

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.
Nelson Mandela

We wish all MIA staff a Merry Christmas & Prosperous New Year

MIA Renaissance



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Website: www.mia.gov.lr Email: info@mia.gov.lr

Phone No.: 0777403678

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Merry Christmas

Govt. Pumps\$ US\$95m in Economy ---Liberian coins to make comeback

Beginning this holiday season to the first quarter of 2014, the Liberian government has begun to infuse US\$95m into the economy, Finance Minister Amara Konneh has disclosed. Simultaneously the Central Bank of Liberia has announced that it is reintroducing several denominations of the Liberian coins into the market.

The government, Minister Konneh said, hopes that the money which will be disbursed through salaries and wages to civil servants and purchases of goods and services for the

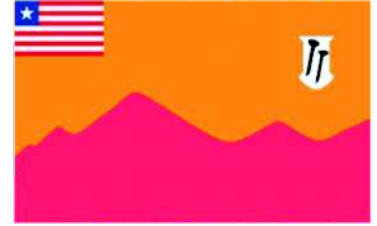
Liberian coins: Front & back faces of 1 dollar, 50 cents & 10 cents

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County Profile



BONG COUNTY



Superintendent Selena Polson-Mappy, Sen. Henry W. Yallah, Sen. Jewel Howard Taylor, Reps., Tokpah J. Mulbah, Prince K. Moye, George S. Mulbah, Lester M. Paye, Edward Kafia, Adam Bill Corneh & Corpu G. Barclay

Bong is a county in the north-central portion of the West African nation of Liberia. One of 15 counties that comprise the first-level of administrative division in the nation, it has twelve districts. Gbarnga serves as the capital with the area of the county measuring 8,772 square kilometers (3,387 sq mi). As of the 2008 Census, it had a population of 328,919, making it the third most populous county in Liberia.

Named after Mount Bong in the southern portion of the county, it is bordered by Lofa and Gbarpolu counties to the north, Margibi and Montserrado counties to the west, Grand Bassa County to the south, and Nimba County to the east. The northeast part of Bong borders the nation of Guinea. Created in 1964, the County Superintendent is Selena Polson-Mappy. Bong County's flag is purple, signifying the dawn, and orange, signifying the County's newness. The two geological instruments in the white field portion of the flag symbolize

Bong County's mining industry.

The County is situated in the central part of Liberia, on the main paved road that runs from Monrovia to Sanniquellie in Nimba County and its twelve districts (2008 population) are: Boinsen District (8,352); Fuamah District (27,784); Jorquellah District (78,803); Kokoyah District (3,707); Kpaai District (25,127)

Panta District (16,326); Salala District (41,982); Sanoyea District (30,932); Suakoko District (28,277); Tukpahblee (11,767); Yeallequellah (36,919) and Zota District (18,943)

The population of Bong from the 1984 Census was 255,813 for the 8,772 square kilometres (3,387 sq mi) county. In July 2005, the population was estimated to be around 804,000. In 2008, the Census placed the figure at 328,919, ranking it third in Liberia after Montserrado and Nimba. The main ethnic groups include the Kpelle, Mandingo and Mano.

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Gbonota Clinic Sanoyea District Bong County Health Team Head Office Phebe hospital

Editorial

X-raying counties' scholarship programs

The Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a statement over the weekend in which it noted it was necessary for that scholarships offered by county administrations across the country and funded from Social Development Funds (SDF), be comprehensively reviewed.

The Ministry said scholarship review exercise will “ensure that scholarships are aligned with the Agenda for Transformation and targeted to meet the human capital development needs of counties and the country”.

The release added that the “good intention and benefits of the county scholarship program has overwhelmed county administrations, Legislative Caucuses, and unless it is reformed, the scholarship program could be counterproductive”.

The Ministry says that when the inter-agency review of scholarship programs are complete, annual total scholarship allocations from counties will not exceed 10% of each county's gross annual Social Development contributions.

The granting of scholarships to Liberian students has and will always remain a very important component of the overall educational development of the country. Thus, scholarships are pivotal part of investing in the future of the country and more importantly; scholarships can be the only way available to needy and poor students to gain a solid education.

