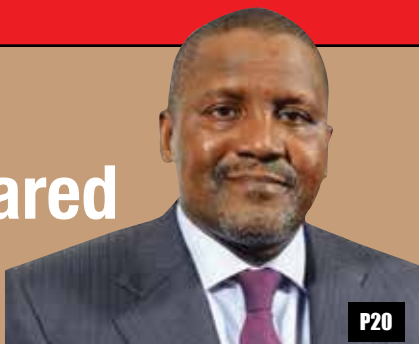


April 2013 - N° 03

BUSINESS IN CAMEROON

MAJOR PROJECTS
AGRICULTURE
ENERGY
MINING
INDUSTRY
SERVICES
FINANCE

**Dangote
Group Cleared
by Court**



**Dr W. Tasong,
Azideriva
Software**



OKU HONEY AND PENJA WHITE PEPPER

**Two of
Cameroon's
treasures
certified by
the African
Intellectual
Property
Rights
Organization**



P 3 et 11



CAMRAIL
***"Yaoundé-Douala
in two hours, thirty
minutes by rail"***

P19

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La valeur n'attend pas le nombre des années. 3 ans au compteur, un personnel hautement qualifié, des appareils régulièrement révisés, des valeurs, une vision, un sourire, l'étoile du Cameroun est bel et bien lancée sur sa trajectoire. Voyagez sereins, voyagez Camair-co.

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L'étoile du Cameroun

Penja, Cameroon's Bordeaux



An established reputation has made Bordeaux wines one of the most common in the world, and Penja white pepper is similarly distinct and deserves recognition. The pepper is grown in the Njombe-Penja sub-division of the Littoral Region, and gourmet chefs reportedly consider it the best in the world. Pepper culture was introduced in Cameroon by Antoine Decré, who had a banana plantation in Penja. The first export, a 40 kg bag of white pepper, took place in March 1958.

Penja pepper grows in high-quality volcanic soil that has been proven to be very rich in minerals. Combined with an equatorial climate, the pepper enjoys the perfect balance between rainfall and sun, which gives it a distinctively rich and pure taste. The pepper, which is one of the rarest according to experts, starts by elegantly delighting the nostrils and then evokes a warm, round, and insistent taste. But there is only a small amount available on the world market.

A great place for horticulture, Penja Valley is 75 km from Douala and home to 30,000 people. It has two large producers of this treasure, Penja Plantations and METOMO Plantations, and over 281 farmers cultivate the crop for subsistence.

Only 18 tons are grown on a 100-hectare plantation, and no chemicals are used in the growing, processing or post-harvest treatment. While not

organic, they are free from nastier types of pesticides and chemicals.

It is regrettable that this treasure is still being cultivated on such limited surfaces of land. It would be important to create new farms: increasing output will increase the income of farmers and improve their standard of living – a great way to truly fight poverty.

According to authorities at the African Intellectual Property Rights Organization (OAPI), Penja pepper will soon have a geographical indication (GI), i.e., a name or sign used on certain products that corresponds to a specific geographic origin.

The GI will serve as a certificate that the product possesses certain qualities, is made according to traditional methods (once sun-dried, the grains are graded with a sieve and only the biggest are selected), or enjoys a certain reputation due to its geographic origin.

Once certified, Cameroon will use laws against false trade descriptions, which generally protect against false claims that a product has a certain origin, quality or association. Penja pepper will become a monopoly of Cameroon, and consumer and producer protection benefits will accrue.

Currently, a kilogram of Penja pepper sells at 7500 francs CFA for small grains and 9000 for large grains, and the GI will increase these prices.

BUSINESS IN CAMEROON

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CASTING



EMMANUEL BONDE



From April 2 to 8, 2013, Cameroon will host the second international agro-industry forum in Yaoundé, an occasion for more than 150 national and foreign businesses to showcase their innovations and their latest inventions in the sector.

Named SIALY, this second edition of the forum *“will offer stakeholders in the agro-food industry the opportunity to sell their know-how to the world, and meet on a business-to-business basis with other life-changing projects,”* said Emmanuel Bonde, Minister of Industry.

Agro-industries constitute 33% of Cameroon’s industrial production, and add six percent to the country’s exports, reports the *Cameroon Tribune*.

JEAN-MARC DARBOUX



According to Darboux, President of Schneider Electric International, it is Africa’s time to benefit from the latest inventions. *“Africa is capable of unrivalled technological progress. Some Africans have never owned telephone landlines but today own two mobile phones. Similarly, every new town, every new district should benefit from the latest Smart Grid technologies. And every rural village should have access to renewable off-grid energy without having to wait for conventional solutions to be provided,”* he said.

Through a project called Villaso, Schneider Electric has provided electricity with solar energy to 200 villagers in the Pitti Gare village. Although it is not connected to the national grid, the system supplies power to a cassava milling machine and will eventually supply the school and the village clinic, as well as a domestic “battery charging” service for the village’s people.

Access to electricity is crucial in rural areas. According to the French Development Agency (AFD), 95% of people living in rural areas in Cameroon do not have access to electricity, even though more than 45% of the population live in rural areas.



PERRIAL NYODOG



The General Manager of Tradex is the president of the Cameroon Cartel of Petroleum Professionals. Jean Pierre Battermann, from Total, is the Cartel's vice-president. The Water and Energy Minister, Basile Atangana Kouna, was in Douala recently to set up the Cartel's new bureau. Other members

include Gabriel Eteki, an Accounts and Finance Manager at OiLibya who works as the group's treasurer, and Biyong Biyong, who works as the bureau's secretary.

"GPP (Groupement des professionnels du pétrole) aims to encourage best practices in health, security and environment in the petroleum sector for its members," explains Perrial Nyodog.

In Cameroon, the petroleum sector saw a boom in 2000, with the entry of nationals into different activities, especially distribution. For this reason, the number of distributors jumped from three (in the pre-liberalization period) to 44, and filling stations from 287 to 563 units.

Created in 1978, GPP consists of six permanent members: Total, Corlay, Tradex, OiLibya, First Oil, and Camgaz. As of December 31, 2012, it owned 391 filling stations, or about 70% of the sales points in the country.

ROBERT NKILI



The Minister of Transport announced that the Tiko Airport, which is located in the South-West region of Cameroon, will be rehabilitated. His statement was made during a two-day visit to the region from March 6 to 7, 2013. As of today, the region has no airfield, despite its important history.

The airport was built by the British during colonial rule, and it was handed back to Cameroon when they left.

Abandoned for a very long time, Tiko Airport looks forward to its rehabilitation, although some individuals have been encroaching on airport land. *"Worst still, air transport experts are quick to point out that even the new Tiko council office was erected on the landing path of the airstrip,"* reports the *Cameroon Tribune* of March 11, 2013.

YERIM HABIB SOW



The Senegalese billionaire is joining forces with a local Cameroonian businessman, Lionel Fofé, to build a world-class hotel in the economic capital, Douala. At an estimated cost of 15 billion francs CFA, the project is part of a broader strategy to build eleven hotels across Africa.

"The tender for the award of the contract will be launched in two months," said Lionel Fofé. Operating under the name "Noon", the hotel will be constructed on a 10,400 m² piece of land located near Bonanjo's administrative centre.

