

Weekly highlights by L'ECONOMISTE



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(Ph. B-zouat)

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EDITORIAL

Crafting a new future

Meriem OUDGHIRI

66,5 kilometers of trenches, soil excavation, and gigantic pipes. The water transfer mega-project is once again the hallmark of Moroccan engineering. Still, this titanic project of interconnection between river basins had to be carried out many years ago, especially since it was part of the 2009 water strategy, validated by the Sovereign. But it took the huge scarcity of water that the country is currently experiencing to get started, because the losses incurred so far were huge. For years, water was pumped euphorically due to its availability, with the results we know. Over the past five years, more than 6.5 billion cubic meters of water have been lost to the sea. From last September till today, 300 million cubic meters have suffered the same fate. It was therefore urgent to stop the bleeding. This whole situation clearly shows that History, present and future, belongs to people who have the

will to make it. This is the logic of modern thought. This logic also shows that when the public authorities put themselves at the service of the same sector, the strike force is thereby reinforced. Morocco has experienced examples of major projects and mobilization. Such is the case of the Tanger Med harbor, the giant project on the Mediterranean sea, in the Tangier region, that made many people say that Morocco is not, is no longer the messy country that had trouble organizing its projects, small or big. Of course, there are programs or administrations that are dragging their feet. They are no longer the benchmark. Today (and even tomorrow), the big challenge will be to win the “post-drought” challenge and to extend all this mobilization to all the territories and other sectors. This is another way to move definitively from orphan strategies to global and effective policies. In a word, the goal is to craft a new future. □

Weekly highlights

Town planning/Administrative decisions

Silence means consent

FATIMA Zahra Mansouri and Abdelouafi Laftit recently published a joint order in the Official Gazette. This decree aims to set the deadlines required for each participant at the level of certain administrative decisions relating to town planning and issued by the municipalities. The silence of the administration means consent after the expiry of the deadlines set for their delivery. If this mechanism is implemented, it will allow citizens to conduct business in the best conditions and as quickly as possible, which simplifies procedures and brings citizens closer to public services, which is one of the royal recommendations. This piece of legislation is part of the implementation of the royal will to place citizens at the heart of public policies, through the removal of administrative and regulatory barriers and through the improvement of the business climate and governance. The area targeted and which is the subject of public criticism concerns the granting of authorizations.

This order is also part of the efforts made by the two ministries to adapt



(Ph. L'Economiste)

the regulatory framework governing town planning authorizations to the provisions of the law relating to the simplification of procedures and administrative formalities. The law had set a deadline of 30 days for the processing and issuance of the administrative acts necessary for the realization of investment projects. The system that was established stipulated that the deadlines required for each

participant for certain administrative acts issued by the local authorities or their groupings are established by joint decrees.

In this issue which affects citizens, Abdelouafi Laftit wants to save time. Less than a week after the signing of this joint decree, the Minister of the Interior sent a circular to the walis and governors which determines the practical arrangements for the imple-

mentation of this new system under the best conditions. The subject of the circular relates to the activation of the principle of silence of the administration which is considered as approval. The deadlines that have been set relate to administrative decisions rendered by municipalities or districts. This also concerns the administrative decisions issued by the municipalities and the provinces, which constitutes a quantum leap in the administration's relations with users and the procedures linked to the issuance of administrative decisions.

A decree published in the Official Gazette on May 11 made it possible to establish a list of administrative decisions for which the principle of agreement applies in the face of silence of local authorities and their groupings for applications for which the time limit has expired. The legislation also specified the model of attestation to be used to confirm the silence of the administration, which document is established by the Wali or the Governor after the refusal to issue decisions. □

Mohamed CHAUI

Courts: Proper attire required!

