.

Police Officer Disrobes for Murder

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Reuters

Wednesday, 3 January 2006

Ban talks death penalty on first day

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon started his first day on the job on Tuesday by departing from the traditional UN opposition to the death penalty, saying nations can make their own decision.

Ban, a former South Korean foreign minister succeeding Kofi Annan of Ghana, was greeted by a UN honour guard, went to a UN meditation chapel to honor fallen peacekeepers, spoke to reporters and held a mass meeting with UN staff.



Asked about the weekend execution of Saddam Hussein, Ban, 62, said the former Iraqi leader committed "heinous crimes and unspeakable atrocities against the Iraqi people and we should never forget the victims of these crimes."

But he said, "The issue of capital punishment is for each and every member state to decide" and in conformity with international law. South Korea is among the 68 nations that retain the death penalty although Seoul is considering abolishing it.

Groups such as Human Rights Watch have criticised the death penalty against Saddam, saying it was imposed after a "deeply flawed trial" with political interference. Annan and leading UN rights officials also have opposed capital punishment, as has the European Union.

The UN special representative in Iraq, Ashraf Qazi, released a statement on Sunday saying that the world body "remains opposed to capital punishment, even in the case of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide."

Ban's new spokeswoman, Michele Montas of Haiti, said, "The UN policy still remains that the organization is not for capital punishment." She said Ban's comments were nuanced but would not say whether he agreed with Qazi.

While Ban intends to make a fresh start, he is being pressured by the United States, Britain, France and others for control of key departments as were his predecessors.

Expected appointments

Sir John Holmes, Britain's former ambassador to France, is expected to head the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, formerly run by Jan Egeland, who resigned last month and returned to Norway, UN sources said.

A US citizen may head the political affairs department or perhaps even peacekeeping, although most envoys believe Frenchman Jean-Marie Guehenno will stay on the job, at least for the time being.

The United States for years held the management and administration department, which is now expected to go to Mexican Alicia Barcena, who served as Annan's chief of staff since June, Reuters reported on Sunday.

Ban's main message to the staff was that "morale has plummeted" in recent years when the bureaucracy was the target of harsh and sometimes unfair criticism.

"Not all the criticisms are justified but some of them warrant our urgent attention and we must take bold steps to dispel them," he said.

Ban also told reporters the crisis in Sudan's Darfur region was "very high on my agenda" and he would meet with his special envoy Jan Eliasson of Sweden on Wednesday morning.

He announced he would attend an African Union summit at the end of January in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and talk to Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir there.

The United Nations is seeking to get a peacekeeping force in Sudan's western arid Darfur region, where violence has escalated, rapes have multiplied and more than 2.5 million people have lost their homes. Bashir has put conditions on a UN peacekeeping force to bolster the under-financed 7,000 African Union troops, now in Darfur.