Fofé, who heads Faris, a real estate company in which he holds a 40% stake, will contribute 6 billion francs CFA. His "friend of 20 years", Yerim Habib Sow of Senegal, founder of the Teylium Group, will provide the remaining 9 billion CFA. To manage the project, they have created *Chain Hotel Cameroon*, a subsidiary of Chain Hotels & Resorts Holding based in Spain, one of Teylium's branches.

With a capacity of 180 rooms, *Noon* will open for business in 2015 and should have 250 employees.

IBRAHIM TALBA MALLA



In its latest ranking of the top 500 African companies, *Jeune Afrique* magazine rated the National Refining Company of Cameroon (SONARA) as the best company in Cameroon in terms of turnover. It seems that sales volume was the main criterion for the ranking. With nearly

1000 billion francs CFA of turnover in 2011, SONARA climbed to the 76th spot in Africa, up 28 places and ahead of the National Hydrocarbons Corporation (NHC), which sits in the 86th position with a jump of three places. Brasseries du Cameroon is 246th and AES African Power Co is 287th, while MTN Cameroon occupies the 308th position and Orange Cameroon the 362nd.

Although productive, SONARA's former General Manager, Charles Metouck, was fired and replaced by Ibrahim Talba Malla, formally General Manager of the Hydrocarbons Price Stabilization Fund (CSPH), one of the shareholders of SONARA.

SONARA and the other five companies in this ranking are among the top 10 companies in Central Africa in terms of turnover. A total of 39 companies based in Cameroon appear on the list of the best companies in Central Africa.

Waza Park: one of Africa's most beautiful parks





THE KIDNAPPING OF FRENCH TOURISTS WILL IMPACT TOURISM IN THE EXTREME NORTH

The position of the Extreme North's regional tourism representative, Tay-be Ngaba, is clear: *"The kidnapping of seven French tourists will inevitably impact tourism in the Extreme North region, and particularly the Waza region which attracts the majority of tourists. Yet we are still in the middle of the tourism season,"* he stated. Indeed, since the kidnapping of seven members of the Moulin family on February 18, the French government has appealed to its nationals to leave the Extreme North region *"as soon as possible"* and advised French citizens not to go there *"until further notice"*. All other chancelleries have taken the same decision.

67,000 tourists in 2012

The Extreme North is one of Cameroon's most popular tourist destinations due to the abundance of its parks, including Waza. According to the Tourism Regional Delegation, there were over 67,000 tourist arrivals in 2012, which marked an increase compared to 64,000 the previous year. These visits have generated 945 million francs CFA in revenue. This is a financial blessing that will certainly be diminished this year as a result of the recent kidnapping of French tourists.

Brice R. Mbodiam

Cameroon Fears Europe Ban on Cocoa Exports



As of April 1st, 2013, all cocoa beans and other products exported to the European Union (EU) with more than 2 micrograms of cadmium (a heavy metal) per kilogram will be sent back to their point of origin.

Brussels, the headquarters of EU institutions, has imposed a maximum content of cadmium in imported cocoa. This decision follows the publication of a 2009 scientific study by the European Food Safety Authority, which recom-

mended the monitoring of the quantity of heavy metals in cocoa that may cause health problems. The presence of cadmium in the human body can cause kidney failure, broken bones, infertility, problems with the immune system and cancer, among others.

This new EU measure applies to countries whose production is located in ancient volcanic areas or where soils are naturally acidic, since both are often characterized by the presence of heavy metals. According to the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), *"the highest levels of cadmium are found in Latin America and in Africa, particularly Cameroon."*

Strict control measures are therefore necessary in Cameroon, the fifth largest producer of cocoa, as well as in all concerned countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, the world's largest producer.

Also, research has shown that the second source of cadmium contamination consists of fertilizers and other chemicals. Until the five-year moratorium sought by cocoa-producing countries is accepted by the EU, which consumes 60% of world cocoa, all concerned countries must put in place effective monitoring systems if they wish to continue exporting to this important market.

"Since the beginning of this year, the Government of Cameroon and some actors in the cocoa sector have launched awareness campaigns, replaced tarps and repaired furnaces in large production basins to eradicate the phenomenon of drying cocoa beans on the bitumen and thus export good quality beans," said the Cameroon Tribune.

Between late August 2012 and late January 2013, Cameroon exported 172,135 tons of cocoa beans, up from 149,793 tons in the same period in 2011/2012. There has also been a decline in the number of exporters over the course of January 2013. **Jude Viban**

Certified Oku Honey and Penja Pepper on the Market Soon

Oku honey and Penja pepper, two agricultural products that are unique in taste, origin and commercial value, will soon be protected by the African Intellectual Property Rights Organization (OAPI). These products are harvested in the North-West, Littoral and South-West regions of Cameroon.

“Placing a product under such protection reduces the likelihood of piracy, fraud, and counterfeiting, but also significantly boosts farmers’ incomes,” Ayite Juliette, the OAPI Deputy General Manager, told the *Cameroon Tribune* during a two-day regional seminar on geogra-

phic indications last Thursday February 28, 2013.

In the case of Penja pepper, which is grown in Mbanaga, Njombé-Penja, Loum, Manjo and Tombel, it took four years of work and lobbying to achieve this outcome, an effort that was partially financed by the French Development Agency (AFD) to the tune of 655 million francs CFA.

Currently, a kilogram of Penja pepper (small grains) cost CFAF 7,500, while a kilo of big grains costs CFAF 9,000. Certification will undoubtedly increase these prices.



First Harvest of Upland Rice Pleases Authorities

48 tons of upland rice were harvested and tested as part of the mid-term evaluation of PRODERIP, a recently-launched project to promote the culti-

vation of upland rice in plateaus and forest zones in Cameroon. According to the project’s Coordinator, Tobie Ondoa Managa: *“For a first experience, the*

results are satisfactory.” This statement was made during a ceremony in Yaoundé on Wednesday March 6, 2013 to present the rice to the public. For the pilot phase, 2,000 farmers were trained at the project’s eight sites.



PRODERIP is an attempt by authorities to reduce the rice supply shortage. National production stands at only 175,000 tons, which forces the government to import rice to the tune of 150 billion francs CFA each year.

Initially scheduled to end in 2014, the important PRODERIP project will be extended until 2016, indicates the *Cameroon Tribune*.

Gov't Donates 30 Tons of High-Yielding Maize Seeds for the New Farming Season

At a press briefing last Thursday, the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation announced that it was donating high-yielding maize seeds. The seeds, which will cover 1,500 hectares and be ready for harvest in three to four months, will be shared between farmers in the ten regions.

Minister Madeleine Tchunte spoke on the occasion of the “Improved Seed Promotion Day.” The donation is expected to allow the production of more than 4,500 tons of seeds, which will be redistributed to farmers next season.

But authorities fear that the farmers will sell the high-yielding seeds to neighbouring countries, which has often occurred in the past. *“I ask the beneficiaries to use these seeds exclusively in Cameroon for the good of compatriots. Selling them to neighbouring countries, as is often the case, would be a crime against our agricultural development,”* she warned.

More than 99 tons of maize (white and yellow) are on sale in research centres across the country. Also available are 17 tons of Irish potatoes, which are resistant to diseases like blight and moderately resistant to viruses; four varieties are even resistant to bacteria. There are also produce potatoes, which have a firm texture, never darken after cooking, and yield 30-35 tons per hectare.

