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Le premier quotidien économique du Maroc

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EDITORIAL

«Paparazzi democracy»

Mohamed Ali MRABI

CORRUPTION, embezzlement of public funds, drug trafficking... one scandal follows another, tarnishing the image of parliamentarians and further eroding public confidence. Will the new parliamentary code of ethics succeed this time in anchoring the principle of morality? In practical terms, the new code will be legally binding. It is important to enshrine the moral rule in law. But the «judicialization of politics» alone cannot overcome a highly complex phenomenon. Rather, it is a mechanism to be placed within the framework of an overall corpus, consolidating the values of integrity, and preventing possible breaches. In a context of eroding trust, the «presumed probity» of politicians is no longer systematically recognized. The challenge today is to deconstruct the stereotypes rooted in the collective imagination, according to which a politician is either corrupt or incompetent...

Integrity control thus requires greater transparency (notably through reform of the model for declaring assets, which has shown its limitations). This will be decisive in countering disenchantment (especially among young people). Beyond the texts, the real challenge will be to influence people's minds. The «morality shock» will thus involve transparency and exemplarity, which are real levers for improving the relationship of trust between citizens and political elites. Ultimately, democracy as a «type of government» can only hold if those in charge of it place the public interest above private interests, to quote Montesquieu. In this process, it is important to avoid the pitfall of extreme solutions. Transparency, conceived by Rousseau as «the virtue of beautiful souls», must not be abused to promote voyeurism or what specialists call «paparazzi democracy». □

Weekly highlights

1st regasification platform coming soon

MOROCCO has drawn up a plan to import LNG directly from Spain.

The plan includes the construction of three long-term regasification platforms. And Leïla Benali, Minister for Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, and her team, who have scaled back their ambitions, are apparently in a hurry. After all, two of these regasification platforms are due to be completed by 2027. The first of these, the only one on the Mediterranean coast, will be built at the port of Nador West Med.

To this end, a strategic memorandum of understanding was signed on March 26 between four ministries (Interior, Economy and Finance, Equipment and Water and Energy Transition & Sustainable Development) and five public bodies and state-owned enterprises (ANP, ONEE, ONHYM, Nador West Med and ADM). The aim is to strengthen public authority coordination with a view to accelerating implementation of the sustainable gas infrastructure development program. A program which, it should be recalled, had difficulty getting off the ground in 2021, with an unsuccessful



Morocco has a significant need for natural gas in the short and medium term. That's why ONEE's development plan calls for the production of more than 2.5 GW of new thermal gas capacity by 2027.

call for tenders. This led to the ANP's desire to equip itself with the same type of infrastructure at the port of Mohammedia in 2022.

This first Nador West Med platform will be equipped with a gas pipeline connected to the GME (Maghreb - Europe gas pipeline) and will be used primarily to supply ONEE's combined-cycle gas power plants, notably those at Ain Béni Mathar and

Tahadart, to produce electricity.

This platform will be followed, in the short term, by another regasification platform to be erected on the Atlantic coast, at either Jorf Lasfar or Mohammedia. «Studies will be launched shortly to determine

which of these two ports will ultimately be chosen. And servicing the industrial basins will be a determining factor in this choice », he explained. Indeed, the aim is to meet the needs of many industrialists who wish to replace fuel oil with natural gas, and to help develop new activities such as glass and steel production. The third and final platform will be built at the port of Dakhla Atlantique by 2030 and will be connected to the Mauritanian and Senegalese networks, as well as to the Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline.

To ensure the rapid deployment of all these LNG entry points in Morocco, the government has opted for a PPP approach, in which the bulk of the investments will be made by the national and international private sector. The tender for the first regasification platform at Nador West Med will be launched shortly. □

Aziz DIOUF

Eid Al Adha: Preparations launched

PREPARATIONS to secure the supply of livestock for Eid Al-Adha have begun. Addressing members of parliament in the House of Councillors, Mohamed Sadiki confirmed the Government's decision to open up the import of over 600,000 head of sheep for the second year running, in anticipation of the festival. This invitation to tender concerns sheep intended for the Aid Al-Adha sacrifice. As the situation is exceptional, it is possible to increase these quantities further if necessary, he told parliamentarians. In any case, the Minister is closely monitoring the situation with professionals. The government has introduced a premium of 500 Dirhams (USD 50) per head in addition to exemption from customs duties and value-added tax on imports. The scheme is similar to that of 2023. Except that last year, promises to bring down market prices for sheep were not kept. Despite import subsidies, prices



In addition to sanitary controls, the logistical aspect is also important. This will be achieved by setting up and equipping 34 temporary markets for sacrificial sheep throughout the country

did not fall. The program for this year's preparations includes several measures that the Ministry of Agriculture has begun to implement. These involve field data and the implementation of a range monitoring system, some of which relate to the precise as-

essment of sheep supply and demand, in coordination with professionals in the chain.

