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CAMEROON ENDS ROAD PROJECT, ALLEGING CHINESE INCOMPETENCE

Cameroon's minister of public works, Nganou Djoumessi, has accused GPT Weihai International and Economic Cooperative Co. and the China Railway 14th Bureau of gross incompetence in their efforts to renovate a road in the West African nation. Speaking during a site visit on the road between Yaounde and Douala, the minister suspended the project and threatened to cancel the contract. (Cameroon Info Net, August 8, 2019)

RUSSIA THREATENS WOOD EXPORT BAN TO CHINA

Russia will ban timber exports to China if Beijing does not help curb illegal logging, the country's Natural Resources and Environment Minister, Dmitry Kobylkin, has said. According to Kobylkin, Russia would dedicate two billion rubles (\$30 million) to stop the illicit logging and requested another \$45-\$60 million from the same purpose from China. The minister said both countries should work together to replant the forest on the Russian side of the border "in order to restore for the benefit of our children and grandchildren what the black market lumberjacks have stolen."

Kobylkin also requested China's law enforcement agencies tackle the issue "because I really do not like that we are working with their 'comrades' here in Russia on our own. China must understand clearly that if they do not take part in the resolution of this problem then we will have no other option apart from banning the export of wood entirely. If we see specific steps from China then we can beat this problem." Russia exports an estimated 10 million metric tons of timber to China illegally every year, and Siberian authorities have linked illegal Chinese logging to the forest fires that have ravaged Siberia this summer. (Vedomosti, August 15, 2019)

PLA EXPANDS TIES WITH NORTH KOREAN MILITARY...

China and North Korea are expanding their military relations following Xi Jinping's visit to Pyongyang in June for a summit with Kim Jong-un – the first visit by a Chinese head of state to North Korea in 14 years. A North Korean delegation headed by Kim Su-gil, director of the General Political Bureau of the North's Korean People's Army, recently arrived in Beijing to discuss strengthening bilateral military ties with the PLA and exchanged opinions on the geopolitical situation on the Korean Peninsula. (Yonhap, August 16, 2019)

...AND PAKISTAN'S ARMED FORCES

Amid heightened Indo-Pakistan tensions in Kashmir, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission General Xu Qiliang visited Islamabad and met with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, to coordinate policy responses and reiterate support for the "time-tested" Sino-Pakistan military relationship. As part of Xu's visit, the two officials inked a formal memorandum codifying their mutual intent to enhance bilateral defense coordination and stepped-up PLA support for building capacity in Pakistan's Army. (*Express Tribune*, August 27, 2019)

SHANDONG U APOLOGIZES FOR CONTROVERSIAL "BUDDY PROGRAM"

An online uproar erupted when Shandong University announced that its "buddy program" had paired 141, mostly female, Chinese students, with 47, mostly male, foreign students from developing countries, including Kenya, Nepal, and Yemen. Facing an onslaught of online criticism, the university issued a public apology and promised to "conduct a thorough review of the program." One comment captured the tone of the attacks: "No country takes care of Chinese students this way, so why can't we just treat foreign students in China equally? Why should we treat them like they are gods?" (*South China Morning Post*, July 13, 2019)