Along with cassava, a staple Cameroonian food with several by-products, there are more than 500,000 tubers and cuttings for farmers across the nation, and these varieties yield in nine to 12 months and produce 40 tons per hectare.



Minister
Madeleine
Tchunte

Germinated oil palms (2 million), as well as second-cycle improved palm seeds can be obtained in Dibamba, a research centre specialized in palms. *“Planting the Tenera-ameliorated seeds from the Dibamba centre, farmers harvested within three to four years,”* Tchunte said while citing a contrasting example of farmers who planted the traditional palms but failed to harvest even after seven years. Tenera is the result of 50 years of research, according to the Minister.

Cuttings of fruit trees such as oranges, lemons, and mangoes are available at the Njombe research centre. Piglets and table birds are also available in the 19 research centres across the country.

It is thanks to the Ministry's investment budget that these centres are functional, the minister said. Other than the state, agro-industrial companies such as SODECOTON, a

cotton company, have been sponsoring research. *“I would like to thank the General Manager, Mr Iya Mohammed, for the financial support he gives to research. Since the creation of SODECOTON, all the seeds used by the corporation are the research work of IRAD (Institute of Research in Agriculture for Development) and their French partner, the CIRAD (International Centre in Agronomy for Development),”* she revealed.

Minister Tchunte also saluted the joint efforts of the IRAD and the ICRAF (International Centre for Research in Agro-Forestry), which have led to the domestication of forest products. Okok, djansang, bush mangoes and others now yield around homes between three to four years after planting.

According to the minister, *“Improved Seed Promotion Day”* will be repeated in all the regional headquarters from April 1 to 30. **JV**

Islamic Development Bank Loans CFAF 26,220 to Cameroon for Livestock and Fish Production in the North-West Region

This information is contained in three separate presidential decrees that were signed on March 4, 2013, and later published in the *Cameroon Tribune*.

In the decrees, the President of the Republic, Paul Biya, affirms that “the Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (Emmanuel Nganou Djoumessi) by delegation signed a financial accord with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) named “Istisna’a” ... for the funding of the project for the development of livestock and fisheries in the North-West region.”



Cameroon Will Import 713,000 Tons of Meat in Five Years If Authorities Fold Arms



Monique Ouli Ndongo, Secretary General of the Ministry of Livestock, made this stunning revelation at a workshop on methods to boost production in the fishing and livestock sectors, adding that tons of milk would also have to be imported by 2018.

These sectors currently produce only 267,000 tons, yet national de-

mand stands at 348,000 tons. The deficit of 81,000 tons therefore has to be imported, which creates a negative balance of payments.

With these levels of production, supply is at 12.3 kg of meat/individual/year, and 9 kg of milk, against a demand of 15.3 kg and 14.5 kg, respectively.

JV

Price of Eggs Drops



According to the *Cameroon Tribune* of March 7, 2013, an egg at the Mvog-Mbi egg market in Yaoundé now costs between 55 and 65 francs CFA (down from 80-100), while a tray of eggs costs between 1,600 and 1850 francs CFA (down from 2,350-2,600). The fall in prices is attributed to the increase in the number of hens in the poultry industry, especially in the Western region.

There, eggs are produced in great quantities. According to Emmanuel K., a source at the *Cameroon Tribune*, “fowls were sold in huge quantities during the end-of-year festivities, and now this new set of hens has favoured the massive increase in the production of eggs.”

Abba Sadou Rejects Two Completed Road Contracts, Orders Reconstruction



Minister Delegate in Charge of Public Contracts, Abba Sadou

The Minister Delegate in Charge of Public Contracts, Abba Sadou, has rejected the work that was done on the Meiganga-Ngaoundere road (80 km in the Adamawa region) and the Mamfe-Numba road (50 km in the South-West region). He has ordered for tarring to be re-done at the expense of the contractors.

Mere months after construction was completed, there were already death traps on the road, the Minister explains. He further stated that the situation is “*abnormal for a road that should need rehabilitation only after 15 years.*”

“A verification mission on the roads discovered that they were poorly tarred,” writes the *Cameroon Tribune*, quoting Abba Sadou.

According to a source at the Ministry of Public Works, the contractors had trouble coping with the nature of the soil and the materials used for tarring. Yet feasibility studies had been carried out before the contracts were awarded, and another company was in charge of supervising construction.

Strelitza Holdings Ltd Will Lend 210 billion CFAF to Cameroon



On March 1, 2013, the Head of State, Paul Biya, signed a decree authorising the Minister of Economy to sign a loan agreement worth 210 billion francs CFA with the British firm Strelitza Holdings Limited for the tarring of a 235 km strip of road.

The Ministry of Public Works has already carried out studies on the road's environmental and social impacts, which were validated and certified by the Ministry of Environment, the Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), according to sources at the Ministry of Economy, indicates the *Cameroon Tribune*.

It could take several months before the loan agreement is signed, but once the road is tarred it will open the South-West Region to the national economic hub, Douala.

Settlements along this road such as Tombel, Ebonji, Etam, Bakossi camp, Mambanda, Ekombe, Kombone and Bonge will heave a sigh of relief as they bid farewell to dusty skies, pools of water, and knee-deep mud along sections of the road.



Road Connecting Southern and Northern Cameroon is 80% Complete



The Garoua-Boulai-Meiganga road that links the East and Adamawa regions will be completed this June, reports the *Cameroon Tribune*. Since September 21, 2010, two companies, Razel and DTP Terrassement, have been working on the road under the control of Egis Cameroun. Construction was to be completed within 30 months.

"A coat of tar has already been applied on certain parts of the road, and the population is already enjoying a smooth ride", indicates the newspaper. The European Union and the African Development Bank are each contributing 50% of the funding for the project, which will cost 104 billion francs CFA.

"Before, it took us three days to travel on the Garoua-Boulai-Meiganga road in a good car, but now it takes just one hour," said Housseni Goni, a commuter.

JV

Major Reduction in Road Accident Deaths



Since January this year, 192 deaths have been recorded on Cameroonian roads, which represents 60 deaths per month compared to 90 in previous years, indicated Brigadier General Daniel Elokobi Njock, who is in charge of coordinating the National Gendarmerie.

According to him, Cameroonians are becoming aware of their misdemeanours on the road. He was speaking as he led a team of officers to national road number four (Yaoundé-Bafoussam) during the 4th phase of the surveillance, control and enforcement operations his corps launched two years ago. Code named "Zero Tolerance", it fines road users who violate highway laws.

"Vehicles without insurance are impounded irrespective of the owner", the General told reporters. The most frequent violation is excessive speed. Last Saturday, Gendarmerie staff stopped several drivers in Nkol Nguem, before Obala, for speeding.

There, a sign indicates that the speed limit is 30 km/hour because of ongoing construction work Razel is carrying out on that section of the road, but most drivers ignored the limit and fell into the net of law enforcement officers.

Work on Limbe Petroleum Yard Resumes



According to the Minister of Transport, Robert Nkili, work on the Yard had stopped for a year because of financial difficulties. He was at the site on Wednesday March 6, 2013 to inspect the situation.

The required funding is still not entirely available, indicates Antoine Bikoro, Deputy General Manager of the Cameroon Shipyard Engineering Corporation (CNIC). The total cost is estimated at 150 billion francs CFA, of which 84 billion were spent in the first phase of the project. Covering 1 km inland, 100 hectares of water, and 60 hectares of land, the project is being funded by the African Development Bank (ADB).