According to the Minister, as of April 15, over 210,000 feeding units had been registered, and almost 2 million head of sheep and goats iden-

tified. The national livestock population is also in good health. The Ministry is continuing to raise awareness among breeders of good health practices for feeding and fattening Eid sheep. In addition, it carries out field inspections, taking samples of meat and feed and sending them to laboratories for analysis.

With the approach of Eid Al-Adha, overall control operations are being stepped up, through the mobilization of all relevant services such as the food safety agency (ONSSA) local authorities and the Royal Gendarmerie, according to a joint circular with the Minister of the Interior, which will continue until the day of Eid. Over the course of Eid and the following days, ONSSA will be mobilizing veterinarians and technicians on a permanent basis throughout the country to communicate with citizens and assist them in case of need. □

M.C.

Morocco-Belgium

Investment opportunities presented

«We have international events coming up, such as the African Cup in 2025 and the World Cup in 2030. Between these two events, there are likely to be other events in the pipeline. We need more stadiums, more hotels, more facilities...». At the Morocco-Belgium economic meeting held on Tuesday April 16 at the headquarters of the Moroccan employers' association (CGEM) and attended by representatives of the Moroccan and Belgian employers' associations, Aziz Akhannouch, Head of Government, reaffirmed the desire to create wealth not only locally but also nationally. This will be achieved in particular through the creation of hubs, as is the case in the automotive and agribusiness sectors, and in green hydrogen, where the opportunities are significant. «I really think that this is a great window of opportunity for Morocco», stressed Akhannouch. The economic meeting was held on the sidelines of the Moroccan-Belgian High Joint Commission, and welcomed a



At the Moroccan-Belgian economic meeting held on Tuesday, April 16 at the CGEM headquarters and attended by representatives of Moroccan and Belgian employers, Aziz Akhannouch, Head of Government, reaffirmed the desire to create wealth not only locally but also nationally (Photo by Jarfi)

large delegation of Belgian businesspeople, as well as the participation of Alexander DE CROO, Prime Minister of Belgium.

«When we look at some of the figures, we see that we can go much further. Take, for example, our trade, which stood at around 2.5 billion Dirhams (USD 250 million) in 2023,

which doesn't really reflect the existing potential. We have everything to gain by developing these exchanges, but above all by promoting investment between Moroccan and Belgian companies. It is investment that drives trade and accelerates growth», said Chakib Alj, President of the CGEM. Alj proposes to define pragmatic

quick-wins in terms of investment and co-investment in the infrastructure and energy sectors, identified as being highly strategic.

«If we are serious about Morocco and Belgium as hubs for trade between the European Union, Africa, and the Atlantic Basin, it is imperative to start investing now, in 2024, in exchange, connection and connectivity infrastructure between these two markets», said Leila Benali, Minister for Energy Transition and Sustainable Development. Without transmission platforms, cables and electrical interconnectors, the potential for the exchange of electrons and green molecules cannot be realized.

«We have the necessary assets to develop this corridor between Morocco and Belgium and to reduce the risks associated with these exchanges,» added Benali.

This shows that there are plenty of investment opportunities, and so the participation of the private sector is eagerly awaited. □

Khadija MASMOUDI

Car rental

New specifications since April 15

SINCE Monday April 15, driverless car rental agencies have been governed by new specifications. All operators are required to sign the entire 7-page document, legalize it and submit it to one of the Ministry's regional offices. Among the documents to be produced are a copy of the certificate of ownership of the head office or the lease contract, proof of professional capacity (specialized technical diploma or baccalaureate (G.E.D. / Junior High School Degree) plus 2 years or the last year of the baccalaureate with two years' experience in the field, attested by the Moroccan Social Security Fund, (Caisse Nationale de Sécurité Sociale, CNSS) and financial capacity (500,000 Dirhams, i.e. USD 50,000). Operators wishing to invest in this activity will be issued with an agreement in principle, valid for six months, after which they will be required to submit a file containing

a number of supporting documents. These include a certificate of registration in the trade register, a certificate of registration for professional tax, a certificate of registration with the CNSS, a certificate of registration of the manager with the CNSS, and an administrative certificate proving that the rental agency has a minimum fleet. The person concerned has six months to purchase the vehicles required for his business. After this period, the agreement in principle lapses. In the event of refusal, regional management must justify its decision.