Sadly, there have been allegations that the scholarship programs, especially those supervised by county administrations, are not netting the intended results and that the program is a major syndicate in which millions of dollars are being allegedly misspent annually under the guise of scholarships and education for needy students.

It is against such a backdrop that we think it is only prudent that MIA's desire to review the program is certainly the right thing to do for the benefit of the students, the counties and the country as a whole.

According to the Ministry, when the inter-agency review of scholarship programs are complete, annual total scholarship allocations from counties will not exceed 10% of each county's gross annual Social Development contributions.

We welcome the idea! Its long overdue and we say 'hats off!'

Kpatawee declared a Natural Asset



Kpatawee Bong County

One famous natural beauty of Bong County has been declared “a natural asset of the county that needs to be preserved,” the leadership of Bong County has declared, banning the proliferation of citizens and the construction of houses in close proximity with the site.

Superintendent Selena Polson-Mappy during a recent county retreat declared the Kpatawee waterfall in Suakoko district “a natural asset of the county that needs to be preserved”.

Polson-Mappy said the waterfall is a natural asset not only for the people of Bong County but Liberia. “We have noticed that people are abusing the beauty of the site by constructing houses in close proximity to the site and using the area as restroom.

Kpatawee represents a place of rare beauty for nature lovers and has a quite high flow rate. During the dry season, with its very green surrounding, the waterfall gives visitors a nice resting place.

Govt. Pumps\$

smooth operation of ministries, agencies and other government functionaries will help to lubricate the economy and boom trade and commerce in the country.

Making the disclosure at the Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism on Friday at the beginning of a two-day workshop for government communications team to arm members of the team with facts and figures to adequately inform the public about government's projects and programs, he said there have been complaints from local businesses that the economy was tight, noting that the government hopes that the amount will help to stimulate and lubricate the economy.

Minister Konneh said the government hopes that the infusion of the US\$95m into the economy will help to create jobs for mainly young people and expand trade and commerce.

In related monetary news, the Liberian coins are finally making a comeback in circulation. Last year, the Central Bank of Liberia, Dr. Joseph Mills Jones, told a gathering of bankers, government officials and financial experts at the Liberian Bankers' Association's that he supports wider use of the Liberian dollar in the economy.

Dr. Jones suggested that transferring to the Liberian dollar would be the best option for the Liberian economy but warned, however, that such migration should be done with utmost care.

The CBL Executive Governor's comments were supported by Minister Konneh, who warned that “any abrupt movement towards [a] single currency for Liberia, especially towards the Liberian dollar, would cause [a] shock in the economy.” Konneh pointed out that although the

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Deputy Minister Sirleaf Honored



Dep. Min. Sirleaf received honor certificate from PAL Chairman Keita and other images from the honoring ceremony Monday



Dep. Min. Amos Toweh left at the ceremony

Deputy Minister Sirleaf Honored



The press insisted on a closer look at the certificate and Min. Sirleaf gladly obliged

Progressive Alliance, K. Mamadee Keita said Deputy Minister Sirleaf was selected from a 60-day rigorous process in which several other personalities were nominated for the awards.

Responding, Hon. Sirleaf lauded the group for the recognition saying he was proud to be selected among many.

"I take service to the state very seriously, MIA is a very large Ministry, but we have been able to serve with our hearts and passion for the work and country". The smiling honoree told the gathering.

He said the recognition by group gives more vigor for

the future. He recounted a number of programs being carried by the Ministry including: Boundary Harmonization, Decentralization, Peace building and Reconciliation, Prober management of County and Social Development Funds, Personnel Re-documentation, just to name a few.

Also attending the ceremony were Hon. Ranney B. Jackson, Deputy Minister for Operations, Hon. J. Tiah Nagbe, Deputy Minister for Research and Development Planning and Hon. Amos B. Tweh, Deputy Minister for Urban and Hon. Joseph B. Janagr, Assistant Minister for Customs and Culture amongst others.



Dep. Min. Tah Nagbe Center at the ceremony



Dep. Min. Ranny Jackson 3rd from left at the ceremony

Govt. Pump\$

Liberian dollar is the best currency for the economy, it is prudent for such migration to be done with care.

