

October 2017 - N° 56

BUSINESS IN CAMEROON

MAJOR PROJECTS
AGRICULTURE
ENERGY
MINING
INDUSTRY
SERVICES
FINANCE

The battle of mineral waters in Cameroon



J. J. Aouda, an expertise in
the railway industry that
goes beyond borders



French firm Casino to open
20 stores in Cameroon



FREE - CANNOT BE SOLD

BUSINESS IN CAMEROON .COM

Daily business news
from Cameroon



Compatible with
iPads, smartphones
or tablets



APP AVAILABLE ON IOS AND ANDROID



All united for development

The 66th edition of your *Business in Cameroon* magazine is released in a particular context marked by the significant “Anglophone” crisis. The “dead cities” (*villes mortes*) weekly operations launched some months ago in the North Western and South Western regions have led to the global slowdown of commercial activities and trade with Nigeria. Losses are significant for banks, businesses, artisans, and all those selling and buying on the two sides of the border. The economic impacts of this crisis are obvious. Review will surely show slumping curves. Regardless, Cameroon moves on with its many projects and keeps tackling economic challenges as it seeks to achieve a growth rate of more than 5.6% in 2018.

Works are ongoing and structuring projects respect the schedules fixed in 2011. A won bet! Power outages are decreasing with more hydropower dams coming online while the second bridge of the Wouri River was just partially opened to traffic, this month of October 2017, to the great satisfaction of the people of the economic capital and its surroundings.

Credible, Cameroon pursues negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to better cushion the impact of the drop in prices of commodi-

ties and the fight against Boko Haram in the North. As one may notice, despite swimming in quite tumultuous waters, the country remains afloat.

Talking of waters, it is the theme of this edition's dossier. Markets in this sector are highly dynamic. Indeed, a rude competition is recorded in the profitable, and booming, sector which is that of mineral waters. The liquid which is extracted from the water tables and volcanic rocks of Mount Cameroon, makes more than one investor happy. As a result, consumers now have great access to mineral water whose prices are extremely competitive. Truly, on the stalls of many stores and supermarkets are laid different types and brands of the product. Mineral water's consumption is continually growing as statistics can attest. In 2016, volume of mineral water consumed in Cameroon stood at 2.2 million hectoliters, nearly a third more of the volume recorded in 2015.

Once considered as a luxurious product imported exclusively from Europe, mineral water nowadays is sold everywhere in Cameroon, both in urban and rural areas. This shows that despite economic, political and security challenges, Cameroon is building itself and each and every one can feel it in its daily life.

CONTENTS

FOCUS



- 08 • Cameroon drinks a big cup of mineral water
- 09 • Source Tangui swims in troubled waters
- 09 • Supermont: A new and hungry leader
- 10 • Opur, a strategic investment Source du Pays
- 10 • A new brand... "Vitale" for Brasseries du Cameroun
- 11 • Volcanic, Semme, Madiba and Pura drowned by competition
- 11 • Imported products not much popular

LEADER OF THE MONTH



- 34 • To protect the environment, Ismaël Essome makes pirogues with recycled plastic bottles

INTERVIEW



- 12 • Jean Joseph Aouda: "Cameroon can boast of having the best experts there can be in the sub-region, in the railway sector"

BUSINESS IN CAMEROON

Publisher

Stratline Limited

Publication Director

Yasmine BAHRI-DOMON

Contributors

Brice R. MBODIAM, Sylvain ANDZONGO, Idriss LINGE.

Operator

Médiamania Sàrl

www.mediamania.pro

Design : Jérémie FLAUX, Web : Christian ZANARDI,

Translation : Schadrac AKINOCHO, Bérénice BAH

Advertisement

regiepub@investiraucameroun.com

In Cameroon

Albert MASSIMB, almassimb@yahoo.fr

Tel : 00 237 694 66 94 59

Printing

Rotimpres, Aiguaviva, Espagne

Circulation

Albert MASSIMB, almassimb@yahoo.fr

Tel : 00 237 694 66 94 59

Free – cannot be sold

www.businessincameroun.com - info@businessincameroun.com

NEWS IN BRIEF



PUBLIC MANAGEMENT	P 18-20	INDUSTRY	P 29
FINANCE	P 21-23	MINING	P 30
AGRIBUSINESS	P 24-26	ITC & TELECOM	P 31-32
TRANSPORTATION	P 27-28	SERVICES	P 33

THE CAST



**PIERRE
MOUKOKO
MBONJO**

The former Cameroonian minister of foreign affairs (2011-2015), Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo, was just appointed as the Head of the African Union's newly formed Institutional Reforms Unit, official sources revealed. Professor at the Institute of Foreign Affairs of Cameroon (IRIC), Pierre Moukoko Mbonjo was also minister of communication (2004-2006) and Director of Cabinet of the Prime Minister (1996-2004).

Author of multiple articles, the newly appointed Head holds a PhD in political sciences from the University of Paris Pantheon I Sorbonne, as well as a Master of Advanced Studies in economic sciences, with a specialization in economic development.



**VINCENT
BOLLORÉ**

In a statement officially released on September 5, 2017, the Bolloré Group, who is owned by French industrialist Vincent Bolloré, denied taking over rights of the French logistics firm Necotrans in the Kribi deep water port's multipurpose container terminal, which is yet to be commissioned, in Southern Cameroon.

"Contrarily to what is said here and there, Necotrans' shares in Kribi's container terminal were not taken over by Bolloré Transport & Logistics," reads the statement which however confirms the takeover of *"Necotrans' minority shares"* in the Douala International Terminal (DIT), concessionaire of the container terminal of the Douala port.



**PROTAIS
AYANGMA**

On September 19, 2017, Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital city, hosted an investment and trade forum which regrouped 60 business leaders from China, and many Cameroonian economic operators, including 80 who showcased their projects to their Chinese guests, the event's organizers said.

The forum, according to Cameroon's business leaders' association which is led by Protais Ayangma, was held ahead of the Cameroonian Economic, Industrial and Commercial Days in China, which are to finally take place from December 1 to 5, 2017 (They were to initially be held on October 9-15, 2017, in Beijing).



**ALAMINE
OUSMANE MEY**

Under the fiscal law in place, *"tax stamps are exclusively sold in tax offices, fiscal management offices, stamps revenues offices, general treasuries, pensions and revenue offices"*. This was revealed in a statement released by Cameroon's minister of finances, Alamine Ousmane Mey.

The official's announcement comes in a context where complaints from candidates to various civil service examinations are resurging as their application's documents are rejected at submission, due to the use of fake tax stamps.



**MARTHE
ANGELINE
MINDJA**

On November 9 and 10, 2017, the Investment Promotion Agency of Cameroon (API) will organize in Douala, the country's economic capital, the second edition of the Cameroon Investment Forum (CIF). This was announced by Marthe Angeline Mindja, Managing Director of API, during a press conference held in Yaoundé.

Around 300 Cameroonian, American and European companies, are expected to attend the event and at the occasion, *"Accent will be put on the new private investment incentive framework in Cameroon, which exempts firms of customs and fiscal taxes for 15 years, divided into 10 years corresponding to their installation and 5 years during the production stage,"* the MD stressed.



**AUGUSTE
MBAPPÉ PENDA**

"Procedures and formalities for the clearance of import-export goods in Cameroon's ports". That was the theme of the capacity-building seminar which the National Council of Shippers of Cameroon (CNCC) just organized targeting public authorities.

The seminar aimed to sensitize the public administration's authorities about the need to respect deadlines set to clear their goods at the Douala port, to avoid clogging at the infrastructure. Truly, says CNCC's Director General, Auguste Mbappé Penda, *"Statistics clearly indicate that many of the containers stationed at the port over a prolonged period belong to various ministries"*.