CLOTHES don't make the man. This proverb is so dear to people who care little about their attire. But the Casablanca Bar Association is not of this opinion and just sent a note to lawyers about some of them being too casual. Apparently, this is not the first time that the bar association has pinpointed the way some lawyers dress inside the courts. This issue, it seems, is unanimous among veterans, young people, and trainees. In his note, Taher Mouafak, President of the Casablanca Bar Association, says that *"the prestige of a profession is not measured solely through the laws which govern such a profession, nor by the respect due by the public and users in court, but colleagues should be convinced of the sacred nature of their profession and of the need to take care of their appearance to arouse respect and consideration"*. However, due to the fact that the President of the Casablanca Bar Association visits different courts as part of his work and his mission as



(Ph. DR)

President of the Bar and sometimes even inside the headquarters of the Association, *"it is regrettable to note that a large number of lawyers do not attach any importance to the way they dress. Indeed, our colleagues dress as they see fit. Their clothes are not commensurate with lawyers and with the respect due to the gown and to the profession"*. The President

of the Casablanca Bar Association decries *"the wearing of torn jeans, espadrilles or even the traditional headscarf (zifhayati) by some female lawyers"*... In addition to their clothes, the president of the bar points the finger at the "haircu" of some colleagues and is already worried about the future laureates of institutes and faculties who wish to pursue a

career as a lawyer. Consequently, the president of the bar urges his colleagues to raise awareness among these young people so that they give to *"the question of attire the importance it deserves because the credibility and respectability of the profession are at stake"*. For the Casablanca Bar Association, the first step for the success and respectability of the profession of lawyer is its dress code. *"When you circulate inside a court, you will never meet a magistrate dressed in a T-shirt, in a simple shirt, or in jeans"*, underlines the president of the bar association, who added that the fact of dressing in this way causes harm to the profession and regretted that some colleagues are not aware of it. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a lawyer from a man in the street.

Usually, lawyers wear their gowns inside the courts when exercising their activity, but the law does not provide for instructions on clothing. □

H.E.

In the pipes of the water highway

(Ph. Bziouat)



MOROCCO'S largest water highway project will soon be operational. The pilot phase of this megaproject will soon come to an end. It should connect Wadi Sebou (Sidi Yahia: Gharb Region) to the Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah dam, not far from Rabat. This is a strategic civil engineering project intended to deploy the interconnection of the Sebou and Bouregreg river basins, which will strengthen the supply of drinking water and irrigation both of the city of Rabat and of the business metropolis, Casablanca. The works will be divided into two phases. The first part will allow the connection of the Sebou dam to the Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah dam, at the level of the Bouregreg river basin. This will be followed by the phase of the Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah reservoirs, which will then be connected to the Imfout dam in the province of Settat. The overall amount of the investment is 6 billion Dirhams (USD 600 million) financed by the national Government and the regions.

"The North-South water transfer project is one of the mega-projects that Morocco intends to carry out. The project will make it possible to mobi-

lize 850 million cubic meters of water from the rainy Northern part of the country to the semi-arid South", specifies a document from the Regional Office for Agricultural Development of the Gharb region (Ormvag), and more specifically from its development department (delegated contracting authority).

According to engineers on site, the urgent part of the transfer project concerns the interconnection between Sebou (Kenitra) and Bouregreg (Rabat). Then, the interconnection will

have to extend to Oum Rbiaa. The purpose of this tranche is *"to recover the volumes of water from the Sebou basin that used to be lost at sea by placing the river basins of Sebou, Bouregreg, and Oum Rbiaa or even Tensift in a common pool"*, which will allow, in the long term, for the securing of demand from the coastal area of Kenitra to El Jadida... In a second phase, the transfer will make it possible to secure demand from the Marrakech-El Haouz system. In the meantime, the interconnection will

help safeguard the plain of Berrechid (Casablanca region), Doukkala (Azemmour-El Jadida) and indirectly El Haouz-Tensift (Marrakech region). The first tranche of the interconnection extends over 66 kilometers. The water supply line has a total length of 66.5 km. The supply line concerns the two provinces of Kénitra and Salé. Theoretically, some 400 million cubic meters of water will be redirected annually to the regions of Rabat and Casablanca.

According to engineers, the soils crossed, over the 66 kilometers, are divided into four categories. The heterogeneous nature of the variety of soils provides information on the complexity of the sites, which requires technical prowess in terms of civil engineering, technical studies, and the construction of engineering structures. In total, seven territorial municipalities are covered by the supply line. In the province of Kénitra, the supply line crosses the localities of Ben Mansour, Mograne, Ouled Slama, Ameer Seflia, Haddada, and Sidi Taïbi... In the province of Salé, the supply line goes through the localities of Ameer and Shoul. □

