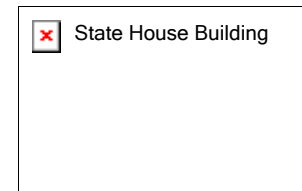
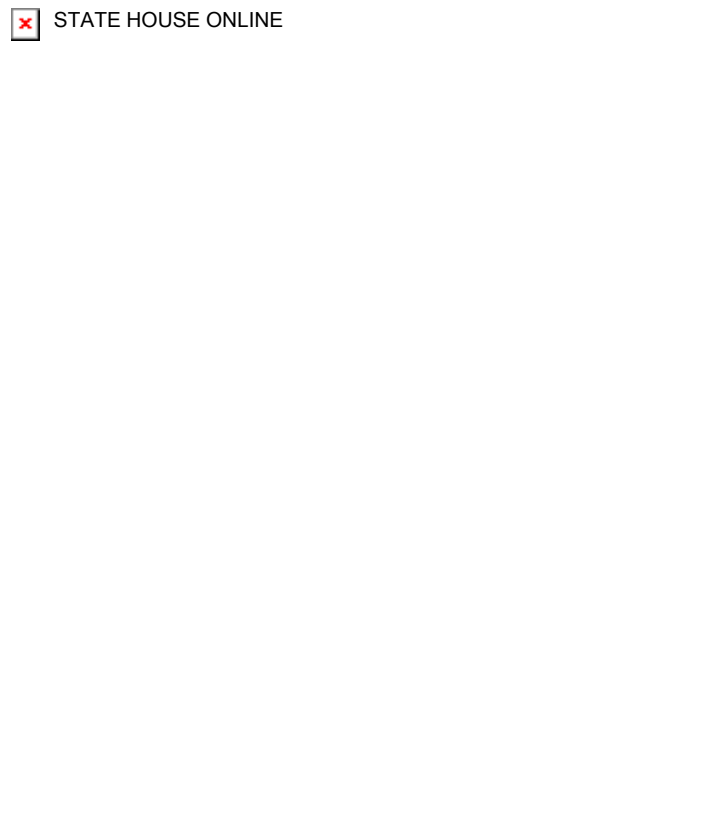
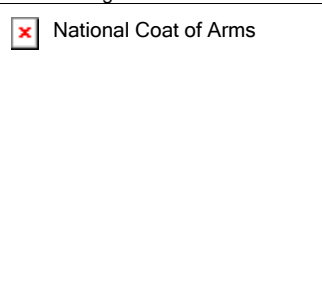


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15 April 2008

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President Kabbah Launches Gola Forest Conservation Concession Programme

By Marian Samu

MONDAY, 6TH JUNE 2005: Our forests, the importance of which cannot be over estimated, had suffered immensely in the hands of the people mainly for human activities including logging, farming and mining. These activities if allowed to go an unabated will not only destroy our most valuable natural resource, but will also affect wildlife, including our water resources.

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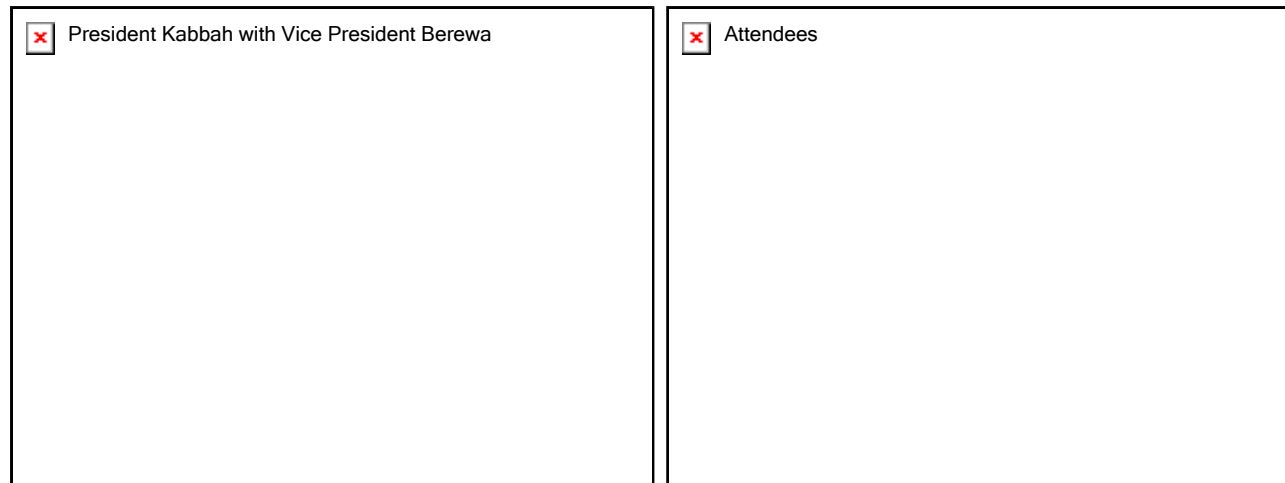
Official Website of the
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To address the problem, Government in 2004 decided that the Gola Forest in South-eastern Sierra Leone, the only surviving remnant of the once valuable Guinea Rain Forest that stretched from Guinea to Ivory Coast, be preserved and protected from any destructive human activity.