Cameroon drinks a big cup of mineral water



In Cameroon, if there is a sector that is, like the telecommunications or cement, on the upward slope, it is surely that of mineral water. Truly, the product which was once considered as luxurious by many, has since the beginning of the 2010s significantly been democratized. This is mainly to be attributed to a rude competition in this market, mostly spurred by innovations driven by

many firms operating in the sector. In fact, according to statistics from official financial reports of Brasseries du Cameroon (Cameroon's Breweries), whose unit in charge of mineral water production (Société des Eaux Minérales du Cameroon – SEMC) has monopolized the market for decades, the drink's consumption level ceases not to grow since 2013. Indeed, after recording a growth of

11.8% that year, total sales of mineral water products in the country have soared by 32.6% in 2016, reaching 2.2 million hectoliters.

This was due to the arrival of new operators, competing with SEMC. Since the latter held the monopoly for many years, mineral water products, regardless of their producers, were often called by the name of the brand used by SEMC.

To change the trend, the newcomers, despite being foretold a not-so-bright future by analysts who based their conclusions on previous experiences, brought changes to the existent economic model, leveraged on an aggressive marketing. The innovation, resulted, in less than 10 years, in the decrease by more than 50% of the price of bottled mineral water, from CFA500 to CFA220 only now.

A great deal which Cameroon's populations rejoiced over as, it should be noted, the country's access to drinking water is officially below 40%. Well, as the prices became more affordable, Cameroonians in cities and in some remote areas even can now compensate the shortcomings of the national water utility with mineral water bottles.

Truly, a 1.5L bottle of mineral water is sold cheaper than a kg of rice (which is sold at FCFA300-FCFA400), which is the most consumed food product in Cameroon.

Brice R. Mbodiam

Source Tangui swims in troubled waters



After reigning on Cameroon's mineral water market for decades, Source Tangui, product of Société des Eaux Minérales du Cameroun (SEMC) which is listed on the Douala stock market (DSX) and controlled by the

Société Anonyme des Brasseries du Cameroun (SABC), was just dethroned by the Supermont brand, which is produced by Source du Pays. *"With Supermont, Source du Pays has officially become the country's leading mineral water producer. Supermont represents around 52% of the market shares against 36% for SABC,"* Castel's Cameroonian subsidiary disclosed in its 2016 yearly report.

Indeed, though it had disappeared from the Cameroonian market for some years, the Supermont mineral water returned with a strategy which consisted in democratizing the product in the country, selling a 10L container for CFA1500 while six traditional bottles of 1.5L were sold for FCFA2400.

This strategy was adopted by other producers, pulling prices down and

subsequently reducing their profit margins, including that of the market's former leader.

Truly, with Supermont's back in the game, Société des Eaux Minérales du Cameroun ended 2012 with a deficit of FCFA50 million which widened at the end of 2013, reaching FCFA319 million, according to financial reports of Brasseries du Cameroun, parent company of SEMC.

However, in 2014, SEMC which is the least performant DSX-listed company was able to make profits again ending the year with a net result of FCFA261.9 million; but still losing significant market shares.

Supermont: A new and hungry leader

As it increased its investments in the country and kept offering its products at more and more affordable prices, Source du Pays (SP) reinforced its position in Cameroon's mineral water market in 2016, with its Supermont brand.

Amongst its investments, it has that year acquired Nabco, the firm which used to manufacture the Opur mineral water brand.

Following this, SP snatched from SEMC its crown, having 58% of the country's market shares, 6% of which were previously held by Nabco, reads Brasseries du Cameroun's 2016 report.



As it increased its investments in the country and kept offering its products at more and more affordable prices, Source du Pays (SP) reinforced its position in Cameroon's mineral water market in 2016, with its Supermont brand.

Opur, a strategic investment Source du Pays



Since the beginning of 2016, a new product has entered Cameroon's mineral water market. Named Opur, it was produced by the Nana Bouba Company (Nabco), which is owned by Cameroonian billionaire Nana Bouba. As Nabco entered this sector, competition for market shares got ruder. Truly, the new product quickly announced its ambitions, becoming even the official sponsor of Cameroon's senior national football team, the Indomitable Lions. This considerably increased the product's visibility, a phenomenon spurred by Cameroonians'

love for their team. This, paired with its relatively low prices, would allow Opur, in less than a year of activity, to officially grab 6% of the country's mineral water market's shares. A feat which apparently did not convince Nana Bouba much as the billionaire decided to sell the producing firm to Source du Pays (which produces the Supermont water mineral). The move fell under a strategy aiming to redirect the Nana Bouba Group's activities back to its initial line of business, knowingly mass retail (via Soacam) and agribusiness (Azur, Sagri, etc.).

A new brand... "Vitale" for Brasseries du Cameroun

Despite the slump of its performances in the mineral water sector, which is paradoxical to its sales (which grew by 32.6% from 2015 to 2016, according to the above-mentioned report), Brasseries du Cameroun, via SEMC, intends to recover its crown. Truly, the firm announced in its annual report for 2016 that it plans this year to increase its sales more (+32.1%), *"by restructuring its distribution system and adopting an harmonious price policy and product segmentation"*.

For some days now, we have learned a bit more on the strategy adopted by the company which is controlled by the Castel group, to achieve its sales objectives in 2017, and reposition itself in the local mineral water market, amid an extremely rude competition. Truly, the SEMC just launched a



new, cheap, mineral water brand. The name of this brand is Vitale, and the product's 1.5L bottle is sold for FCFA220, officially. For the six bottles pack, it costs FCFA1300. These prices make Vitale more competitive than its sister-product, Source Tangui, or even its rivals, Supermont and Opur,

which cost between 350 CFA and 400 CFA a bottle, and between 1500 CFA and 1600 CFA for a pack of six. By leveraging on prices, SEMC thus re-enters the battle, armed with the weapons that its rivals have been using for some years to steal the crown which it once wore incontestably.

Volcanic, Semme, Madiba and Pura drowned by competition

It seems that the theory of natural selection is applied in Cameroon's mineral water market. Indeed, far is the time when the country had no less than ten mineral water brands circulating around. One of these, Semme, which was produced by Semme Mineral Water, firm established by businessman Semme Nougou, had in fact, over some years, competed well with Source Tangui and Supermont. However, after trying to purchase Pura, another local brand which was buried by the competition, the Semme brand finally disappeared from stores in 2013, officially after the production unit of

the Semme Mineral Water in the South Western region collapsed, as a result of a power surge in the electrical network. Yet, in July 2017, the product's promoter announced a comeback of the brand in the local market. After contributing to the flooding of the Cameroonian market, other local brands became quite discrete, almost extinct actually. This is the case of Madiba, a product launched by the Cameroonian Breweries Union, only brewery in the country to be controlled by nationals. The same goes for Volcanic, a mineral water extracted on the sides of Mount Cameroon.



Imported products not much popular

With an extraverted consumption, Cameroon is a big importer of basic products. However, this reputation does not concern two products which are: coffee, with some local roasters rivalling with Nestlé's famous Nescafé brand; and mineral water, as imported bottles have not much success in the country.

Truly, though they can be seen in some supermarkets, mineral water products such as Contrex, Evian, Perrier, Cristallin, Volvic, Badoit, St Yorre, Vittel, amongst others, are much of a Tom Thumb, in the Cameroonian market where local brands reign as giants. A situation which can be explained by the expensive prices of the first, which are now even ignored by the expatriates, many of whom tend to prefer local products, namely Source Tangui and Supermont, the two leading brands.



Though they can be seen in some supermarkets, mineral water products such as Contrex, Evian, Perrier, Cristallin, Volvic, Badoit, St Yorre, Vittel, amongst others, in the Cameroonian market where local brands reign as giants.

Jean Joseph Aouda:
*“Cameroon can boast
of having the best
experts there can be
in the sub-region, in
the railway sector”*

In this interview, the chief executive of BEACOP, one of the only Cameroonian firms providing railway engineering services gives an overview of the railway industry in his country, as well as some advices regarding the announced establishment of a company which will insure the management of Cameroon's railway infrastructures.

Business in Cameroon: You were one of the kingpins of the West African rail loop. How did you land on this major project developed by the Bolloré group?

