

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



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:

Friday, 2 February 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Local News

Prosecutor Welcomes Start Date in Taylor Trial / <i>Independent Observer</i>	Page 3
Between Chief Norman and PMDC / <i>New Vision</i>	Page 4
Lawyers Strike Cripples Court Sitings / <i>Standard Times</i>	Page 5

International News

Taylor's Trial Set for June 4 / <i>Star Radio</i>	Page 6
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 7-9
UNMIL Outlines Indian Police Women Responsibility / <i>The Analyst (Monrovia)</i>	Page 10

Independent Observer
Friday, 2 February 2007

Prosecutor Welcomes **Start Date in Taylor** **Trial, Promises Access** **for Sierra Leoneans**

The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is slated to begin this spring, as ordered by a Judge of the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. The case against Mr. Taylor, who is accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity during the civil war in Sierra Leone from 1996 through 2002, will begin on June 4.

At the Taylor Status Conference held on January 26 at the trial venue in The Hague, it was announced that the date for commencement of trial had been changed from the original date of April 2 at the request of the Taylor Defence to provide additional time for its preparations.

Justice Teresa Doherty, who presided at the Status Conference, made rulings on several other matters, including the setting of the date for the filing of pre-trial briefs. Taylor has pleaded innocent to charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity linked to the killing, mutilation, and sexual violence involving thousands of victims, as well as the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Responding to reporters questions after the hearing concerning the nature of the Prosecution case, Stephen Rapp, The Prosecutor, said, The indictment alleged acts that included the most horrendous things humans can do to one another.

Whereas the other trials of the Special Court for Sierra Leone are being conducted in that nation capital, Freetown, the Taylor case will unfold at the facilities of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The Prosecutor noted that the decision to move the trial was a result of negotiations aimed to keep the peace in Sierra Leone and the region as a whole. The decision was supported by the United Nations and the key governments in the region, including Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Mr. Rapp emphasised that while the trial has been moved due to regional security concerns, it is the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and only the Special Court, that is conducting this trial. I want to emphasise from the outset that this trial will be conducted first and foremost in the name of, and on behalf of, the people of Sierra Leone. Regarding concerns that the distance between The Hague and the Sierra Leonean capital would prevent the people of the country from witnessing justice being done, The Prosecutor spoke about the extensive Outreach programme of the Court. Last year, 780 meetings were held in every region of the country to inform the public of the Court work, Mr. Rapp commented. "Every effort is being and will be made to ensure that Sierra Leoneans have transparent access to this trial."

New Vision
Friday, 2 February 2007

Editorial

Between Chief Norman and PMDC

About two weeks ago, supporters of the Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) circulated a press release purportedly signed by Chief Norman and eight other detainees at the Special Court in which they pledged their loyalty and support for the SLPP party.

That press release, a copy of which was obtained by the New Vision, was actually signed on the eleventh day of January 2007, some days before the departure of the former Kamajor Kin pin and RUF strong man to Senegal for medical treatment.

Upon obtaining a copy, the New Vision investigated the veracity or otherwise of the statement by speaking directly with Chief Norman in his hotel room in Dakar.

In that interview, Mr. Norman denied knowledge of the press statement and even vowed to make a formal rebuttal once he was through with his medications, a development which the New Vision reported.

Then a week later the PMDC organ 'Positive Change' came out with the same press release claiming that Norman and all indicted at the Special Court had actually declared their intentions to join the PMDC and not the SLPP.

It is the inalienable rights of people to join any political party of their choice. A right that the New Vision will not question nor undermine.

We are aware of the fact that Chief Norman had on many occasions before actually dissociated himself from any other political organisation other than the SLPP.

We also know that late last year he spoke via mobile phone to a group of ex-fighters in the Southern Provincial town of Bo and pleaded with them not to switch allegiance to any other party but the SLPP.

What is baffling us is the seeming double standards at play in the whole scenario.

As a matter of fact the New Vision reckons that the signature of particularly Chief Norman as it appeared on that statement, even if it was forged, was done so cleverly and to clear all doubts, we took the initiative to speak to him over telephone.

The only signature that we questioned was that of Musa Allieu Kodowei, as an illiterate, we were told usually signs with his thumb prints. But in the statement Kodowei signed at least like a semi literate, which a family member claimed was forged. That particular signature to us discredited the whole statement.

Furthermore, we are inclined to think that Chief Norman, being what he is, may never have signed that document only to disclaim it afterwards.

With his current predicament, he has nothing to lose by simply making a political choice.

However, for the PMDC to actually publish the story in its own mouth piece; gives some legitimacy to the document.

Before we pass judgment on the matter, we will only hope and pray for the safe return of Mr. Norman whose response will once and for all complete a notable political drama to a close.