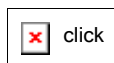
In collaboration with and support from the International Community and especially the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Birdlife International, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone, in cooperation with government has launched the Gola Forest Conservation Concession programme. The President, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was in Kenema, the Eastern Region headquarter town, on Saturday 4th June 2005, to officially launch the programme. The programme provides alternative income generating activities for the communities of the seven chiefdoms: Tunkia, Makpele, Normo, Koya, Gaura, Malema and Barre chiefdoms that surround the Gola Forest.

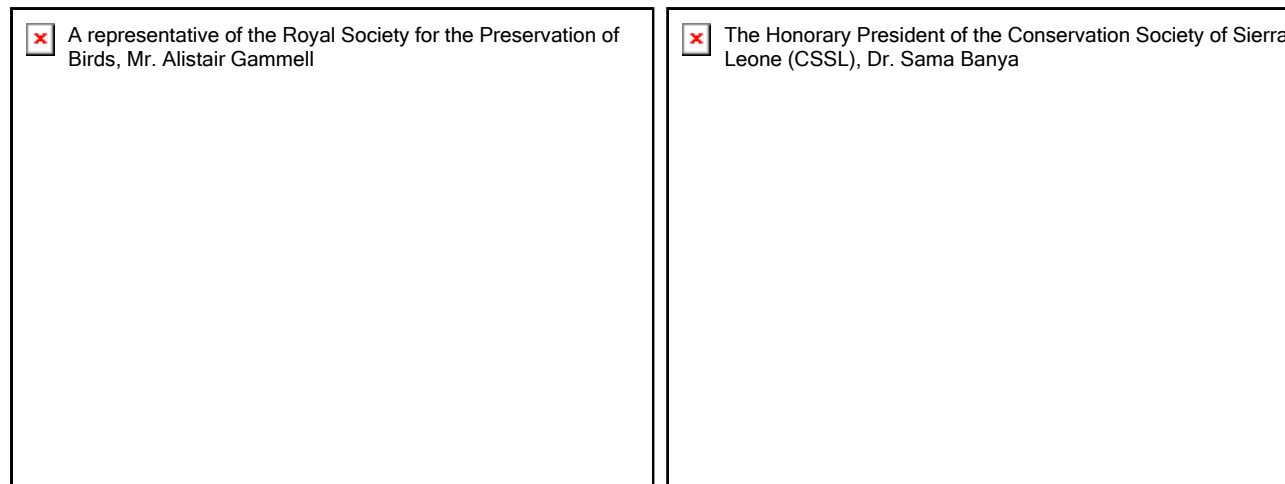
Speaking at the ceremony, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Dr. Sama Monde reiterated President Kabbah's great concern for the conservation of our environment. He said that the Gola Forest Preservation programme initiative is a milestone in his Ministry's effort in the conservation for sustainable development strides. Dr. Monde informed the audience that Sierra Leone is the first country to try this conservation strategy and therefore appealed for the sustainability of the programme. He thanked the Paramount Chiefs for joining hands with government and its partners in the preservation programme.

Video is 15 min, 39 seconds.