Jean Joseph Aouda: When the Bolloré group decided to build the rail loop, its realization was trusted to Camrail (Cameroon Railways). As a result, a delegation comprised of the Managing Director, the Director of major projects and the Director of fixed installations visited the site of construction of the demonstrator (a 500m-long straight line). Given that I was at the time the director of fixed installations (in charge of maintenance and rehabilitation of railway infrastructures), I had the privilege to be part of this delegation.

My office had been tasked with developing the project on-field. I therefore chose the best Cameroonian collaborators as chiefs of teams to carry out the works. Considering the task at hand, I personally monitored works on-field. The day before the commissioning of the demonstrator, I was invited to a work session with the Group's President, Vincent Bolloré himself, before meeting the President of Niger. It was the first time, for me, to work directly with the great Vincent Bolloré, and this lasted an hour. I had the chance to prove that I was the right man for the job. It was a turning point for me and my Cameroonian peers working on the project.

BC: Can you tell us a bit about your experience on the project?

JJA: First, I would like to thank the Bolloré group, without which I would not have become a railway expert. Indeed, throughout my career, I have always been given the opportunity to showcase my skills. At all the various positions I held, I achieved great results, this in a quite sensible sector of activity.

What we experienced on this project was amazing, considering that we were the pioneers of the conception



Jean Joseph Aouda, chief executive of BEACOP: "What we experienced on this project was amazing, considering that we were the pioneers of the conception and realization of an infrastructure as gigantic as the West African rail loop."

and realization of an infrastructure as gigantic as the West African rail loop. The Bolloré group had a goal: to put forward the railway expertise of Africans, and their capacity to handle such a major project, trusting people who were active on the two railway

concessions that it operates: Camrail and Sitarail. Therefore, we had to insure that this project was a success. One of the biggest challenges and not the least, was to build the railway while training 1200 Niger nationals to the job as they composed the

most part of the staff working on the project. We had to deal with a harsh weather, on a part, and also to the mentality of workers which was completely different from ours, in terms of religion and culture, at least, on another part.

Last, I would like to recall the words of an 80-year old man who defied Niger's presidential guard, just to lay his hands on the rail, which he did in tears. They were: *"I have waited seventy years for this dream to come true. The best part of it is that it was done by one of my black sons. I can rest in peace now. Shoot me now if you want"*. I can assure you that such emotional experiences do not happen many times in a lifetime.

BC: How did you come up with the idea to start a company that specializes in railway engineering, a sector which up till now was solely covered by foreign firms ?

JJA: I dislike routine, and all my

was structuring his firm, and the treasury's difficulties at the time, M. Bouba offered to sell his shares to me. Once again, I agreed to his offer.

Given my expertise on the railway sector, it was obvious that we put the accent on the innovative domain which railway engineering represented in Cameroon. It is true that for now, the monopole of this sector is held by foreign companies, but we believe we are a reliable and valuable local partner.

BC: What assets does Beacop, the firm you head, has and can leverage on to compete with its foreign rivals, as they have grabbed almost all railway contracts in Africa over many decades ?

JJA: Our first asset, like any competitive company, is the skills of our men in terms railway expertise. We think it would be great for projects' promoters or clients to include in

"It should be recalled that Cameroon's railway was laid at the colonial period, and its most recent section is more than 30-years old."

former hierarchic superiors were well aware of this. It is the reason why I believe that holding the same position for more than three years is unproductive. Starting my own company had always haunted me for years. This was actually why I enrolled at the France Business School to offer an MBA. This course has reinforced my will to start a business.

When I returned to Cameroon, and saw that the project had been suspended, I was approached by Beacop's initial promoter, M. Bouba, to boost his firm. I agreed to this, while waiting to launch my own company which I would name JJ Consulting. However, somewhere on the way, looking at the way I

their contracts a clause forcing foreign companies to partner with local firms, to share their skills and expertise with nationals. In addition to our first asset, we have five criteria that define us:

Beacop favors professionalism, as it hires permanent qualified staff and experienced consultants. We have the pretention to develop a qualified work environment and work towards constant improvement. For Beacop, professionalism includes many fundamental duties to which are associated four major values: responsibility, competence, social engagement and the sense of ethics.

At Beacop, we also prioritize proactivity, through continuous listening and solution seeking. To be proactive

at Beacop simply means that we train our reactivity in such a way that it integrates our action strategy in the medium and long terms. We respect our commitments, and our schedules. Our vision dictates the direction we must maintain and help us redirect ourselves when needed. We are not mere observers, we are actors. We therefore do not suffer the pressure of emergencies and reduce causes for stress, and this contributes to the improvement of the well-being of our collaborators on a daily basis.

Another strong argument is multi-disciplinarity. At Beacop, we promote transversal skills within the group, in addition to the knowledge of the profession and the sector of activity of each expert. The multi-disciplinarity concerned here refers to the liberalization of various fields of expertise. Joint specialties, while maintaining their respective specificities, contribute to a collective project, by providing their knowledge and methods. They collaborate and exchange with each other, to respond to the needs for action and comprehension. Often, the merging of common work gives birth to a complexity that goes beyond disciplinary frameworks and involves the reinforcing and/or integration of common skills (transversal) to associated disciplines. It is thus the occasion to use each of these specialties' specificities to achieve common goal (transversal skills).

Pragmatism is also a key criteria. The projects we pilot or support always respect three major pillars of sustainable development: the economy, the society and the environment. To these we always add a dose of realism. Thus, for each of its projects, Beacop gets rid of useless complexity with the intent to be as clear and operational as possible, in all situations, to avoid hampering your activity. We favor the rapid result approach, to break away from old practices. Finally, there is flexibility. Beacop is equipped with a capacity to adapt that helps it train small teams in

LA VITRINE DU CAMEROUN SAGO



Sectoral meetings :

- Governance
- Economy & industry
- Agro-pastoral
- Mines & sustainable development
- Education & research
- Energy & infrastructure
- Culture
- Health and social services
- ICT & digital economy

24 to 29 July 2018,
at the Sports Complex
of Yaounde.

Theme :

« Cameroon on the path
to emergence: public policies
and citizen involvement »

With the help of:



National Program
on Governance

Mon Communicateur

For a partnership, a reservation, please contact:

Telephone : +(237) 242 66 60 44 / 242 60 78 49 / 677 88 63 22 / 655 69 88 85

Email : mcommunicateur@yahoo.fr / Site web : www.sago.cm



Jean Joseph Aouda, chief executive of BEACOP: "One of the biggest challenges and not the least, was to build the railway while training 1200 Niger nationals to the job as they composed the most part of the staff working on the project".

strong technical skills in order to rapidly respond to the needs and expectations of its clients. The firm has a cross-disciplinary experience that enables it assist its clients, businesses or individuals, in regards to issues falling under its domains of expertise. Based on the project's importance, we activate our partners' network. We have succeeded in creating a strong network regrouping partners that are highly skilled in their respective domains of activity.

BC: Besides Beacop, are they in Cameroon and Central Africa in general other companies controlled by nationals, providing railway engineering services?

JJA: We have positioned ourselves in the sector because we believe

there is a real need in Cameroon and the sub-region. We can affirm with certitude that, for now, Beacop has the best railway experts there are in Cameroon. You know, railway expertise is so limited that, all of us operating in the area, in sub-Saharan Africa, know each other, almost all. To our humble knowledge of African railway networks, Cameroon can boast of having the best experts there can be in the sub-region, in the railway sector.

BC: To date, what are Beacop's references ?

JJA: Talking about references for such a young company would be pretentious. However, we can modestly list among some of our achievements providing technical support

and skills transfer via "learning by doing" in the framework of the West African rail loop project; monitoring construction works of a new road between Niamey and Dosso (150km) in Niger; monitoring of rehabilitation works of the Lomé-Cacayé railway and reinforcement of Cacayé-Tsévié railway, in Togo (35km); management of two reinforced concrete sleepers manufacturing units in Niger; analysis of 700 hydraulic infrastructures along Camrail's network; and conduction, under outsourcing, of feasibility studies and APS of railway along Douala-Limbé and Edéa-Kribi axes.