Amin RBOUB

Civil engineering / Public works 100% Moroccan companies

The steering and monitoring of the various phases of the water transfer mega-site is provided by several teams of engineers and technicians, design offices, and other stakeholders. These 100% Moroccan companies specializing in civil engineering, construction, construction works, and engineering structures, have developed proven expertise, whether in Morocco or across the continent. These companies include SGTM (SGTM (Société générale des travaux du Maroc), SNCE (So-

ciété nouvelle des conduites d'eau), and STAM (Société des travaux agricoles marocains). STAM is a company specializing in earthworks, public works, large-scale irrigation, and road works. The project also includes design and engineering offices, experts, as well as engineers from the Ministry of Equipment... Delegated project management is provided by the Regional Office for Agricultural Development (ORMVA) reporting to the Ministry of Agriculture. □

Weekly highlights

Telecoms: Increasing complaints

SUBSCRIBER claims against telecom carriers are skyrocketing. According to the National Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (ANRT), the number of complaints received and processed during the first quarter of 2023 increased, compared to the previous quarter. As a reminder, the telephone market regulator deals with consumer complaints, of which it is the recipient. These are generally complaints relating to telecommunications services provided by public network carriers. In total, at the end of the first quarter of 2023, ANRT received and processed 362 complaints compared to 133 at the end of March 2022. Per category, the most recurrent complaints are those related to the ADSL service (48%). This is followed by complaints relating to the mobile voice service (32%). Customer disputes relate in particular to portability, billing, quality of service, phone carriers, the non-availability of the signal/network, or even contractual complaints. More importantly, most criticisms come from retail customers (97%). Roughly speaking,



(Ph. AFP)

consumer complaints relate to different segments of service provision: mobile and fixed telephony, FTTH (Fiber-to-the-Home), ADSL, 3G/4G Internet, and other issues. To collect and process complaints, the regulator uses different sources, including mail, mailing, the complaints platform, and other sources. According to ANRT,

consumer complaints are received either directly (mail, website, e-mail to the following address suiviplainte@anrt.ma), or via Khidmat Al Moustahlik (www.khidmat-almostahlik.ma) or through Chikaya (www.chikaya.ma). These online platforms allow users (individuals, businesses, local authorities, and other stakeholders) to contact the

regulatory authority and report malfunctions encountered in their relationship with their service provider. At the same time, these feedbacks are sources of improvement that phone carriers are called upon to address urgently, in order to optimize the customer experience. □

Amin RBOUB

Water and electricity

Multiservice regional companies will take over

MULTISERVICE regional corporations (SRM) will soon come into being. The legislation, recently published in the Official Gazette, aims to create 12 regional corporations, one per region. They will gradually replace the utilities and the National Office for Electricity and Drinking Water. A decree from the Ministry of the Interior will set the deadlines for each region. This operation is part of the reform of public institutions and also of the energy sector. The distribution of electricity, drinking water, and liquid sanitation will be part of the remit of these new entities. The goal sought is to set up economically viable entities with a view to mobilizing funding, inter alia, for investment purposes. Adopted by 154 votes in favor, 21 against, and 16 abstentions, Law No. 83.21 on the creation of regional multi-service corporations should, in principle, put an end to the problems currently facing the sector. "Monitoring and evaluation operations have shown that the performance of the



ONEE (National Office for Electricity and Drinking Water) and the utilities will be relieved of distribution for the benefit of regional multiservice corporations (Ph. L'Economiste)

water and electricity sector is facing a series of problems within the framework of ongoing management experiences", underlined the Minister of the Interior, who added that "this state of affairs does not allow current players to support the development of demand for water, sanitation, and electricity services, especially since

it prevents a balance in the distribution of these services at the territorial level, particularly in the rural world".

Endowed with the status of a public limited company, the SRMs will have as shareholders the central Government, public agencies, and state-owned enterprises, including

the National Office for Water and Electricity, as well as local authorities. The capital of the Multiservice regional corporations may be open to the private sector, but provided that the central Government's share is not less than 10%. SRMs are authorized to carry out all industrial, commercial, real estate, and financial operations and activities related to their main purpose. Regional multiservice corporations may also be empowered under the management contract to collect royalties, funds, participations on behalf of a utility or of the national Government or for their own account, as the case may be (Article 2 of the law). These corporations benefit from the right of expropriation for reasons of public interest and from the right of temporary occupation of the private domain, in accordance with the legislation in force. SRMs also benefit from all the rights and advantages granted by the legislative and regulatory texts for the benefit of investors and promoters of industrial projects. □

Khadija MASMOUDI