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Guyana: Workers Protest Austerity Measures

by John Neagle

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On April 10, police in Georgetown told reporters that unidentified groups sabotaged two of Guyana's eight state-owned sugar processing plants over the weekend. The incident was the first violence reported in over a week of protests against austerity measures implemented March 31 by President Desmond Hoyte's government. The measures include price hikes averaging 300%. The administration building at the Leonora Estate was firebombed and partially damaged. The Estate is a sugar production center located about 9 km. west of Georgetown. Another group severed telephone lines at the La Bonne Intention estate, about six km. east of the capital, and some sugar cane crops had been set on fire at other plantations. Nearly all Guyana's 26,000 sugar workers are on strike. Bauxite industry officials said they are afraid the strike involving 2,000 workers at the Linden mines and plants, about 105 km. south of the capital, will spread to other installations. The Linden workers' strike began April 3. On April 10, trade unions discussed when to call a general strike. Parliament went into the sixth day of debate on the austerity measures, supported by the International Monetary Fund. Police said nearly 70 protesters had been arrested in the last week for demonstrating without a permit, including Clement Rohee, a ranking member of the Marxist People's Progressive Party, who was released on bail April 10. (Basic data from Xinhua, 04/04/89; AFP, 04/10/89)

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