BC: Railway professions are quite particular. How are you able to get staff in an environment where

there is almost no school or training centres teaching those professions?

JJA: Our experts are mainly former veteran railroad workers, whose expertise constantly needs to be expressed. In the framework of forward career planning, we have sent two young civil engineers to train in order to boost their knowledge in terms of management, maintenance and repair of railway infrastructures. We have among our consultants experienced railroad workers and youth that we personally train. Effectively, one of our major actual concerns is the vulgarization of railway professions in Cameroon. We are working on this with some former railway-worker colleagues and with the support of professional trainers and external partners we plan to open a worthy of the name training center for these professions. This vulgarization is compulsory as the success of the national masterplan for railways depends on it, if Cameroon does not want to repeat the experience of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project and wishes to have available local personnel for these jobs. We hope that when the time comes, we can count on the government's support to go through with our project.

BC: In Cameroon, many have been talking of the creation of a firm specialized in the management of railway infrastructures. What are your views regarding this matter?

JJA: Infrastructures are the inalienable property of the State which is their licensor. The latter, initially, trusts the task of managing railway infrastructures to the concessionaire. It thus comes to the State to decide when and to whom it wishes to transfer these responsibilities. It is nothing new, not in relation to the concession of railways in general, nor in that of concessions in Cameroon. The Head of State has instructed the government to establish an infrastructures management company. It is obvious that doing so, the government aims to better monitor

and control of the concessionaire's activities. This development will offer great opportunities, in regards to the steering of great projects particularly. The fact is that there is an issue of responsibility and legibility when the concessionaire happens to be both the delegate project manager and delegate project developer. The creation of such a structure would at least help tackle this issue concerning the concession's technical supervision.

We also think that the most important is not only to create a company that will manage infrastructures, but rather insure that skilled personnel and experts are the pumping heart of this entity. The government is yet to give information regarding the responsibilities associated with the term "management of infrastructures".

This upcoming entity should in no way hamper the operations of the concessionaire. The foundations of such a structure's organization should be trusted to an expert consultant, so that challenges related to railways operations are taken into account when setting it up, on a part, and government's expectations also, on another. It is necessary to clearly define the responsibilities of the licensor and the concessionaire, as well as the exact field of actions corresponding to the infrastructures' management.

BC: What is your overall opinion of the Cameroonian railway network?

JJA: The concessionaire focused on improving technical and commercial standards compared to those inherited from ex-Regifercam. Given the advanced age of infrastructures and traffic density over the past 15 years, this was necessary to maintain an acceptable performance for the whole network. Massive investments are required to pursue modernization which has already begun. It should be recalled that Cameroon's railway was laid at the colonial period, and its most recent section is

more than 30-years old. All the sections which have not been rehabilitated pose many maintenance issues to the concessionaire. Materials used are scarce, close to inexistent. Regarding the railway, the introduction of reinforced concrete sleepers remains the most determining innovation in the maintenance of Cameroon's rail network. However, there is still room for modernization. The Western line (Douala-Kumba) must be rehabilitated, and the populations occupying the railway's right-of-ways must be displaced. Concerning the Transcam (Douala-Ngaoundéré), the Pangar-Ngaoundéré section is a worrying state. Its rehabilitation is needed urgently, this after rehabilitating the 175 km (between Batchenga and Ka'a and the Douala and Yaoundé entries).

As for signaling and telecommunication, the management system on Transcam 1 (Douala-Yaoundé), inherited from the ex-Regifercam is obsolete and must be modernized. Transcam 2, to date, has no telephonic access. Cameroon's railway management system should meet global standards for railway security. At present, the most appropriate railway management system is the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMC). It establishes a direct connection between the driver and the control station which monitors the whole railway traffic. This type of communication system would be most useful in Cameroon. Modernization will necessarily requires a technological upgrade of telecommunication systems. Concerning engineering and hydraulic structures, constant effort for maintenance and rehabilitation is made by the concessionaire in this regard. However, it is still important to provide agents with appropriate equipment, such as handcars, to enable them efficiently inspect highly sensitive structures.

Interview with
Brice R. Mbodiam

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

At last, the 500,000 laptops promised by President Paul Biya will be released in November 2017, officials reveal

The release of the first batch of the 500,000 laptops, promised by President Paul Biya in 2016, will take place in November 2017, while it was announced for December. This was made clear during the extraordinary government council held in Yaoundé on September 19.

Jacques Fame Ndongo, the minister of higher education, after this government council, said that this first batch comprises 80,000 laptops manufactured by Sichuan Telecom Construction and Engineering Co. Ltd. The official also reminded that manufacturing of the remaining laptops still continues in Shenzhen, China. Apart from the students of the 2016-2017 academic term initially which were to benefit from the programme, those of the 2017-2018 term will receive the laptops as well. Agreement for the current pro-



gramme, the “e-national higher education” convention, was signed on Feb. 10, 2016, between the ministry of higher education and Sichuan Telecom Construction Engineering Co. Ltd, in line with President Biya’s “Plan Special Jeunes” (Special Youth

Plan) which aimed to provide a laptop to every student registered in a public or private college in Cameroon. The initiative was entitled “*un étudiant un ordinateur*” (A student, a laptop).

CFA1 billion premium awarded to 20 municipalities in Cameroon for their performance

The national participative development plan (Pndp), led by the ministry of economy, recently revealed the names of the 20 communities nominated by its “performance” branch which rewards the most performing communities in Cameroon.

These communities, which distinguished themselves through their budget management, governance system and adoption of the partic-

ipative development plan of Pndp, received a check of CFA50 million each. The rewarding ceremony was held on September 18, 2017.

The Pndp aims at equipping communities with basic infrastructure (borehole, markets, toilets, road maintenance...), strengthen the potential of operators and roll out land-planning schemes by involving the beneficiary populations.

The programme has been implemented in 3 phases of 4 years each. The first phase of this governmental program was implemented in six districts. The second phase extended the program to all the districts (10), covering all the 329 communities with an overall budget of CFA68.26 billion. A loan agreement, signed on February 3, 2016, with the World Bank facilitated the 3rd phase.

Great Britain acknowledges 1961 referendum in Cameroon and dismisses SCNC request for independence

We know a bit more about the reasons for the flat refusal handed, on 8 September 2017, by the Queen Elisabeth II of England, to representatives of the secession movement demanding the partition of Cameroon. Indeed, they were not received at the Buckingham palace, as desired. The fact is that, since the social protest movements started, later leading to secessionist demands in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon in 2016, Great Britain has taken a stance on this situation, after several discussions with the Cameroonian authorities.

This is at least what revealed an official correspondence from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, signed on 2 May 2017 by Tobias Ellwood, in charge of relations with Africa and the Middle East. The letter is addressed to a member of the House of Commons (J. Cunningham), the lower house in the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

"With regard to the initiative from Mr. Sam Egbe on the independence, it is important to highlight that, firstly, the United Kingdom recognises the results of the referendum organised in 1961 by the United Nations in territories under British rule in Africa. The two regions which make up Southern Cameroon agreed to become a part of francophone Cameroon", recalls Tobias Ellwood.

He continues: *"in 2003, the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) failed in its claims for independence, in front of the African Commission on Human and People's rights. This petition was rejected in 2009 by the Commission, who called for positive dialogue between the parties. The United Kingdom encourages all parties to accept and work from this recommendation, to build a stable and prosperous future for all Cameroonians".* But, before this rather sententious conclusion, Tobias Ellwood recalled the steps taken by the British High

Commission in Yaoundé, before adopting his position. *"Our High Commissioner in Yaoundé is following the situation closely in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. We will continue to do so with the Cameroonian government. The British High Commissioner met with the President of the Republic on 7 March, and I have discussed with the Minister of Foreign Relations, Mr. Mbella, on 19 April 2017, to talk about the tensions in the South-West and North-West regions".*

During these different discussions with the Cameroonian authorities, highlights Tobias Ellwood, *"we called for the end of the use of force by the different protagonists, the obligation of respecting human rights standards, and the use of legal means to solve this crisis. We also called for a return to normal in the dialogue in the two regions".*

Central African rebels cause insecurity to rise in Eastern Cameroon

Some armed men who are thought to be Central African rebels descended once again in Cameroonian territory on September 23, 2017. They kidnapped seven people in Koya, a village in the district of Kette in the eastern region, we learned from relevant sources.