To watch the video clip of His Excellency's End of Year message, please click the Play button above. If it does not start, [Click here](#)

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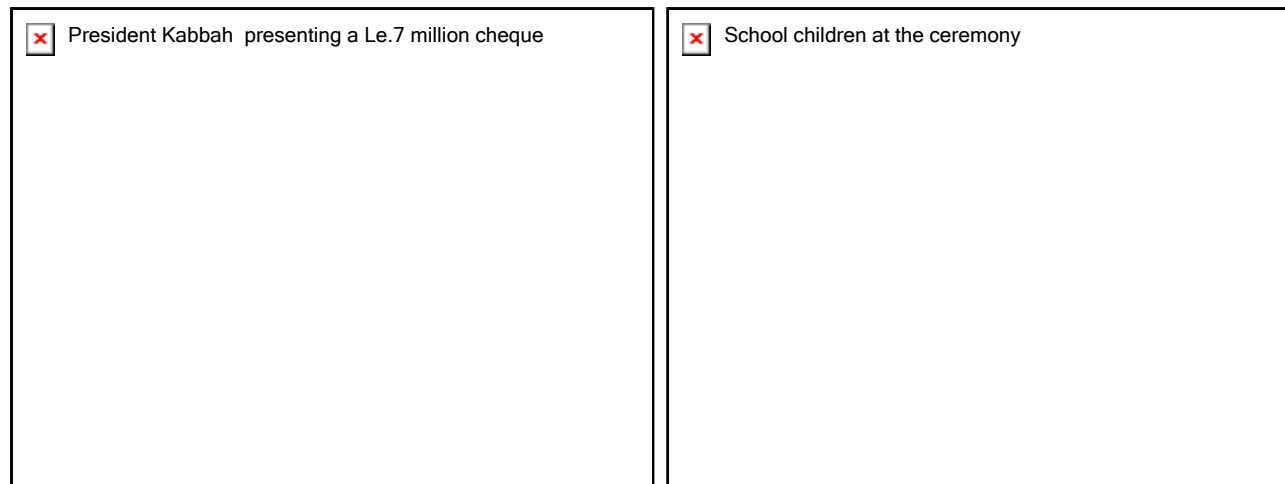


A representative of the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds, Mr. Alistair Gammell in his statement said that the Gola Forest is a very special place known in the World as a biodiversity hot spot, and it is because of its immense importance that they have come all the way from the United Kingdom to help preserve it.

He expressed thanks and appreciation to President Kabbah for his support, adding that he will publicize this initiative for the whole world to see the good job that Sierra Leone has done, Mr. Gammell said that a total of Le.336 million has been provided for the project for the next two years, and chiefdoms surrounding the Gola Forest will each receive cash remuneration for alternative income and development programmes. He presented a Le.7 million cheque each to three of the chiefdoms, the Tunkia, Malema and Koya chiefdoms, as part of the concession benefits paid to the communities.

The Honorary President of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Dr. Sama Banya, who gave a brief background to the inception of the Conservation Society, stated that the society started with only six members some twenty years ago, and their first major project was the preservation of Tiwai Island which is today the first national park of Sierra Leone. He underscored the importance of preserving our wildlife and forests, and appealed for the education and training of young children about conservation activities, which the Conservation Society has started by establishing nature clubs in schools throughout the country. This, he said, will inculcate the culture of preserving the environment in the minds of the children for the benefit of future generations.

Officially launching the programme, the President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah described the launch of the programme as a unique occasion as it is one venture that will revolutionize the way in which we use some of our most valuable natural resources.



President Kabbah stated that it has always been his personal desire to ensure that our natural resources, which are crucial to our development aspirations, are managed efficiently. He said that the efficient and effective management of our natural resources are key to his government's policies on food security and poverty reduction.

Inter alia, the President expressed his government's gratitude to Mr. Alistair Gammell and his colleagues for their personal and their government's total support for the success of this unique arrangement. He congratulated the chiefs and people of the participating chiefdoms for their interest and total involvement.

To further demonstrate his government's commitment to the protection of the environment, President Kabbah said that he will in due course set up a separate Ministry that will exclusively concentrate on forest management and the protection of the environment.

-END-

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