The first lot of the yard was completed in 2003, and the second lot will be completed in April 2013, company authorities told state radio.

Limbe Petroleum Yard is expected to create 3,000 direct jobs and 1,000 indirect jobs upon completion, a dramatic increase from the 32 jobs that were created when the CNIC was first established in 1999.

SCDP Auctions 30,000 Litres of Fuel

At the Petroleum Depot Company (SCDP), 15,000 litres of petrol and 15,000 litres of kerosene were recently auctioned off, to the great appreciation of the public. A litre of kerosene sold at CFAF 150 instead of 350, while petrol sold at CFAF 260, down from 569 at the gas station. Valued at 13 million francs CFA, these products were sold for 6 million francs CFA, according to Evina Messanga, a deputy director at the Ministry of Water and Energy (MINEE) who was responsible for the exercise. The

benefits will go back into the state's treasury.

The loot was confiscated last January 31 from fraudulent dealers who were about to mix fuel and kerosene, but an opportune verification mission was able to expose them, confirmed a MINEE official.

According to Cameroonian law, products confiscated due to an illegal activity must be auctioned. The fraudsters will have to pay close to 13 million francs CFA to the state.



Gas Now Available at Kribi Gas-Powered Plant

The National Hydrocarbons Corporation (NHC), a supplier of gas, made the announcement in the February 26, 2013 edition of the *Cameroon Tribune*.

"... Gas was injected into the pipeline on February 22. A team from the national fire department attended this phase of the test," reads the communiqué.

The gas meter has also been gauged, a process that is essential to the commercial relation between the NHC and its customer, Kribi Power Development company (KPDC), following a contract between the two parties. Completed

earlier this month, an 18 km pipeline links the gas processing plant at Bipaga I to the thermal plant at Mpolongwe II.

An earlier communiqué from the Kribi gas-powered plant said that as of Saturday March 23, 2013, *"the plant is ready for commercial operation, and can be operated at full capacity."*

This thermal plant will generate 216 MW when it becomes operational, and could halve the power cuts in urban centres.

JV



Sonara Lost CFAF 29 billion in Four Years Due to Management Errors



Charles Metouck,
former General Manager of SONARA

A report by the Supreme State Audit Ministry published on Wednesday said that the National Oil Refinery (SONARA) lost 29.12 billion francs CFA between 2007 and 2010, when the former General Manager, Charles Metouck, was in office.

The decision to fire three other executives was taken last March 12 by the Finance and Budget Disciplinary Council

(CDBF), an arm of the Supreme State Audit Ministry, and it was signed by the Minister, Henri Eyébé Ayissi.

In Metouck's case, he was found guilty of 40 management errors, 28 of which had cost SONARA 26.94 billion francs CFA.

According to the decision, the former GM *"violated prescriptions governing*

public contracts" and *"decided to increase his monthly salary by 50% without consulting the company's Board."* He is also said to have paid for *"second-hand goods at the market price of new ones"*, among other offences.

The second senior official involved in the decision is Jean Joule Edingue, who was the head of Legal Affairs and Insurance Services. He was fired for seven mistakes that cost the company 1.85 billion francs CFA.

As for the chief of SONARA's expansion project, Yenwo Molo, he is said to have *"paid a surplus on the initial amount of a contract"* worth 324.6 million francs CFA, according to the decision.

Finally, Michel Moue Mbeleck, the head of Purchasing, was accused of incurring losses of 3.48 million francs CFA, and among other things, of *"purchasing items at a higher price than on the invoice."*

Jude Viban

Camair-Co Cuts Down on Late Flights



The national carrier, Camair-Co, says that it has reduced the number of flights that take off behind schedule. *"When the new management arrived, 20% of flights were on time. Today, we are at 95%,"* Eloi Cyrille Tollo, Special Adviser to the General Manager, told reporters at a press briefing on Thursday in Douala.

It was also revealed that the company will soon stop using "Dja" Boeing 737-300ER, its biggest carrier. *"It will be replaced in the short or medium term,"* Christian Perchat, a Commercial Manager, said in a press briefing to present Camair-Co's new development plan.

Empty return flights are forcing the company to rethink its plan. *"At this point, for the regional routes, we are*

between 55 to 60% of passenger load. [...] The problem is with business class, where there is little clientele," explains Perchat.

This situation is due to the lack of technology in the aircraft. Business class clients need an environment where they can rest, relax, and work. *"They need to be able to use USBs, and have electricity to plug in their devices,"* the Commercial Manager adds.

Apart from replacing the Dja, Camair-Co wants to increase its fleet from three to 26 aircrafts in the next six years. Another innovation in the plan is to increase the frequency of flights. In the domestic network, Ngaoundere airfield will open this July 1st if the reha-

bilitation work on the tarmac is completed on time.

In the future, Camair-Co clients could be able to fly the Douala-Yaoundé-Garoua-Maroua route six times a week.

On the regional scene, Libreville now has six flights and is connected to Paris, and Camair-Co will touch down on the Lagos tarmac three times a week before continuing to Cotonou. A regular stop in Abidjan is scheduled to start next July 1. Flights to Paris will jump to five in June.

Camair-Co, which was born from the ashes of the defunct Camair, wants to become *"a leader from Dakar down to Luanda,"* Tollo said.

Jude Viban

Le Bus Shows the Door to 150 Employees



A vehicle from Tic Le Bus

Unable to meet its obligations, the company was forced to cut its technical staff on March 7, 2013, reports the daily *Mutations*.

According to a reliable source (a *Tic Le Bus* executive), the company is facing many problems, including difficulties with vehicle maintenance, a lack of spare parts, cash flow pressures, a lack of working capital, and many others.

"People are not working, but the company has an obligation to pay them. This is now the second month that we have gone without pay," claimed an anonymous company official.

According to the company's executives, the situation is due to an excessive workforce. *"International standards for urban transport management require that we have six employees for a bus. But now Tic Le Bus has 20 buses with 428 people on staff,"* an employee told *Mutations*.

When the company began in 2006, it had 47 new buses with more than 500 employees. And, according to a company official, the losses incurred in 2007 amounted to 1.7 billion francs CFA. *"Since 2009, we made a profit of more than 900 million francs CFA, which has also contributed to the purchase of second-hand buses,"* said one official.

Despite the acquisition of 38 second-hand buses, the last 20 of which arrived in January 2012, only 20 are functional at the moment.

Yaoundé-Douala in two hours, thirty minutes by rail – Hamadou Sali



On February 25, 2013, the Cameroon Railway Company (CAMRAIL) presented six new locomotives. To mark the occasion, its chairman, Hamadou Sali, announced that CAMRAIL would in the "near future" transport persons and cargo from Yaoundé to Douala in two hours, thirty minutes. By road, the 245 kilometres are covered in three to four hours.

CAMRAIL has ordered 55 passenger coaches, 40 of which will be delivered in August, while 50 flatbed wagons and 25 tank wagons are expected before the end

of this year, according to the company's press release.

Reports say that the company is paying 12 billion francs CFA to the state (in concession fees and taxes), in addition to a 10 billion francs CFA investment in the modernization of the railroads. CAMRAIL, which is a public-private partnership managed by Bolloré Africa Logistics since 1999, announced that it would also rehabilitate the 175 km railway line between Batschenga and Ka'a by July 2013.