A military operation carried by Cameroonian security forces however helped retrieve four of the hostages. Unfortunately, the remaining three were killed before the forces led the mission.

This is the second raid by Central African rebels in eastern Cameroon within two weeks. The first oc-



curred on September 11, 58km from Yokadouma. During that raid, the rebels burnt a car of the forestry company of Cameroon (CFC). As a reminder, since the fall of

François Bozizé regime in Central Africa which led to political instabilities, Central African rebels skim the eastern regions of Cameroon kidnapping villagers for ransom.

Cameroonian employers' association tells Mitsuhiro Furusawa its opinion on IMF's new economic strategy for the country

The Cameroonian employers' association is not pleased with IMF's strategy for Cameroon recently revealed by the institution's Deputy Managing Director, Mitsuhiro Furusawa, who visited the country on September 14-15. This is reported by Daniel Claude Abate, president of the Cameroonian entrepreneur's movement (MECAM). *"Though they were cordial, discussions between IMF's deputy managing director, his team, and the main representatives of the Cameroonian employers' association were nevertheless frank and sincere,"* says Daniel Claude Abate.

According to him, the association condemns the signing of a new economic and financial programme with IMF, last June 26, in which its role and name are mentioned despite not having been sufficiently implicated during the scheme's elabo-

ration. *"Even after it was ratified, communication on the programme was dilettante, vague and difficult to understand,"* MECAM's president complained.

Cameroon's employers' association also said it deplores the lean financial resources released by IMF to support the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) amid the current crisis and in tackling external challenges. *"If we are to compare, how is it that when Greece, which has a GDP of \$200 billion, was in the same conditions, it benefited from an aid package of \$260 billion (CFA145, 000 billion) while all the countries of the CEMAC combined, with a GDP of \$75 billion, only benefited from a \$4 billion loan or less than CFA2500 billion? This is clearly unfair,"* the MECAM fulminated. The employers' association also

expressed its incomprehension and vivid apprehension regarding the fact that the Cameroonian administration is already implementing some of the measures set out in IMF's new programme. These include companies' transfers abroad, tax base broadening, prepayment of the withholding tax, resurgence of the untimely tax and customs control within enterprises, the unilateral implementation of measures to restrict and monitor monetary mass, etc. *"It is unfortunate that the IMF still locks itself in frameworks that revolve around budgetary support or stabilization of public finances while we know that economic activities themselves generate public funds. We cannot indefinitely continue to increase fiscal pressure and broaden tax base,"* Daniel Claude Abate stressed.

China injects close to FCFA50 billion in drinking water project

In Cameroon, the ministry of economy, just signed multiple technical and economic agreements with China regarding phase two of a drinking water supply project which covers nine Cameroonian towns. The overall value of the contracts is estimated at FCFA49.4 billion (594 million yuan).

The financing which will be provided by EximBank China, in charge of China's external investments, will cover the towns of Dschang (Western region), Yabassi (Coastal), Maroua (Extreme North), Garoua (North) and Garoua-Boulai (East). The first phase of the project, launched in September 2014 and completed in August 2017, covered the towns of Bafoussam (West), Bamenda

(North West), Kribi and Sangmelima (South).

Let's recall that Wei Wenhua, China's ambassador to Cameroon, said the CEMAC's economic driver is *"the second African largest beneficiary of China's financing"*. This however does not correspond to data present in the "China Africa Research Initiative (CARI)", a report detailing China's investments in Africa, released in June 2016, by the John Hopkins University, USA.

Truly, according to the report, out of \$86.9 billion (FCFA47,795 billion) of loans from China to African States, banks and companies, over the 2000-2014 period, Cameroon captured a total of \$2.8 billion (around FCFA1,540 billion). This puts the



Central African nation at the ninth position in terms of African countries to have benefited the most of China's fundings.

Ahead of Cameroon in this regard are Angola with \$21.20 billion, Ethiopia (\$12.3 billion), Sudan (\$5.58 billion), Kenya (\$5.19 billion), the Democratic Republic of Congo (\$4.91 billion), Congo (\$3.7 billion), Nigeria (\$3.5 billion) and Ghana (\$3.1 billion).

FINANCE

IFC to increase its commitments in Cameroon and develop CEMAC's capital market

Jingdong Hua, Vice-president in charge of finances of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a subsidiary of the World Bank, has just completed a two-days working visit in Cameroon.

The main objective of this visit was to discuss with Cameroonian authorities on how to strengthen the commitments of IFC in Africa, World Bank explained. It also aimed to discuss the development of the capital market in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC).

In this regards, sir Hua had working sessions with the minister of economy, Louis Paul Motaze, and the minister of finance, Alamine Ousmane Mey. He also met with managers of Douala stock exchange, the commission in charge of financial markets, and representatives of the banking and assurance sectors. Sir Hua finally had a discussion meeting with the students of the school of economics and social studies of Douala.

"I thank the Cameroonian authorities for having hosted me and for the quality of the discussions I had throughout my stay," the vice president of IFC said. *"My engagements here allowed to highlight how IFC can implement its financial products and advisory services to spur inclusive development in Cameroon and in the CEMAC region,"* Jingdong Hua stressed.

The community of funding bodies committed, in December 2016, to provide a record \$75 billion to the International Development Association (IDA), World Bank's fund devoted to the world's poorest coun-



tries. Out of this sum, \$2.5 billion will be exclusively devoted to a private sectors window (PSW).

The PSW will enable IFC and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bank (MIGA) to invest up to \$2.5 billion and raise between \$6bn-\$8bn private investments with other development

institutions. The additional fund will mainly benefit sub-Saharan African countries, Cameroon included.

The actual investment portfolio of IFC in Cameroon is \$113 million and, the financial institution operates mainly in the sectors of infrastructure, financial markets, productive sectors and agriculture.

Atlantique Assurances lands in Cameroon, and thus enters CEMAC's insurance market



A company named Atlantique Assurances Cameroun IARDT with a starting capital of CFA2.1 billion was established on February 4, 2016, in Douala. This can be read in a recently published legal notice.

The new company, whose corporate purpose stipulates that it is an

insurance company specialized in accidents, is headed by Guy Rolland Rasoanaivo, and has at the top of its board Ivorian businessman Koné Dossongui.

This last detail (adding to the fact that the institution' shareholding comprises the Consortium of Ivorian

Financiers which is held by M. Dossongui) is clear proof that the new institution is the subsidiary of Atlantic Financial Group (AFG), an Ivorian insurance firm.

AFG is already operating in Cameroon's banking sector through Banque Atlantique. The lender, it should be recalled, was born after the Ivorian group acquired Amity Bank's assets subsequent to a legal process initiated by the CEMAC's Common Court of Justice and Arbitration.

With Atlantique Assurances Cameroun IARDT, AFG in partnership with Morocco's Central Bank (Banque Centrale Populaire -BCP), is entering the CEMAC's insurance market after successfully establishing itself in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Mali, and Benin more recently.

As a reminder, Cameroon is, after Cote d'Ivoire, the second most important insurance market of the inter-African conference on insurance markets (Conférence Interafricaine des Marchés d'Assurances - CIMA), a regulatory body regrouping 15 countries in Central and West Africa.

The Cameroon Women Business Leaders Association partners with Nofia microfinance

The Cameroon Women Business Leaders Association (CWBLA), a grouping of businesswomen founded and lead by Adélaïde Ngallé Miano, signed a partnership agreement with microfinance institution Nofia on September 21, 2017. The agreement aims to help CWBLA's members have a better access to loans to finance their projects.