In 1937, coins were also issued in denominations of ½, 1 and 2 cents. The first five-Liberian dollar coins were issued in 1982 and 1985 and pegged at par with the US dollar. The flight of suitcase-loads of USD paper in the economic collapse following the April 12, 1980 coup d'état created a currency shortage, which was only exacerbated when the government began minting \$5 coins.

The Challenges of Dual Currency Regime

A major challenge in running a dual currency regime or using two legal tenders in an economy is capital flight. Whenever two legal tenders are used parallel in an economy wherein one of the two currencies is very powerful and can be used worldwide, that economy will be exposed to possible capital flight by corrupt public officials and businesses.

The Positive Impact of Dual Currency Regime

Easy accessibility to foreign exchange by the business community and individual citizens is high. It creates fair environment for competition relative supply and demand of foreign exchange or exchange rate viability.

Easy access to foreign exchange by businesses has the propensity to push businesses to sell their goods according fair market price relative to cost of goods on the world market, transportation, exchange rate, taxes, and other indicators, etc.

However, with the government now announcing it is pumping US\$95m and the reintroduction of coins in the economy, there are positive reactions that the economy is bound to pick up.

Counties' scholarship patterns under scrutiny

In a bid to thoroughly securitized scholarships offered by county administrations across the country funded from Social Development Fund (SDF), the Ministry of Internal Affairs has also announced that it will shortly embark on a comprehensive review of the exercise.

In a press release issued in Monrovia Saturday, the MIA said the scholarship review exercise is to “ensure that scholarships are aligned with the Agenda for Transformation and targeted to meet the human capital development needs of counties and the country”.

The release added that the good intention and benefits of the county scholarship program has overwhelmed county administrations, Legislative Caucuses, and unless it is reformed, the scholarship program could be counterproductive.

The Ministry says that when the inter-agency review of scholarship programs are complete, annual total scholarship allocations from counties will not exceed 10% of each county's gross annual Social Development contributions.

County Briefs

Nimba County

The Swedish Rural Road Project has commenced major rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads in Nimba County, beginning with the Sehyikimpa-Karnplay road.

The rehabilitation started Tuesday, according to Assistant Nimba County Superintendent for Development, Teeko Yorlay.

The Pacific Construction Company will rehabilitate the 15 km road connecting Sehyikimpa to ZorGowee, while the Solid Rock Company will do the 12.5 km linking ZorGowee to Karnplay.

The Assistant Superintendent said the project, which started manually in November with road-side brushing, will last for nine months.

He said the road will not be paved but will be graded to ensure easy transport of goods and enhance free movement of the people.

The project is being implemented with funding from the Liberia-Swedish Feeder Road program, Superintendent Yorlay said.

The Ministry of Public Works along with engineers from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) will work with the County authorities to monitor the project, he said.

Grand Bassa

President Ellen Jonson-Sirleaf on Saturday, December 14 inspected the first phase of an on-going coastal defense project to protect Buchanan City against sea erosion, praising the level of work done so far. The President also called on the Grand Bassa County administration to direct some of their County Development Funds (CDF) toward the prevention of sea erosion in the county.

“We are doing our part but the leadership of Bassa must do their part and so they must put some of the CDF to that project,” the Liberia President said at program marking the official opening of the National County Meet, few minutes after inspecting the work.

Lands, Mines and Energy Minister Patrick Sendolo told reporters that the project will last forever if resources used provide the protection that is adequate to withstand the level of waves. The project started more than a year ago, according to Min. Sendolo, and has been challenging and stressful especially during the rainy season. He said the cost of transporting rocks and equipment is difficult but with the commitment and love of country, the team has worked excellently.

Maryland County

The HIV/TB Department at the J. J. Dossen Hospital in Harper, Maryland County has confirmed an increase of HIV in Maryland County. The hospital disclosed that many persons diagnosed at the J.J. Dossen Hospital have been confirmed HIV positive but have refused to accept their status.

According to the Supervisor of HIV/TB at the J. J. Dossen Hospital, Eugene D. Golomah, when people are tested positive they usually refuse their status and move to nearby towns and villages thereby sharing the virus with others.