JV

Cameroon Court Clears Dangote Group



Aliko
Dangote

Let's Green Africa, Hygiene and Environmental Security (HSE) and the Bonateki Community had sued the Dangote Cement Company for polluting, but on March 8, the judge in the Wouri Court of First Instance threw out the case after the company presented a certificate indicating that it was complying with environmental laws.

"Our lawyer presented a certificate of environmental conformity at the last

two hearings. This document is proof that everything is in order and that our adversaries have been proven wrong. Today, it's business as usual," a worker at the Douala office told the Cameroon Tribune.

But the "Movement" against the company is not ready to give up. It is planning to take the case to the Supreme Court, said Achille Kotto, a member of the Movement, which is requesting that the factory be shut down and relocated.

"The document's date is March 8, 2013, but work started in November 2011," indicates Achille Kotto.

At the Dangote group, there is confusion about the date work actually started. *"When we fenced the site, it was to prepare the land. But onlookers thought work had started.*

As we speak, we have been granted the building permit by the Douala City Council and we now have other necessary documents from the ministry," explains a senior manager at the Douala cement factory.

Earlier, Dangote had faced opposition from residents who filed an injunction on the grounds that the land belonged to the ethnic Sawa people, and reports said that construction was postponed. It is unclear now when construction actually began.

Located in Douala, the 1.5 million tons-per-year plant was to be completed in 18 months, an official statement from the group said in September 2012. Cameroon currently has only one cement company, CIMENCAM, which has an annual output of about 1 million tons.

Afko Cement Factory Still Under Construction After Five Years

Construction on the Afko Cement Factory began in 2008, yet it remains unfinished till this day. Expected to produce a million tons of cement per year, the factory is situated in the Nguema neighbourhood, about 8 km from Limbe town. Afko, a South Korean company, has already invested 16 billion francs CFA, but 15 billion more are missing to complete the project, indicate our sources.

While the construction of the Afko Cement Factory is delayed, a German group has announced the construction of a GPower Cement Factory, which would have an

annual capacity of 800,000 tons. According to company authorities, it will take 24 to 36 months to complete: if construction starts when expected, the factory will be operational in 2015.

These cement factories could re-

The plan
of the Afko
Cement
Factory in
2007

solve the shortage Cameroon is facing. Current demand in the country stands at 8 million tons, but only 1.5 million are available on the market, according to the Ministry of Commerce, and there is an 8% yearly increase in demand.



Herakles Farm Will Invest CFAF 300 billion in Cameroon



Bruce Wrobel, CEO of Herakles Farms/SGSOC

In a special report dated March 18, *Eden* announced that Herakles Farms/SGSOC plans to invest a total of 300 billion francs CFA over several years for the development of oil palm production in the South-West region of Cameroon.

The breaking news was revealed to the audience by the incoming General Manager, Patrick Jones, at the Herakles Farms/SGSOC General Assembly for stakeholders in Kumba, indicates *Eden*.

Herakles believes this investment will improve the lives of indigenous peoples. *"The key to sustainable plantation development is stakeholder consultation and dialogue (...) We believe that developing a sustainable and responsible palm oil industry in Africa is key to food security on the continent (...) We expect that by the time the project is complete, we'll have been able to move half of the families from the economically-impacted area into the middle class (...) We have lofty social ambitions there,"* said

Bruce Wrobel, CEO of Herakles Farms/SGSOC.

But NGOs have criticised the American company: *"It is developing a large oil palm plantation in Cameroon that is of questionable legality, has been heavily criticized in environmental studies, and is provoking growing local and international opposition."*

As for Herakles Farms, the agro-industrial company *"is concerned that the public is being misled by recent reports on its project in Cameroon, and [it is] working to clarify misinformation and false allegations,"* reads an official statement on its website.

COBAC Issues License to Cameroon's BC-PME Bank

The Bank of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (BC-PME) now has an operating license from COBAC, the constable of banking activities in the Central African Region. Issued on Wednesday, the news comes at a time when the nomination of the management staff is still being awaited, claimed the March 22 edition of *Le Quotidien de l'Economie*.

Held at the conference hall of the Ministry of Finance on Wednesday, the bank's first general assembly (GA) aimed to name a general manager, but no official statement has been issued to that effect.

However, unconfirmed sources told a state radio journalist that proposals have been made to the Head of State.

Held in the presence of Laurent Serge Etoundi Ngoa, Minister of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Social Econ-

omy and Handicraft (MINPMEESA), which provides technical guidance, the GA was also supposed to appoint the bank's board members and establish their pay scale, while the board meeting was supposed to elect a chairman and his deputies, according to an earlier communiqué signed by the Minister of Finance, Alamine Ousmane Mey.

President Paul Biya had promised the creation of the bank during the Agro-pastoral Show in Ebolowa as a solution to the funding difficulties of small-sized enterprises.

The bank currently has a social capital of 10 billion francs CFA, which are provided entirely by the state. But *"that does not mean that the BC-PME is limited to government funds because if there is funding available from international organizations or other local private investors, it would be able to attract that*



Laurent Serge Etoundi Ngoa

funding. But Government will be seen as having a commitment to provide some minimum amount of funding," indicates Dr Ernest Molua, an agro-economist.

According to state radio (CRTV), the BC-PME will have two counters: one for small and medium enterprises, and the other to sponsor handicraft projects. But it will also be involved in other banking activities.

Jude Viban

Bad Weather at Eto'o Telecom, Two Top Brass Fired

After the employee strike, two directors at Eto'o Telecom were sacked over the weekend. Jean-Bosco Massoma, Manager of Financial Affairs, and Mrs. Mbog Tam, Human Resources Manager, were thanked for their services to the company that owns the Set Mobile brand. Sources at the company say that an audit ordered by the General Manager discovered that they had created an embezzlement network to the detriment of the nascent firm.

Last month, the same reason was given for the dismissal of the Deputy General Manager, Georges Dooh-Collins. It should be recalled that Jean-Bosco Massoma had served as interim General Manager following the departure of the previous GM.

According to sources that wish to remain anonymous, the audit was conducted following a recommendation by Hervé Perrin, the new General Manager, as part of an attempt to correct the management gaps and to formulate new strategies, since previous ones have failed to kick start the brand.

Eto'o Telecom, a virtual service network provider, has been in turbulent waters

since it was created in 2012. In December last year, it withdrew the exclusive rights of eight distributors for failing to

respect their engagements, a move that sparked controversy.

JV

Over 1.8 Million New Customers Subscribed To MTN Cameroon In 2012



Karl
Olutokun
Toriola,
Chief
Executive
Officer
at MTN
Cameroon

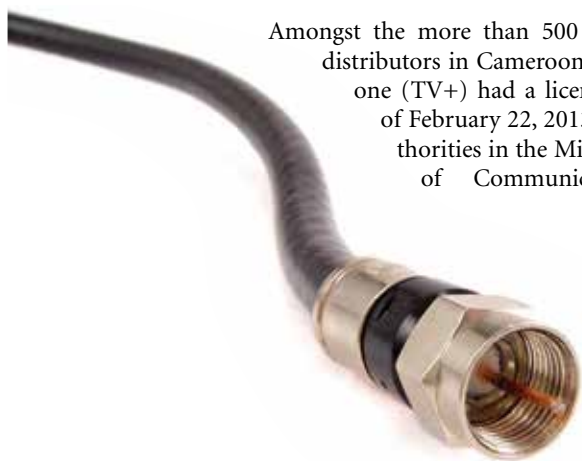
Representing a 26% increase, 1,899,820 new customers made the move to MTN Cameroon, which now counts 7.307 million customers. The company said it expects to add another million customers in 2013.