According to its president, the association was born from *"the will to share and find solutions to challenges*

faced by businesswomen". "It was necessary in order to promote the activities of women who are bold enough to take the risk of starting a business, to make them more visible and heard," Adélaïde Ngallé Miano added.

According to a study, access to funding is the main challenge to the development of SMEs that represent 80% of the country's industrial fabric. The same study indicates that when the SMEs are led by women, there are ten times more challenges to

overcome.

It is to correct this that the Cameroon Women Business Leaders Association started looking for financial partners who can facilitate loan access to its members. Nofia microfinance is the second microfinance institution to commit with CWBLA this year. Indeed, it was preceded on March 10 by the Cameroonian subsidiary of French lender, Société Générale.

Cameroon: China injects CFA19.5 billion in a project to boost international trade

The government of China, through Eximbank China, granted a CFA 19.5 billion loan to Cameroon to fund its e-government project. The latter aims at improving international trade.

According to the two governments, this project consists in setting a platform where economic operators can access information on international trade related standards and services.

Let it be recalled that, according to the Chinese embassy in Cameroon, trade between the two countries reached \$2.6 billion (CFA1430 billion) in 2015 making China the country's leading trade partner.



Cameroon banking sector undermined by the diminution of liquidities and the surge of Non-performing loans according to IMF

Although the Cameroonian banking sector, which is the most solid in the CEMAC, shows signs of resiliency amid a crisis in the price of commodities that affects public finances and economic activities in the CEMAC Union, it has also shown signs of vulnerabilities for some time now. Those problems, already raised by government sources, were made public by the deputy director of IMF, Mitsuhiro Furusawa, who sojourned recently in to assess progress in the implementation of a 3-year programme established by Cameroon's government and the Breton Woods institution.

"Your country's banking sector so far has proven resilient in the face of the crisis. But there are signs of strain. Liquidity is declining, and non-performing loans are rising. Five small and non-systemic banks are insolvent; most have been for many years",

Mitsuhiro Furusawa said in a speech entitled *"Unlocking Cameroon's Growth Potential"*.

Even though he did not reveal the names of those banking institutions, we concluded from our analysis that, at least three lenders are involved. These are: the Commercial Bank of Cameroon (CBC), recently nationalized but entangled in a long restructuring and assets capitalization procedure since 2009; the Cameroonian bank for SMEs whose managing director is always inviting its major shareholder, the Cameroonian government, to inject funds so her institution can operate efficiently; or the NFC Bank which, some years ago, was placed under temporary administration by Cobac, the watchdog of the CEMAC's banking sector. The problems mentioned by IMF deputy managing director lead us to think that the resolutions taken by

BEAC, to revive banks in the CEMAC had no effects.

Indeed, in order to inject liquidities in banking sectors of member-States of CEMAC (Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and the Central African Republic), the Central Bank had decided at the end of its first standing committee on monetary policies this year, to lower by 50% mandatory reserves requirements imposed to banks in the region.

The Apex bank believed that this would have made available between FCFA500 billion and FCFA600 billion to banks in the CEMAC. According to Afriland First Bank CEO, Alphonse Nafack, who is also the head of Cameroon's Bankers corporation, more than 20% of this amount should go to commercial banks in the country.

AGRIBUSINESS

Cameroon, FAO, and EU approved a research on cassava production

Since last September 26, Cameroon has a research, on the production system of cassava roots, that aims to improve the productivity, well-informed sources revealed.

This research is the result of a project implemented in seven African countries with the assistance of the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). FAO has been charged with the implementation of this project in Cameroon. According to the project's managers, it is needed because cassava is a staple for Cameroonians but, the roots used yield low volumes of cassava to guarantee food security for consumers.



Launched 30 years ago, the national program for agricultural extension and research comes to an end

The Cameroonian program for agricultural extension and research (Pnvra), the oldest government initiative to promote agriculture, will be terminated in January 2018 after some years of hibernation, we learned from official sources.

According to Henri Eyébé Ayissi, the minister of agriculture and rural development, the program which was launched more than 30 years ago will be replaced by "*the more practical*" program for the structuring, support to farmers and agricultural extension (Prosapva).

The Pnvra was a support-counseling scheme steered by the ministry of agriculture and aimed mainly at improving the productivity and income of livestock farmers.



Afriland First Bank and Ecobank exit PIDMA (Investment and Development Project for Agricultural Markets)

Funded with FCFA50 billion by the World Bank, the Investment and Development Project for Agricultural Markets (PIDMA) may not reach its objectives. Indeed, this is what suggest the various challenges faced by PIDMA's managers.

Indeed, recently, during the regular dialogue meeting for the project's implementation, two of the partners involved decided to exit the PIDMA. These are Afriland First Bank and Ecobank Cameroon. *"Remaining partners are SGC (Société Générale Cameroon) and BICEC (BPCE's subsidiary),"* said Thomas Ngue

Bissa, coordinator of PIDMA, who also deplored *"high interest rates"* on loans granted farmers associations involved in the project. *"The loans are not rapidly provided, in addition to their interest rates being extremely high,"* he said.

Moreover, during the same meeting, it was found that the project's beneficiaries are having a hard time fulfilling their contracts, due to organizational issues. Same goes from agribusinesses partnering the projects. *"Some committed to purchase tons of maize at FCFA200/kg, and now that market price is FCFA160, they*

have withdrawn their orders, buying elsewhere," PIDMA's coordinator told the Quotidien gouvernemental.

Let it be recalled that the PIDMA which aims to boost local cassava, sorghum and maize outputs to supply agribusinesses, extends over the 2014-2019 period. Under the project, financing is provided to farmers and benefited cooperatives in the form of subsidies (50% of needed funding), while they are to personally provide 10% of the investment and secure remaining 40% from partnering banks.

Telcar Cocoa pays CFA 2.2 billion premiums to certified cocoa producers

For the 2016-2017 cocoa season that has just ended, Telcar Cocoa, the local trader of the American firm Cargill, has paid registered cocoa producers CFA 2,2 billion in premiums, official sources indicate.

This sum shared among some 15000 Cameroonian producers has been officially released last week during an official meeting organized in Sangmelina, basin of production in Southern Cameroon. In its framework to promote certified cocoa production in Cameroon, Telcar Cocoa trained thousands of cocoa producers over the last five cocoa seasons and they received an overall sum of CFA 3,7 billion in premiums.



150 tons of fertilizers distributed to coffee producers in the Moungo department, in Cameroon's coastal region



36 groups of coffee producers in the department of Moungo, the largest production area in the Cameroon's coastal region received 150 tons of fertilizers in the framework of a project that promotes the use of fertilizers in the cocoa and coffee sector (Pauef2c).

The project which is steered by the ministry of agriculture and rural development (Minader), aims to boost Cameroon's cocoa and coffee production by improving farmers' access to fertilizers as most of them lack the means to purchase the product. However, looking closer, this project

so far had no noticeable effect on the country's coffee production which has even considerably declined over the past ten years.

According to actors of the coffee sector, the gradual decline is due to farmers disinterest in the crop, as it is less profitable than cocoa.

Ban on poultry transportation in Western region still effective

Since March 13, 2017, date at which avian flu outbreak was declared in Foubot, in the department of Noun, Western Cameroon, no other alert was given regarding the disease in the region which is the country's largest poultry production basin. However, poultry transportation is still banned in the department just like it has been banned in the department of Mifi since September 2016. This is in line with restrictive

measures imposed by officials when the epidemic broke out. Nowadays, some members of the professional association of poultry farmers (IPAVIC) are demanding the cancellation of these measures and ask the government to allow poultry farmers to resume production in this area from which 80% of the all poultry products produced in Cameroon comes.

"It has been six months already since

the avian flu outbreak was declared in the department and nothing has happened since. It means that we can safely lift the ban in place in the 'poultry department'. Not doing so could cost the sector much more. However, with the inflation of the price of raw materials, as long as the farmers have no exposure, they cannot invest or take risks", Blaise Kamdoun, vice-president IPAVIC said.