Mr. Golomah attested that the migration of infected people draws a fact that HIV is on the increase in Maryland County. He said HIV positive migrants cannot be traced easily as many of them are in hiding for fear that they might either be discriminated, marginalized or stigmatized.

Human Rights

Liberia Launches Human Rights Resolution for Albinos



Some members of the Liberian Albino Society

Liberia's Vice President Joseph N. Boakai Saturday led an array of international human rights advocates, foreign dignitaries in launching an UN-backed resolution calling for the respect and human dignity for people with albinism in Liberia.

Organized and led by the Liberian Albino Society (LAS), the occasion, followed by a street parade in Monrovia by Albinos, was held at the G.W. Gibson High School on the Capitol By-Pass and it urges State Parties to take all measures necessary to ensure the effective protection of persons with albinism, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against them, and to increase awareness through education and public activities.

The Albino Foundation was invited to Liberia by the LAS on a regional advocacy visit to address the legislature, the Vice-President and the President on issues relating to albinism from the 12th – 17th December 2013. The LAS had earlier on this year paid a visit to the foundation headquarters in Abuja by its Founder/Executive Director; Patricia Logan, to glean from efforts made, and was impressed by its achievements so far.

“They graciously extended an invitation for us to

educate the entire executive arm on albinism and the foundation's progress in carrying out the mandate of advocacy, learning and education, social awareness and economic empowerment which form the thrust of the vision.

Last September, shortly after the UN Human Rights Council adopted a second resolution on people with albinism, Rupert Colville, spokesperson for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told journalists in Geneva the resolution is “very positive and much-needed step forward”.

Welcoming the adoption of the first-ever resolution on people with albinism by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the United Nations human rights office urged all African States to take action to protect and ensure the rights these routinely mistreated people.

While applauded the resolution, he said that OHCHR “remains deeply concerned about the overall situation of people with albinism,” stressing that the office continues to receive alarming reports on attacks and discrimination against them in several African countries.

Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Council is conducting a study on the situation of persons living with albinism, which aims to report during the Council's twenty-eighth session.

Albinism is a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited condition occurring in both genders regardless of ethnicity, in all countries of the world. It results in a lack of pigmentation in the hair, skin and eyes, causing vulnerability to sun exposure and bright light. Almost all people with albinism are visually impaired; they may have a shortened life span by lung disease or may develop life-threatening skin cancers.

Deputy Minister Sirleaf Honored

It is the adage that says 'give the man his flower while he is still alive'. That was the case of Varney A. Sirleaf, Deputy Internal Affairs Minister for Administration on Monday, December 16, 2013. He was honored and certificated as **Deputy Minister of the Year 2013-2014**.

A pro-democracy group, the Progressive Alliance Movement of Liberia says it honored Hon Sirleaf for his outstanding contributions to the nation and his commitment to duty.

At the certification ceremony Monday, December 16, 2013, the National Chairman of the



See pages 4 and 5

Dep. Min. Sirleaf received honor certificate from PAL Chairman Keita and other images from the honoring ceremony Monday

MIA temporarily suspends disbursement of CDF



MIA Minister Morris Dukuly

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has announced the immediate suspension of new transfer and disbursement requests affecting the County Development Fund (CDF) and County Social Development Fund (CSD).

The Ministry says the decision is based on the need to undertake an assessment and review of all accounts of the two funds and the programs and activities they support throughout the country.

In a press release issued in Monrovia Saturday, December 14, the Ministry emphasized that the suspension will not affect funds already transferred from the Ministry of Finance to accounts of counties for ongoing projects and programs.

The Ministry emphasized that the review is necessary because county councils are being held under the new fiscal budget, and there was therefore the need to align new projects with the County Development Agenda (CDA) which is consistent with

provisions of the Agenda for Transformation (AFT).

The Ministry has further assured that it will shortly begin to consult with sector agencies, legislative caucuses, and concessions contributing to the Social Development Fund, adding that the suspension is only temporary.



“When you have lost hope, you have lost everything. And when you think all is lost, when all is dire and bleak, there is always hope.”