The new specifications include a number of provisions that will be applied for the first time. For example, a minimum fleet of 7 vehicles will be required, instead of the current five vehicles. The operator must never go below this number of vehicles, which require a type B driving license. With the same authorization, a car rental



The chauffeurless car rental market is currently characterized by an oversupply of agencies and an unbalanced territorial distribution (Private photo)

company can now open more than one branch, using the fleet belonging to the head office. The formalities required are limited to a copy of the initial authorization, the minutes of the general meeting called to approve the opening of a regional branch, proof of ownership or lease, and an administrative certificate confirming the registration of the 7 vehicles at the head office.

The other new feature concerns the

duration of vehicle use. This will be limited to 5 years for thermodynamic cars and 7 years for hybrid or electric models. Rental agencies will also be able to strengthen their fleets by purchasing second-hand vehicles that have already been used by other companies, provided they do not exceed the age limits set by the new specifications. □

Hassan ELARIF

Weekly highlights

Essaouira Gnaoua Festival

A popular and audacious program

FOR its 25th edition from June 27 to 29, the Essaouira Gnaoua and World Music Festival is pulling out all the stops with an original, popular, and audacious program. With some 53 concerts planned and over 400 artists on stage, the festival from June 27 to 29, 2024 is an invitation to cross-fertilization, inclusion and living together. One of those musical, sensory, and intellectual experiences that only this singular festival can imagine, with a perfect balance between Gnaoua Maalems and world musicians.

Over the past quarter-century, the festival has seen some of the biggest names in jazz and world music perform alongside the Maâlems Gnaoua. This year is no exception. Buika (Spain), Saint Levant (Palestine), The Brecker Brothers Band Reunion (USA), Labess (France, Algeria) and Bokanté (USA, Guadeloupe), are just some of the headliners who will be ringing out the notes of flamenco, blues, jazz, oriental music, rap, gypsy rumba, and chaabi music. The emotion that springs from Buika's husky, powerful voice makes her one of



Spanish of Equato-Guinean origin, singer Buika brilliantly interweaves Afro-Cuban music, jazz, and soul with flamenco. Her powerful, distinctive voice makes her one of Spain's most popular artists (Photo Festival Gnaoua)



Palestinian, with French, Algerian and Serbian roots, Saint Levant is a veritable musical phenomenon whose tracks are gaining millions of views on social media (Private photo)

the most distinctive and celebrated Spanish artists in the world. An incredibly expressive voice, which blends the soul of flamenco with the depth of jazz, transcends linguistic barriers and blurs musical boundaries. A rising star on the international music scene, the Palestinian rapper of plural origins and multi-generational appeal Saint Levant brilliantly blends the Arabic, English, and French languages in his tracks. Highly politically engaged, his tracks, which fuse hip hop and orientalist RnB, are a hit on platforms and rack up millions of views on social media. By programming Randy Brecker and his band (The Brecker Brothers Band Réunion), the Festival welcomes one of the greatest names in jazz of the last 50 years, who, along with his brother Michael Brecker, has conquered stages the world over and exerted a lasting influence on generations of musicians. Labess's warm, festive music is rooted in Algerian chaabi music, which he fuses with flamenco and rumba, promoting messages of peace and unity. Re-



Initiated by Michael League, founder of Snarky Puppy, and Creole singer Malika Tyrolien, the group Bokanté combines the sounds of desert and delta, blues and Caribbean kaladja, in a richly melodic and groovy ensemble (Photo Festival Gnaoua)

nowned for their high-energy live shows, Labess' music is a blend of musical styles, free, and haunted. A supergroup of instrumentalists from diverse backgrounds, Bokanté bears the stamp of Michael League, one of the great jazz bassists of his generation and founder of Snarky Puppy. The band's main asset is its singer Malika Tirolien, who masters the vocal demands of jazz to perfection,

delivering lyrics in Creole, French and English that resonate with the struggles facing the world today. Finally, the powerful «Aita mon amour» duo, made up of Moroccan singer Widad Mjama and Tunisian musician Khalil Epi, brilliantly revisits traditional Moroccan Aita, projecting it into the modern world, is likely to be a real hit. □

A.Bo