Revenues increased 8.9% last year to 236.86 billion francs CFA. According to company sources, this is explained by a 25% increase in data revenues (excluding SMS) and the growing popularity of its mobile money services.

The operator shares the market with Orange Cameroon, and both will compete in the next two years with Viettel Cameroun Sarl, a Vietnamese company that was recently granted a licence to operate in Cameroon.

Only One Cable Distributor Has a Licence on Over 500

Amongst the more than 500 cable distributors in Cameroon, only one (TV+) had a license as of February 22, 2013. Authorities in the Ministry of Communication



say 70 operators have paid their application fees, while another five have paid the licence fees and will soon receive their licences. The application fee is 500,000 CFAF, and licence fees differ depending on each operator's coverage area. For example, local distributors pay 50 million CFAF for licences, but a national network cable distributor can pay 100 million.

"This sector employs thousands of Cameroonians. According to the National Institute of Statistics, it has a manpower of 8,110 individuals, with 60% of entrepreneurs employing only close relatives, friends and apprentices, and 40% functioning as well-organised companies with management structures," reports *Alter Eco*. Statistics also suggest that cable operators paid 5 billion francs CFA in salaries during 2011.

In 2011, cable distribution in Cameroon generated 22 billion francs CFA in revenues, according to figures from the National Institute of Statistics. This sector thus constitutes about 0.176% of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Cameroon Introduces New Budget Management Software



Named *Programme Budget Management Information System (PROBMIS)*, the software will help public servants to manage information in the new programme budget that was introduced in early 2013, from the grassroots all the way to the central administration. Software developers say PROBMIS will enable the Ministry of Finance to obtain current information from the lower levels of the administration, and

that it was necessary to replace the old one.

Quoting Agusta Tabenyang Njock Arrey, Controller of Budget and Accounts for the Public Finance Reform Project, the *Cameroon Tribune* said that the software is located at the Ministry of Finance, and that it will network with other ministries and the regions to ensure the rapid flow of information.

Dr William Tasong:

“Azideriva Software Products are Meant for Any Properly Structured Business”

In the business world, Information Technology (IT) is an important tool for doing business. Cameroon-born Dr William Tasong, an IT specialist, has developed with his team two software solutions that are just a click away for the better management of companies. He explains how these solutions work.

Business in Cameroon: Dr Tasong, can you present the two software solutions that you have developed for the management of accounts and services?

Dr William Tasong: The two new software solutions are the Azideriva Logistics Management and Financial Control, and the Azideriva Data Interchange software and services.

The Logistics Management and Financial Control software automates the operations for stock inventory management, sales order processing management, invoicing and payment processing, requisition processing and purchase order management, and accounting and financial controls. The software also includes built-in standard industry reporting features such as automated journal postings, account statements, trail balances, and more. As a result, businesses can effectively manage and control their revenues and expenses at the click of a button.

The Azideriva Data Interchange Solution Suite software helps businesses to exchange data seamlessly in real-time using the Azideriva messaging framework. The interchange solution has various functionalities and applications, such as Mobile Money Transfer management with built-in expert XML, SMS text, and email messaging features, which enable banking organisations to effectively manage the process of sending money, collecting, and reporting using only one suite. The mobile money solution can also manage money transfer agents and tellers. When used with the Azideriva Finance Solution Suite and the Treasury Management Application, the solution helps financial organisations to easily incorporate Mobile Money Transfers into their existing banking operations.

Other features of the data interchange solution include data services over Azideriva's seamless messaging framework, which enables organisations to securely exchange data between branches, customers, and other external organisations. Together with other existing Azideriva Finance software solutions such as Azideriva FL7X, the Azideriva Interchange enables the client to improve efficiency, minimize risk, reduce op-

erational costs, and also improve customer confidence and experience.

BIC: When did this journey start and how did you build your team?

WT: I founded the Azideriva Ltd Company in 2008. Therefore, one could say that the journey started in 2008. Initially, I worked on my own, but I've since been building a team of highly talented people, mainly Cameroonian graduates who are based in our offices in Buea, South-West Region, to support our operations in Cameroon.

BIC: Has the software been tested? What were the results, and are there companies already using it?

WT: The Azideriva software solutions have been extensively tested. Many businesses in Cameroon are currently exploiting and using the Azideriva software in towns and cities such as Douala, Limbe, Muyuka, Menji, Buea, Kumba, and Muyenge. Selected examples of businesses currently using Azideriva software are Nkong Credit for Development Savings and Loans Co-operative Society Ltd MFI, and Nkongni Savings and Loans Co-operative Society Ltd, and many more. Azideriva Ltd is aggressively expanding its customer base and we are currently speaking to potential customers in other towns in Cameroon.



BIC: It seems that the softwares are meant for banking institutions or similar businesses. Is this the case?

WT: The Azideriva software products are meant for any properly structured business, including organizations and groups, as well as those that aspire to acquire the tools that will enable them to effectively conduct stock and financial controls, effectively manage staff and data, and enhance internal and external communication to curb labour and time costs.

BIC: It looks like you chose to present the software in Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, in order to target private entities. What about the public sector?

WT: The decision to present the programs in Douala was not only

about targeting the private sector. It was a call to the heads of all sectors (private and public, owners and managers) that Azideriva has brought them the solutions they need to effectively and efficiently manage and run their operations at minimal cost.

BIC: If a company is interested in using your software, can it go to the store and buy it like a CD, and can any IT specialist install it?

WT: Azideriva software solutions are designed and built on enterprise architecture, and therefore they are not sold as CDs. The software consists of an array of various frameworks that have to be physically installed on the clients' systems, including remote locations of their choice. Therefore, potential customers who are interested in using any of the Azideriva

software products should contact the nearest Azideriva office for more information or for a demo of the products. We currently have an office in Buea, where our experts are based. However, we are flexible in terms of travelling to other parts of the country to assist customers.

BIC: You live and work in the UK, where business is conducted differently than in Cameroon. How close are you to the reality here, so that you are able to develop software that fixes Cameroonian problems and those of similar countries?

WT: I grew up in Cameroon, and before I left for Britain, I had a good knowledge of the Cameroonian system. Cameroon and the UK share similar problems, and software like the Azideriva is number one in places like the UK in terms of addressing business and financial control problems. I urge Cameroonians who have not yet started using Azideriva software products to do so and to spread the word.

BIC: To ensure your legacy, is there anything in particular that you have done or are doing to help young Cameroonians follow in your footsteps?

WT: Azideriva currently employs a good number of Cameroonian graduates, who are working with me. Hopefully, I will mentor them in the process and pass on some of the knowledge I have acquired over the years. I also run a scholarship scheme at my former secondary school (GBHS Fontem) with the aim of encouraging the children to follow in my footsteps.

