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CHINA'S GDP GROWTH AT SLOWEST PACE IN 27 YEARS

According to official data, China's GDP grew at 6.2% in the second quarter of 2019, the slowest quarterly growth rate since 1992 and down from 6.4% in the first quarter of the year. In the second half of this year, China's economy will continue to face "downward pressure," the National Bureau of Statistics said in a public statement. "The Chinese economy is still in a complex and grave situation." For the first half of 2019, China's exports fell 1.3% year-on-year, while exports to the United States decreased by 8.1%. Imports fell 7.3% year-on-year for the first half of 2019, and imports from the U.S. plunged 30%. "Uncertainty caused by the U.S.-China trade war was an important factor and we think this will persist," said Tom Rafferty of The Economist Intelligence Unit. (CNN, July 15, 2019)

CHINA ISSUES XINJIANG WHITE PAPER

The State Council Information Office has issued a white paper on Xinjiang entitled "Historical Matters Concerning Xinjiang" which claims Uighurs are not descendants of the Turks. Islam is "neither an indigenous nor the sole belief system" of the region's Muslim Uighurs who came into existence through a "long process of migration and integration," it says. Xinjiang was included in China's territory in the Han Dynasty and it has never been referred to as "East Turkestan," the paper said. It added that "hostile forces" including "separatists, religious extremists and terrorists" have tried to split China by "distorting history and facts." (*China Daily*, July 21, 2019)

SECURITY AT CHINA BORDER TARGETS HONG KONGERS

Mainland public security officials are checking the phones of Hong Kongers entering the mainland for photos or other information about the Hong Kong protests. One person discovered with photos was detained for five hours and not released until he had signed a confession, was fingerprinted, and provided a DNA sample to authorities. Kwok Ka-ki, a member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, criticizing the practice as "extreme and abnormal" and a "serious" violation of the privacy of his constituents' rights. (*Apple Daily*, August 2, 2019)

BEIJING ORDERS ITS SHOPS TO REMOVE ISLAMIC SYMBOLS, ARABIC SIGNS

Officials in Beijing have ordered shops in the Chinese capital to cover all Arabic signs or Islamic symbols. In recent weeks, officials have visited restaurants, cafes and food stalls serving halal food and ordered them to remove the Arabic word "halal" and any images associated with Islam, such as crescent moons. "They said this is foreign culture and you should use more Chinese culture," said the manager of one Beijing noodle shop. Some shops have replaced the Arabic halal signs with those using Chinese characters, while others covered their Islamic symbols. (*London Independent*, August 1, 2019)

CHINA EXPANDS "REEDUCATION CAMPS" FOR UIGHURS

In late July, Beijing announced that most Uighur detainees had been released from the indoctrination camps built to eliminate Islamic radicalism, anti-government sentiment, and spread Xi Jinping Thought in the country's western Xinjiang region. Yet, the vast network of detention camps, which remain shrouded in security and secrecy, continues to expand. There are now at least five large camps around Hotan, Xinjiang, but efforts by reporters to approach them have been blocked by security officials. The Chinese government, meanwhile, seems more eager to quell international outrage than to wind down the extensive system built over the past two years. Local officials have showcased to foreign reporters a classroom decorated with CPC insignia and displaying samples of exemplary class work. "I have achieved true happiness because I was born in a country that is prosperous, strong and democratic," read one essay displayed on the classroom wall. "How happy we are!" (*London Independent*, August 10, 2019)