

# Liberia Independence Day Special

## Democratic transition signals further progress

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The Republic of Liberia experienced its first democratic presidential transition after seven decades of governance. The program marking this year's Independence Day Anniversary

will be celebrated in Monrovia under the theme: "Unifying the Nation for Progressive Development."

As Africa's first independent republic, established in 1847 solely through the agency of freeborn and freed African slaves from the United States and the Western Hemisphere, the country presents excellent opportunities for visitors and those interested in historical tours.

Following the successful and democratic transition from Africa's first female-elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to global soccer legend and 1995's FIFA World Player of the Year, His Excellency President George Manneh Weah, the new government aspires for a reconciled society in which all Liberians can access quality education, basic health care, critical infrastructure and road networks. Since the inception of the president's administration on Jan. 22, Liberia has continued to gain recognition and trust in the president to deliver on pledges made

and is devoted to continuing the promotion of the long-standing historical ties between Liberia and Japan and will remain engaged in furthering the special relations between both countries; as his government has reaffirmed.

The government is focused on public-private partnership investments for growth and economic recovery and is seeking private sector participation in the agriculture sector, which focuses on value chains with proven advantages, and the modernization of infrastructure, roads, fisheries, ports and the energy sector, as well as water and sanitation for economic and sustainable development.

The Republic of Liberia provides access to the regional consumer market of over 335 million people through the Economic Community of West African States and has low labor costs, a young population and minimum restrictions on repatriation of profits. The major road reconstruction project is seen as crucial in creating new economic opportunities for rural communities and facilitating the decentralization of government services, as health and education remain high-priority government projects.

Seventy percent of Liberia's economic reliance has been on iron ore and rubber production, while the agriculture sector has the ideal agro-climatic conditions for many tree crops. However, the country is now focused on four major tree crops: rubber, palm oil, coffee and cocoa, which have steady or increasing demand with rising prices on the

international market. However, new investments in cocoa production are needed.

There is a wealth of opportunities in many industry sectors for investors to take advantage of, as the government of Liberia is committed to encouraging the rapid growth of its agricultural industry, which is also a means for job opportunities and food security.

The government of Liberia remains prepared and open for business and aims to have faster economic growth in trade performance, demonstrating greater resilience to recover from economic crises.

As we celebrate 171 years of independence, we extend our sincere gratitude to the government and people of Japan for the continuous and strategic support in the education, health, infrastructure and security sectors, along with the commencement of the second phase of the four-lane 13.2 km Somalia Drive reconstruction project from Freeport to Red-light Junction, which is also a demonstration of the Japanese government's commitment to improving the socioeconomic lives of Liberians through infrastructure development.

We have great appreciation for countries that have shown strong partnership over the years and during difficult periods, where Japan has been a reliable partner. Our invitation remains open to all interested investors who can make the difference.

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*