Standard Times
Friday, 2 February 2007

Lawyers strike cripples court sittings

BY UNISSA BANGURA

The law court building on Siaka Stevens Street in Freetown, which used to be jam-packed with all categories of people including prisoners in remand at the central prison awaiting justice to be done to their matters, was virtually empty yesterday, leaving the people disappointed, especially when they discovered that the Sierra Leone Bar Association was on strike.

CONTINUED PAGE 15

Lawyers strike cripples court sittings

FROM PAGE 1

During the normal routine beat of this reporter, he discovered that the strike action has rendered the smooth running of the court session ineffective, with no court sittings in the entire High and Appeals Courts. The same thing was prevalent at the magistrate courts.

According to reports, there are close to two hundred cases scheduled for hearing yesterday. But owing to the absence of legal personnel to represent their clients no sittings were commenced.

Following a brief chat with some police prosecutors and court registrars, this reporter learned that the strike action is purely for solicitors. They disclosed that the effect of the strike action on the running of the courts is that large number of cases will not be heard.

A court registrar (name withheld) further explained that the courts are in their normal sittings. As a result all police prosecuted matters are still ongoing.

Outside the vicinity of the court building, majority of the people were not happy with the strike nation. In fact, they maintained that they merely wasted their precious time to come to court and only to be informed about another adjourned date.

The strike action itself was based on certain amendments relating to Section 24 of the Legal Practitioners Act 2000 which the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Mr. Fred Carew has sought an amendment without prior notice to the Sierra Leone Bar Association.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Wednesday, 31 January 2007

Taylor's trial set for June 4

Written by Wellington Geevon Smith

The lead prosecutor for the UN-backed Special Court on Tuesday said the trial of former President Charles Taylor would commence on June 4.

Mr. Taylor has been indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp said the trial represents the vindication of the principle that no person, no matter what their position, is above the law.

He also said the court has raised half the money needed this year for Taylor's trial.

According to the Chief Prosecutor, the court needed thirty-three million United States dollars for 2007.

Chief Prosecutor Rapp was appointed to the post last December.

To ensure transparency, the BBC World Service Trust will send two Liberian and two Sierra Leonean journalists to The Hague.

The journalists would be there for the duration of the trial so that they can report back to their home countries on the proceedings.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 1 February 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

Chinese Leader in War-battered Liberia, Under the Spotlight over Sudan

MONROVIA, Feb 1, 2007 (AFP) - President Hu Jintao of China arrived in Liberia Thursday ahead of the most important stage of his African tour when he meets with Sudan's leaders about oil supplies and the Darfur conflict. Hu is on the second stop of an eight-nation Africa tour aimed at winning a larger share of Africa's oil and mineral resources.

China's Hu heads to Liberia

MONROVIA, Feb 1, 2007 (AFP) - Chinese President Hu Jintao was to travel to Liberia Thursday on the second leg of his African tour aimed at winning a larger share of the continent's oil and energy resources. The streets and war-blackened buildings in the Oceanside capital of Monrovia are brightly festooned with Chinese and Liberian flags in Hu's honour.

International Clips on West Africa

The State of the Sierra Leone Woman

Freetown, Jan 31, 2007 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --The state of the Sierra Leone woman is deplorable and painful. Despite efforts by organizations such as Amnesty International and other human rights agencies to change these deplorable lives, it is still worrisome and alarming a situation in Sierra Leone.

Ivorian Foes Set for Talks

OUAGADOUGOU, Jan 31, 2007 (AFP) - Preliminary direct talks between Ivory Coast foes to re-start the country's peace process are due Monday under the mediation of Burkina Faso's president, an official said Wednesday. "February 5 is the date which was set for the first contact of the three for talks to end the crisis in Ivory Coast," Seydou Ouedraogo, advisor to President Blaise Compaore, told AFP.

Local Media – Newspaper

Chinese President Visits Liberia Today in Continuation of African Tour

(Daily Observer, The News, Heritage, The Analyst, Liberian Express, The Inquirer, New Vision, The Monitor and National Chronicle)

- The President of the People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao, will arrive in Liberia today on a one-day State visit as guest of the Government of Liberia in continuation of an 8-nation African tour.
- The visit is the first by a Chinese President, especially since the two countries re-established diplomatic ties in 2003.
- China has made significant contribution to the post-war reconstruction of Liberia. Currently, there are about 500 Chinese peacekeeping troops serving the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Yet, Liberia expects that President Jintao's visit would bring more opportunities to the Country.