On a concluding note: to see that there are problems in Cameroon is one thing, but to get involved in solving them is another. I intend to encourage Cameroonians to look for ways to get involved in the search for the solutions to our country's problems. It is by doing so that everyone can work as one and achieve more.

Interviewed by Jude Viban

Lake Chad Shrinks by 95% in Four Decades

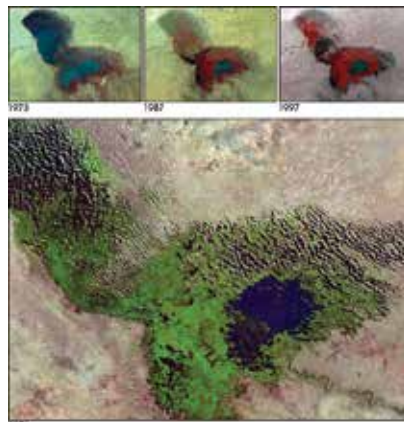


In the photo, Lake Chad as seen from Apollo 7 in 1968

Scientists say that Lake Chad, one of the largest freshwater lakes in Africa, has diminished tremendously in the past 35 years, and may disappear in the coming decades.

“Regional leaders say they have a new solution: diverting water from the Oban-

gui River in the Congo to Lake Chad. But the project will be costly and some environmentalists say it could bring new consequences for river and lake communities,” reports Free Speech Radio News. Part of Lake Chad is in Cameroon.



Lake Chad in a 2001 satellite image, with the actual lake in blue, and vegetation that has grown on top of the old lake bed in green. Above it, the changes that occurred between 1973 and 1997.

ADB Opts to Fund Second Phase of PADY

During a working session between the African Development Bank (ADB) and authorities from the Yaoundé City Council, it was revealed that the Bank will fund the second phase of the water channelling project in the city (PADY). The first phase was sponsored to the tune of 22.3 billion francs CFA by the Bank, which provided 90% of the funds.

Thanks to PADY, the number of floods in Yaoundé dropped from 15 in 2006 to three in 2011. The project has also created 751 direct jobs and 1,064 indirect jobs.

The first phase was finished on June 30, 2012, but it remains unclear when the second phase, which involves channeling the 8 km of the Mfoundi River that flow across the city, will start.

Strike Season in Cameroon

In three months, more than 15 strikes have been recorded, and others are announced for the coming months. Infrastructure, agriculture, service, transport and factories are some of the sectors that are being hit hard by these strikes. Unfair dismissals, the non-payment of salaries, and the status of work are some of the main reasons behind these repeated strikes.

At the *Paris Mutuel Urbain Camerounais* (PMUC), work stopped for four days as ticket vendors asked for a review of their wages, which are set at 4% of sales.

To be paid their two months salaries in arrears, workers at *Le Bus* blocked buses in their parking lot in Nlongkak for three days.

The situation was the same at CAMRAIL, where former workers of REGIFERCAM blocked the railway in the Nyalla neighbourhood to ask for 163 months of unpaid salaries, totalling 30 billion francs CFA.

For Issac Bissala, President of the Cameroon Workers' Trade Union (UGTC), the timing of the strikes is carefully calculated. *"Preparations for Labour Day are in high gear. It is the period during which workers strike. If you look across the globe, there are strikes all over. It is simply a period we think best to defend the interests of workers"*, the trade unionist explained.

"The social situation in Cameroon has been unhealthy for some decades", and this translates into the violation of workers' rights, explains Issac

Bissala. *"Nobody respects workers' rights in the country. At times I think that nobody is afraid of the state. We have realized that the law and all that regulates the rights of workers are not respected. Be it state institutions, private or para-public, nobody respects these rights"*, Bissala told *Le Quotidien de l'Economie*.

Although there is no official statement from the government, the Ministry of Labour is seen as the



invisible hand behind some of the fruitful negotiations that have ended stand offs between employers and employees, especially in para-public institutions.

PMUC Workers Leave Kiosks for the Streets



"Unacceptable" work conditions and poor remuneration have forced the workers of Paris Mutuel Urbain Camerounais (PMUC) to take to the streets, according to Le Quotidien de l'Economie of Friday March 8, 2013. In their pink outfits, the workers walked to the institution's headquarters in Yaoundé on Thursday afternoon to protest the "poor treatment and bad conditions of remuneration," reports the paper.

"We are paid by commission, which is 4% of sales per month," said E. Etienne, an employee who has worked for PMUC for

five years. From this amount, 5,000 francs CFA are deducted for insurance and taxes. "At the end of the day, we sometimes have 10,000 francs as net pay, sometimes 4,500 for some workers," a fuming Etienne told Le Quotidien de l'Economie. The protesters are the employees who sell tickets.

A meeting between the management, a representative of the Cameroon Workers' Trade Union, a staff representative, and a labour inspector has been scheduled for next Monday, confirmed Isaac Bissala, a trade unionist, to the paper.

567 Companies Caught in a Fake Document Ring



The ARMP (Public Contracts Regulatory Agency) has published a list of 567 companies that are guilty of using fake documents to pursue contracts during the 2011 financial year. Some of these are either inexistent or do not have actual structures, according to ARMP authorities. However, well-known companies do not appear on the list.

ARMP explains that the denunciation of the culprits is an attempt by the government to bring order to a sector that is known for corruption, such as the payment of kickbacks before the award of contracts.

In this effort to revolutionize the sector, the Head of State, Paul Biya, created the Ministry in Charge of Public Contracts at the Presidency of the Republic (MIN-MAP) on December 9, 2012, while the ARMP was re-organized and assigned new functions.

MINMAP now centralizes all contracts in the country that are above 50 million francs CFA, unlike the previous practice in which each ministry managed its own contracts.

Illegal Logging: Authorities Impound Over 20 Trucks in Douala



More than 20 trucks loaded with illegally-exploited species of timber were confiscated in Douala over the weekend as part of a blitz operation launched on February 22, 2013 by Philip Ngole Ngwese, the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife.

The governor of the Littoral Region, Joseph Beti Assomo, made the discovery last February 28 in the course of an unannounced stop at Youpwe, a neighbourhood in Douala where trade in wood flourishes. Accompanying him were ministerial authorities charged with the operation, which was led by its

Chief, Jean Nyeng, reports the *Cameroon Tribune*.

Bubinga, Debema, Azobe, Ayous, Iroko, Kocipo and Sapeli were some of the species among the confiscated timber. They grow in the southern part of Cameroon, which is mostly covered by an equatorial rain forest. "This operation is to respect the engagements Cameroon took with foreign donors and international partners," said Jean Nyeng. The confiscated logs will be auctioned, while as for the culprits, "The law will be applied," indicated Beti Assomo.

Mbalam Project in Limbo after Hanlong Chairman Arrest



Liu Han, Hanlong Group Chairman

There are renewed doubts about the takeover deal of Sundance Resources (owner of the Mbalam project) by China's Hanlong Group after its chairman, Liu Han, and his ex-wife were detained by police in Beijing.

His current wife and other family members were reportedly *"under the control of police"* in Sichuan province, southern China. The story on the Shanghai Securities News website gave no reason

for the detention of one of the nation's richest men.

But the website of the People's Daily, the main newspaper of China's Communist Party, said that Liu had been detained for gambling-related offences.

Liu's arrest in Beijing came just a few days after the National People's Congress ended. The media speculates that Liu's political allies in China's former government have now either retired or been demoted, thus prompting his sudden arrest.