TRANSPORTATION

Douala port authorities officially get new maritime surveillance equipment

On September 20, the ministry of public works (MINTP) officially handed over maritime surveillance equipment to authorities of the Douala port. This is to reinforce the port's operational capacity. Louis Max Ayina Ohandja, state secretary in charge of roads at MINTP, and Cyrus Ngo'o, managing director of the Douala port, signed the official documents sealing the deal. Before the equipment was handed

to the port's authorities, Shey Jones, chairman of the management board of the port, welcomed the government's purchase of the "Emergence" speedboat and three semi-rigid dinghies, qualifying it as extremely opportune. A transaction which was backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). *"This equipment comes at a time executive management initiated an inclusive strategy to make the Douala port more*

competitive and efficient," Shey Jones declared.

Cyrus Ngo'o, on his part, indicated that the speedboat arrived at the Douala port on May 7, 2017 and, it is being used since. It facilitates movements of chief captains from the coast to incoming or outgoing boats while at the same time making more productive the port which handles around 10-12 tons of freight per year.

The Cameroonian government need CFA200 billion to replace the nozzles on the Yaoundé-Douala road

Following the numerous cracking of the Yaoundé-Douala Douala road (Nationale n°3), the ministry of public works (Mintp) explained that around 409 nozzles must be replaced by gutters in on this highway connecting the two major cities of Cameroon. This will cost CFA200 billion.

"We have investigated and we know exactly the number of nozzles that were built between 1982 and 1986. A specific action plan has been set and, we classified the nozzles we need to replace into 3 categories", Guy Daniel Abouna Zoa, coordinator of infrastructure projects at Mintp explained.

He further indicates that there are 134 nozzles to be urgently replaced. Those to be replaced in a very short term are 143 and there are 132 to be replaced in the future. This makes it a total of 409 nozzles to be replaced. *"We need around CFA47 billion this*



year [2017], and, we were able to raise CFA10 billion", Guy Daniel Abouna Zoa explained.

The Yaoundé-Douala axis which is part of the Douala-Ndjamena and Douala-Bangui corridors, is disrupted most of the time. After the crumbling of 3 metal nozzles on September 1st and 2nd there, the technical segment of a nozzle that

fell on September 16 at Ebomè, in the Sanaga maritime department. Nearly a year ago, crumbling of a road in Manyai on October 21, 2016 caused many to rush to the only railway company in Cameroun; Camrail. This was the main reason of the derailment that followed causing the death of 79 people and 600 injured.

Lack of freight and bad roads hamper goods transport along Douala-Ndjamena corridor

Last September 16, the thrust block of a culvert crumbled in Ebomé, along the Yaoundé-Douala road which is part of the Douala-Ndjamena and Douala-Bangui corridors. Few days later, on September 25, another road section, along the Ngaoundéré-Dang road, in Cameroon's Northern region, collapsed. Due to these two incidents, transporting goods to Kousséri, which shares a border with Ndjamena, Chad's capital city, has become extremely challenging. Before the collapses which, of course, had a negative impact on activities along the Douala-Ndjamena corridor where about FCFA340 billion worth of Chadian goods transit each year, the traffic was already troublesome. This is according to Cameroon's

customs office.

"The bad state of the Maroua-Kousséri axis forces us to use the road that goes from Touboro to the South of Chad, and heads up to Ndjamena. This causes long delays on delivery schedules.

At least 800 km separate Maroua and Kousséri. However, going around passing through Chad, the distance is twice as long," said Alhadji Ousmanou, a leading member of Cameroon's Road Hauliers' Organization, in an interview with tri-weekly regional newspapers l'œil du Sahel.

According to our source, beside the state of roads, which causes hauliers, importers and exporters to record significant losses, traffic on the Douala-Ndjamena corridor has considerably decreased due to the absence of freight. *"You could*

have your truck, registered, settle your fiscal status, full of fuel, things are still difficult (...) Some hauliers load cargos at Douala heading Kousséri, but have issues going back as they have to do so with no cargos and cannot therefore bear the cost of their trip," Alhadji Ousmanou explained.

The lack of freight, which can partially be attributed to a slowdown of Chad's economic activities, as a result of the crisis in oil prices (the country gets 70% of its revenues from the black gold, according to CEMAC's commission), had already been denounced months ago, by the Road Transport Professionals Union. However, at the time, the union was blaming a group of clandestine hauliers who actually control nearly 45% of the terrestrial freight in Cameroon.

After a strategic move back to domestic flights, Camair Co will resume flights to Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and CAR

Camair Co, the Cameroonian public airline, will resume, in the coming weeks, its flights to some African capital cities. These include Libreville in Gabon, Bangui in the Central African Republic, Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, and Dakar in Senegal, we learned from authorised sources.

The announcement of this resumption of international activities by Camair Co was recently made in Yaoundé, the capital, during a meeting between the Cameroonian public

airline, partners such as travel agencies, and potential clients for these destinations.

This decision from the top management of Camair Co would suggest that the airline is gradually finding back its balance, after several structural and financial issues which have affected its operations since the launch of its activities in 2011. A situation which led the company to temporarily give up on international flights, to focus only on domestic routes.



INDUSTRY

The national participatory development program will promote local building materials use in its projects

From now on, the national participatory development program (Programme national de développement participatif- Pndp), which is in charge of building socio-economic infrastructures for Cameroonian municipalities, will commit to the promotion of local building materials. This, through a partnership with the local

building materials promotion taskforce (Mission de promotion des matériaux locaux -Mipromalo). Apart from the joint implementation of projects that prioritizes local building materials' use, the agreement plans for training programs, on the use of these materials, for decentralized local authorities.



Bocom Recycling starts production of eco-friendly roof tiles made of recycled plastic waste

After its project of lead extraction from recycled car batteries, Bocom Recycling now moves to produce environmentally friendly roof tiles. The tiles will be made with recycled plastic waste which are abundant in Cameroonian streets, we learned from credible sources.

According to the group's executives, the tiles or "éco-tuiles" as they have been baptized, are strong, water-proof and help maintain an ambient temperature in houses they cover. Bocom Recycling is a branch of Bocom, a Cameroonian industrial group. Apart from recycling, it also specializes in the distribution of oil products, industrial cleaning, and mining and plans to operate an iron mine in Akom II by building a steel complex at Fifinda, in southern Cameroon.



MINING

World Bank provides support to granite paving stones production project in the Adamawa region



The Urban Community of Ngaoundéré, in the Adamawa region, located in northern Cameroon, recently benefitted from funding worth FCfa 80 million granted by the World Bank, we officially learned. This funding will be used, according to the management of the office of the mayor of the regional capital of Adamawa, to set up a granite to

paving stone processing unit, for the construction of drains and surfacing of urban roads.

"Asphalt is expensive and not always affordable for decentralised local governments. One of the solutions to this problem is using granite and other rocks surrounding the town of Ngaoundéré and the neighbourhood", claimed the delegate of the govern-

ment to the Urban Community of Ngaoundéré.

As a reminder, based on estimates from the National Road Council (Conaroute – Conseil National de la Route), the price per kilometre of asphalted roads in Cameroon is approximately FCfa 205 million, against only FCfa 100 million on average in Africa.

ITC & TELECOM

Suspended since two weeks, Vodafone Cameroon submit a request for license



Executives of Vodafone Cameroon decided to bend to Cameroonian authorities' will after some months of negotiations which led to the operator's suspension on September 14, 2017.

Indeed, according to sources working at Vodafone, the firm submitted a request for a license to the ministry of Posts and Telecommunication (Minpostel) on behalf of an entity named Afrimax Cameroon SA. Afrimax Cameroon SA, the Cameroonian subsidiary of Afrimax Group which absorbed Northwave Sarl, who previously held the controversial license (truly, under the law in place, licenses are non-transferrable and are personal), wants to secure its own license to operate under the name of Vodafone Cameroon,

through a franchise it obtained from the UK telecom operator.