Speaker Snowe Says He Has No Plan to Resign

(Liberian Express)

- Contrary to speculations in the media that he was planning to resign as Speaker, Mr. Edwin Snowe told reporters that it would not be politically expedient for him to resign his post as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Special Court Raises US\$33M for Taylor's Trial

(Liberian Express)

- [sic:] Half of the US\$33 million needed this year for the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor on war crimes charges has been raised, State Prosecutor Rapp said.

Executive Mansion Discounts Allegations of Violation

(The Analyst)

- The Executive Mansion yesterday discounted allegations that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf violated the Constitution of Liberia and the Supreme Court of Liberia when she delivered her annual address at the Unity Conference Center in Virginia outside Monrovia.

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

Presidency Dismisses Claims of Violating Constitution

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Chinese Leader Pays State Visit Today

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Liberian and Chinese Presidents Hold Bilateral Talks

- In an interview, Information Minister Laurence Bropleh announced that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao would hold bilateral meetings and later sign Memoranda of Understanding in the areas of health, education agriculture as well as the creation of an economic free zone in Liberia and later dedicate a Malaria Unit at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center. President Jintao would also meet with Vice President Joseph Boakai and the Members of the National Legislators.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Supreme Court Gives Reasons for Absence at President's Speech Making

- In a letter to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia Johnnie Lewis stated that the Court's Bench boycotted the President's Annual Message at the Unity Conference Center (UCC) because doing so would have affronted the Highest Court which earlier ruled against sitting under the gavel of the majority bloc of Lawmakers who are illegally convening at the UCC.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Government and Partners Sign Memorandum for Development Alliance

- A Memorandum of Understanding to establish a global development alliance was signed between the Government, USAID, Firestone Rubber Plantation Company and the Rubber Planters Association of Liberia yesterday. The Agreement would create commercial opportunities that would help to increase smallholder incomes from rubber production and other agriculturally based income generating activities.
- Speaking at the signing ceremony, Agriculture Minister Dr. Chris Toe stated that the initiative would consider new technologies and practices needed to improve productivity and called on Liberians to work together for the success of the initiative as government cannot handle the agriculture sector of the country alone.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

UN Peacekeepers Perplex by Leadership Saga at National Legislature

- Speaking to reporters in Monrovia, the Spokesman of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, Mr. Ben Malor mentioned that the Mission was concerned about developments within the National Legislature and called on members of the Legislature to quickly find a way of addressing the stalemate.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Political Parties Condemn Calls to Cancel Investment Forum for Liberia

- In a joint statement, 10 registered political parties condemned call by three others for the international community to delay the pending international donor conference on Liberia until the Constitutional crises within the National Legislature was harmonized and thought the call was meant to undermine the peace process and increase the suffering of Liberians.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 9:00 am)*

Children Parliamentarian Abhors Violence against Children

- In her remark at a forum to close the entry for the Children Essay Competition yesterday, the Secretary-General of the Liberia Children Parliament Jani Jallah thought that violence against children was unacceptable and abhorred the use of children as "breadwinners and objects of torture".

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.

The Analyst (Monrovia)

Thursday, 1 February 2007

UNMIL Outlines Indian Police Women Responsibility

By Nindi Tarley
Monrovia

The Commissioner of the United Nation Mission In Liberia (UNMIL) Police CVPOL Mohammed Alhassan has outlined the responsibilities of the Indian Police Women Operations in their peacekeeping role in Liberia. Speaking at a Press conference at the UNMIL Headquarters yesterday in Monrovia, the Police Commissioner said the newly form Indian Police Women will join the task force patrol team of CVPOL and Liberia National Police (LNP) to patrol the city of Monrovia and its environs throughout the week.

Commissioner Alhassan said out of the 152 Indian Female Police there will be an anti robbery back up patrol team to help facilitate protection of residents.

He said there will also be a back up patrol team and a stand by group to tackle the problem of violence at any time.

Mr. Mohammed Alhassan said the essence of the Indian Female Police is to encourage Liberian Women to join the Liberia National Police (LNP) Force, noting that whatever male do women are capable of doing the same in the country.

He said UNMIL was excited about the Indian Police Women because it has been their desire that about 25% of the UNMIL Police Unit could be females since it provides an easy means of communication during investigation base on cases like sexual abuse.

The Indian Police Women who arrived in Monrovia on Monday January 29, 2007 will start a state of preparation by setting up their various offices to enable them work effectively.

They'll also setup their operational logistics before commencing work to enable them carry out their operations easily and, finally they will undergo an intensive training with the history of Liberia, AIDS and Sexual Violence which will also enable them to work without encountering difficulties.

The Commissioner said the Indian Female Police Unit (FPU) has undergo series of training which qualifies them to carry out their operation in any part of Liberia but they will base in Monrovia and carry out their operations in Monrovia.