The Chinese legal system does not limit the time a person can be detained by police without charge. As usual, Liu Han's name was blocked on Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter.

Meanwhile, Sundance confirmed last week that Hanlong had failed to secure

a credit-approved term sheet from its financiers, China Development Bank and China Everbright Bank, which it had to finalize by March 26 to move ahead on the deal, which has been under negotiations for 2 years.

Sundance decided to suspend trading in its shares until April 5 in order to work through the latest issues on the deal, but Sundance's managing director, Giulio Casello, told *The Australian* this week that he still believed that China was the natural owner of the Mbalam project and that Hanlong would successfully takeover Sundance.

However, market speculation suggested that Sundance had held talks with parties, including Glencore International, about the sale of a stake in the Mbalam project.

Study: Seigneurie Sells "Dangerous" Household Paint in Cameroon

Seigneurie, an American company, is refusing to remove from store shelves the cans of paint that allegedly contain dangerous concentrations of lead, according to a study by OK International and the Research and Education Centre for Development (CREPD).

The study, which was published in the May issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene, revealed that lead concentrations were as high as 500,000 parts per million (ppm) or 50 weight % in household paint being sold by Cameroon's largest paint company, Seigneurie, a subsidiary of PPG, an American firm. This concentration is more than 5,000 times the allowable limit in the U.S. Lead is added to paint because it is an inexpensive way to add colour, increase resistance to corrosion, or improve drying.

"There is an immediate need for regulations to restrict the lead content of paint in Cameroon to protect public health," said Perry Gottesfeld, Executive Director of Occupational Knowledge International (OK International) and co-author of a new study on this lead hazard. *"The levels of lead are extraordinarily high [...] This is the ultimate case of a company operating with double standards, as it sells hazardous products in developing countries that have been banned in the U.S. since the 1970s,"* Gottesfeld added.

The study showed that two-thirds of new paints in Cameroon made by more than ten companies had hazardous lead levels, i.e., in excess of 90 ppm. The researchers also found that none of the lead paints surveyed in stores had any hazard warnings, while only 8% had labels identifying the ingredients. This

new study is the first one to provide the names of paint companies and the lead concentrations for all 61 paints tested.

Most of the paint available on the market contains hazardous levels of lead, but there are no regulations regarding the lead content of new paints in Cameroon. Lead paint in housing contributes significantly to children's exposure, and can result in brain damage, mental retardation, lower educational performance, and a range of other health effects, according to the World Health Organization.

As a result of this study, consumers in Cameroon are being warned to avoid purchasing paint unless the cans are labelled "no lead added".

JV

UP

IBRAHIM TALBA MALLA: SQUARE PEG IN A SQUARE HOLE



On February 15, the former General Manager of the Hydrocarbons Prices Stabilization Fund (CSPH) was named General Manager of the national oil refinery (SONARA). Ibrahim Talba Malla Oumaté, Chairman of the Board at Credit du

Sahel, replaced the controversial Charles Metouck, who had been GM since September 2002. In a rush, he assumed his functions at the company's headquarters that same Friday.

This new house is a familiar one for Talba Malla. He ran CSPH for close to 22 years, and he knows that SONARA is a key partner in hydrocarbons price control. Also, he will be a linchpin in the negotiations between the government of Cameroon, foreign partners, and consumers in the stabilization of fuel prices in the country. Despite the announcement of higher costs in 2008 (post-riots), Talba Malla and his team held firm. Similarly, the announcement in December 2012 that fuel prices would increase in January 2013 triggered threats of strikes and protest marches, but he tactfully avoided the situation.

He came to office while CSPH was based in a building it had been renting since 1974 in the Etoa-Meki neighbourhood in Yaoundé. He decided to build new futuristic headquarters, which were inaugurated in May 2008 in Warda. Cost: 7 billion francs CFA.

At 54, this tax and business law specialist will have to put his experience to the use of the refinery's growth. A native of Mayo-Sava, the smallest administrative unit in the Far North, Talba Malla will face numerous challenges, including getting SONARA out of the hole, and managing the difficulties of mastering the local market. The son of a former senior State administrator, from whom he takes his name, Talba Malla will face another major challenge: that of moving the company from an annual production of 2.1 million tons to 3.5 in the months ahead. The resumption of activities at SONARA after 45 days of stoppage due to construction work will help the new leader of this offshore corporation to increase the productivity and efficiency of the oil sector within the sub-region.

CHARLES METOUCK: AN OIL SPILL ON THE HIGH SEAS



Humiliation is an appropriate word to describe what happened to Charles Metouck, the former GM of SONARA. After being fired on February 15, Metouck was "officially" surprised in his former office in Limbe on February 18. He

was arrested by police, led to Buea, and detained in a cell with six of his ex-employees. The former GM was suspected to have signed or destroyed certain company documents with the complicity of staff member in his former office, after entering without permission. His case is still pending in court. But according to Metouck, John Ebong Ngolle, SONARA's Chairman of the Board, had signed a document authorizing him to hold working sessions with the new GM to facilitate the transition.

According to some newspapers, Ebong Ngolle, who was questioned by police, said that his signature was forged and denied having signed any such document. For his part, Ibrahim Talba Malla, the new GM, said he discovered the existence of this document in the newspapers, according to press revelations. However, the document indicates that it was issued to Mr. Metouck "with the agreement of the new GM."

Still involved in this mess, the Supreme State Audit released a report that further blemishes Metouck's reputation. The report claims that SONARA lost 27 billion francs CFA in just four years because of Metouck's management errors. He is said to have unilaterally doubled his salary instead of seeking approval from the Board.

Charles Metouck, who replaced the late Bernard Eding, launched the first phase of the massive project to modernize SONARA. With boldness and determination, he arm-twisted Total, a SONARA shareholder, to accept the project. Some media reports suggest that his fall from grace is due to his conflict with Total.

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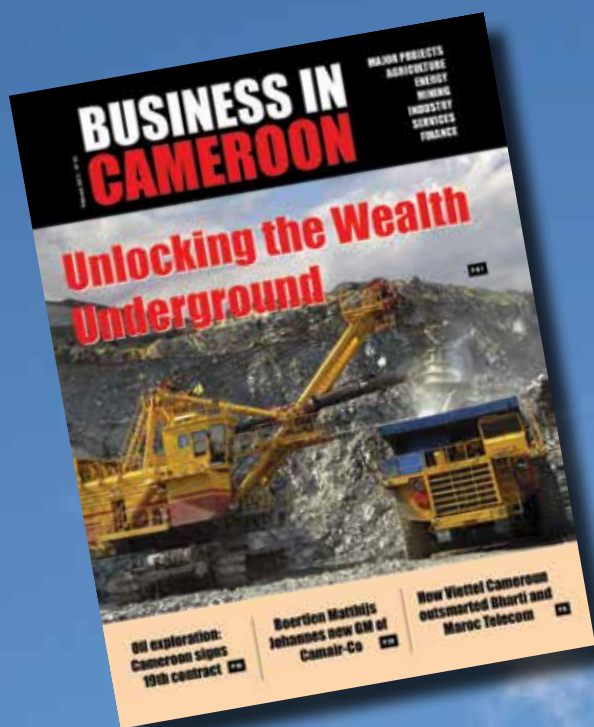
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