The case of Vodafone Cameroon's license, which was simmering since October 2016, experienced an accelerated development this month. Indeed, ordered by the minister of post and telecommunication, Minette Libom Li Likeng, telecoms regulatory authority has suspended Vodafone's activities on September 14.

Explaining the move, the government official in charge of telecommunications referred to the law governing the establishment and/or operation of networks and provision of electronic communication services. The latter clearly specifies that operating rights are personal, non-transferable and grant no exclu-

sive rights to their holder. Northwave Sarl, therefore, was not allowed to transfer its license to Vodafone Cameroon, the entity born from its absorption by Afrimax Group. According to Minpostel's officials, Vodafone Cameroon must request its own license and meet related requirements, before using 4G LTE to supply internet to Cameroonians. This is what they just did. Our sources also add that the license requested only covers Yaoundé and Douala that represent around 80% of the country's telecom market. This aspect could lead to difficult negotiations between government officials and Vodafone Cameroon as the operator's rivals for their part are forced to cover the whole country.

The PmExchange 2017 will be held in Douala from November 21 to 25, 2017

Organized by the employer's group Ecam (Entreprises du Cameroun), the 2017 PmExchange will be held from November 21 to 25, 2017 at Douala, Cameroon's economic capital, official sources revealed. Ecam focuses on SME's promotion

and development. Under the topic "*les PME et la révolution du digital*" (SMEs and digital revolution), this edition will be punctuated by thematic workshops, B2B meetings between economic operators and trade fairs.

Let's recall that though SMEs represent more than 80% of Cameroon's industrial fabric, they face innumerable challenges. Some forums like PmExchange try to find solutions to those challenges.

Cameroonian customs seize cargo of over 4,200 mobile telephones in Fotokol, border town close to Nigeria

The town of Fotokol, located at the border with Nigeria, in the Far North region of Cameroon, is often the scene of attacks by the sect Boko Haram. But the atmosphere of insecurity in this city does not seem to discourage smugglers.

Indeed, we learned from official sources, the Cameroonian customs have just seized a cargo of over 4,200 mobile telephones, carefully hidden in the official car of the commander of the Fotokol gendarmerie brigade. Chief Warrant Officer David Abanda was thus caught red-handed by the customs officers, who used information given to them on the unorthodox activities of this warrant officer in the national gendarmerie. The goods were seized and the case taken to military court, we learned.

In June 2017, a cargo of approximately 3,000 packs of Indian hemp and tramol bound for Nigeria was seized in Fotokol. Drugs, which based on the custom officers' analysis, were certainly meant to supply members of the Boko Haram sect on the other side of the border.



SERVICES

French group Casino will invest CFA20 billion in Cameroon, opening about ten stores



Last September 26, in Yaoundé, Cameroon's trade minister received a delegation of French businessmen led by Hervé Daudin, product manager of the Casino group.

Hervé Daudin said that Casino intends to build between 10 and 15 stores in Cameroon. This will create 1000 direct jobs for a CFA20 billion investment. The group intends to supply Cameroon's markets with quality products at low prices in the framework of the government's strategy to tackle the problem of high-cost of living.

After the construction of the stores in Yaoundé and Douala, Ngaoundéré and Bafoussam will also welcome the group's new stores.

"It is an evidence of the government's will to modernize large-scale distributions (...); extensive retail spaces remained elitist till now. It is important to meet standards. Civil society members wish to see national resources valorized".

Casino also intends to invest in the agricultural sector in the western, coastal and northwestern regions of Cameroon.

Douala to host first edition of the international commerce and business fair starting from March 24, 2018

The Cameroonian government through its ministry of commerce and Inter-progress foundation will launch the first international commerce and business fair (FIAC) on March 24, 2018.

The economic event will take place in Douala, the economic capital of

Cameroon, its promoters revealed during a recent press conference held in Yaoundé.

The FIAC will last two weeks and will take place on the sideline of the SME, Partnership and Businesses fair (PROMOTE) whose sixth edition ended last February 19 and re-

grouped around 1300 enterprises. It should be noted that the trade ministry's budget for 2017, which was submitted to parliament in November 2016, was increased by more than FCFA2 billion to hold FIAC's first edition.

LEADER OF THE MONTH

To protect the environment, Ismaël Essome makes pirogues with recycled plastic bottles



By simply assembling plastic bottles, binding them together with a specific cord, Ismaël Essome was able to build a pirogue which can carry up to three people and a load of 90kg on water, and resists waves.

Since August 2016, a small revolution was sparked in the sector of environmental protection in Cameroon, specifically in the fight against plastic bottle pollution. Truly, it was in that month that Ismaël Essome, young environment management engineer, made Cameroon's first ecological pirogue using recycled plastic bottles. The project cost close to a million Cfa francs.

"At the beginning, we had to determine the shape of the pirogue and find the appropriate wire to bind the bottles. It took us days and days. Then, we proceeded to tests between Douala, where we are based, and beaches. We made some modifications and are still perfecting ourselves," the young engineer told Le Monde Afrique which was with him as he was testing his invention on a Cameroonian beach.

"I am not afraid of the waves (...), this pirogue is very strong, and it can take you anywhere. I dreamt to build it for so long," he adds.

Indeed, by simply assembling plastic bottles, binding them together with a specific cord, Ismaël Essome was able to build a pirogue which can carry up to three people and a load of 90kg on water, and resists waves. According to him, his invention which is 100% ecological aims mainly to achieve three goals. First, it intends to promote seaside tourism as it will be made available to tourists. Secondly, it aims to preserve the environment, by recycling plastic bottles which flood the country's streets, gutters and rivers, despite the adoption in October 2014 of a law instructing their producers (bottles) to systematically establish

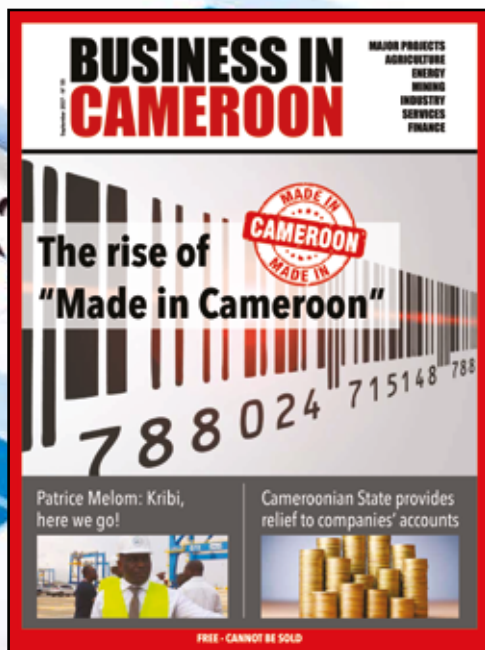
recycling chains. Finally, the young environmentalist wishes to protect trees, whose trunks are used to make regular pirogues in the coastal regions of Cameroon.

If only investors could get interested in his project, promoting both the modernization and commercialization of the pirogues, Ismaël Essome believes that it will not only help end pollution caused by plastic bottles, but also preserve trees while benefiting fishermen who would spend much less to purchase pirogues. Indeed, an eco-pirogue will be sold at FCFA100,000, which is considerably below the wooden pirogue's price which ranges between FCFA150,000 and FCFA500,000, or that made with synthetic material which costs at least one million CFA francs.

Brice R. Mbodiam

Be a part of building tomorrow's Cameroon

Each month, learn about Cameroon's economic progress



The *Business in Cameroon* and *Investir au Cameroun* magazines are both free!

- In Cameroon's embassies and diplomatic posts
- In airport VIP lounges in Paris, London, Brussels, Zurich, and Frankfurt
- In Bourget company lounges
- In Business Class on Brussels Airlines
- In Cameroon's business travel hotels and ministries



IL Y A DU SERVICE DANS L'AIR



La valeur n'attend pas le nombre des années. 2 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.

Une nation, une compagnie, une étoile. Camair-co.

www.camair-co.cm

 **Camair-Co**
L'étoile du Cameroun