

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 of:

Tuesday, 5 January, 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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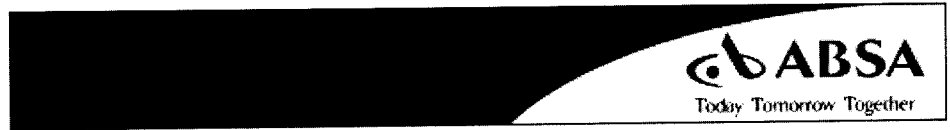
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Strike grips Sierra Leone

04/01/2005 21:11 - (SA)

Rod MacJohnson

print story on email story

Freetown - A general strike called by Sierra Leone's Labour Congress on Tuesday gripped the capital Freetown, leaving main streets deserted and closing banks, supermarkets, government offices and private firms.

Related Articles

- Africa: Highest child deaths

The powerful Labour Congress on Monday night called a nationwide strike in the west African country to protest against the rising cost of living and press for a raise in workers' salaries as well as a range of other demands.

State radio on Tuesday reported that "agreement has been reached between government negotiators and union leaders last evening at a meeting chaired by President Tejan Kabbah", but spokesmen for each side expressed opposing views.

Labour Congress deputy secretary-general Alusine Tholley told correspondents, "we are still on our stay at home action which will last as long as government does not accede to our demands."

The union body also called for a reduction in income tax, the removal of tax on end of service benefits and allowances, and the overturning of a decision that all university employees should join a staff association and no other union.

In an apparent bid to placate the workforce, the government reduced the price of petroleum products by 20%, meeting another key demand of the Labour Congress.

Decade of civil war

Labour Minister Alpha Timbo, speaking to a UN radio station set up in Sierra Leone after a decade of civil war, insisted that "an understanding was reached (at the meeting) with Congress."

"We discussed the end of service benefit, leave allowance, taxation, minimum wage, salary adjustment and these were looked at on a point-to-point basis and we were able to reach an amicable conclusion," he said.

The strike crippled many of the capital's essential services.

Hospitals were working on an emergency basis, email services are partially paralysed, and dock workers have refused to handle cargoes.

Hardest hit were groups of Sierra Leoneans who had come home from abroad for Christmas holidays in the country and planned to leave for Britain, the United



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Aircraft departures were delayed, a local journalist at Lungi International Airport in the north of the capital told AFP. "Senior management officials of the airport have been drafted to man essential services as other workers stand by."

The capital was quiet with armed police patrolling the main streets and occasionally removing barricades set up by unemployed youths.

Only two of the country's 10 daily newspapers were out but vendors refused to sell them because according to one, "many of our readers are stuck up at home adhering to the strike call."

Edited by Francois Krige

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PROMOTION

Dropping the ball on New Year's Resolutions

Most resolutions don't survive past breakfast on New Year's Day, but this year is definitely going to be different, isn't it?

Lucky winner strikes it rich with R200 000 Grand Prize!

Congratulations goes out to Laetitia N. who has won a whopping R200 000 in the World of Choice Promotion at Piggs Peak Internet Casino.

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Pay strike bites in Sierra Leone

The first general strike in Sierra Leone to be held since the civil war ended three years ago has brought the country to a standstill.

The BBC's Lansana Fofana says banks, shops and offices are shut in the capital, Freetown with streets empty.

He says the trade union action over better pay and conditions is being widely observed in other major cities.

Hospitals are also reported to be turning away patients and newspapers have failed to appear on the streets.

The first day of the action on Monday was a public holiday and few people had been expected at work.

On Monday night, talks with the government failed to end the strike.

Labour and Industrial Relations Minister Alpha Timbo told the BBC he was optimistic the strike would be resolved soon and felt progress had been made.

"We have agreed that the Labour Congress will pass on various concessions back to their members but I do not want to jump the gun," he told the BBC's Network Africa programme.

But union official Alusine Tholley told reporters the stay at home strike would last "as long as government does not accede to our demands".

Living standards are extremely low in Sierra Leone which is still struggling to rebuild itself after years of civil war.

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4145931.stm>

Published: 2005/01/04 14:55:31 GMT

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January 5, 2005, Wednesday

SECTION: First Edition; FOREIGN NEWS; Pg. 24

LENGTH: 189 words

HEADLINE: LONDON FIRM AMONG TOP 10 WAR PROFITEERS'

BYLINE: ANDREW BUNCOMBE IN WASHINGTON

HIGHLIGHT:

Tim Spicer: Formed Aegis Defence Services in 2002

BODY:

A PRIVATE security firm headed by a former British Army colonel, Tim Spicer, has been named as one of the "top 10 war profiteers" of 2004.

The London-based Aegis Defence Services was awarded a \$ 293m (pounds 155m) contract by the Pentagon in June last year to co-ordinate security operations among thousands of private companies, making it the biggest private security operation in Iraq.

Only US companies such as Halliburton and Bechtel, which are involved in providing support services and reconstruction, and the defence manufacturer Lockheed Martin have received larger contracts.

"The Aegis contract stirred up considerable controversy," said Charlie Cray, the director of the Centre for Corporate Policy in Washington, which drew up the list. Critics have questioned the accountability of private military contractors and the screening process by which they are awarded the contracts.

Mr Spicer, whose previous company, Sandline International, was involved in shipping guns to Sierra Leone in 1998, contravening a UN embargo, formed Aegis in 2002.

No one from Aegis was available for comment yesterday.

LOAD-DATE: January 4, 2005



Court backs Pinochet murder trial

Chile's Supreme Court has ruled that former President Augusto Pinochet is fit to stand trial on murder and kidnapping charges.

It upheld a lower court move to throw out a defence motion arguing that Gen Pinochet, 89, was not mentally able to defend himself.

The ruling brings the former military ruler one step closer to trial.

However, Gen Pinochet's defence will still have other opportunities to block the proposed trial.

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/4146303.stm>

Published: 2005/01/04 14:55:49 GMT

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