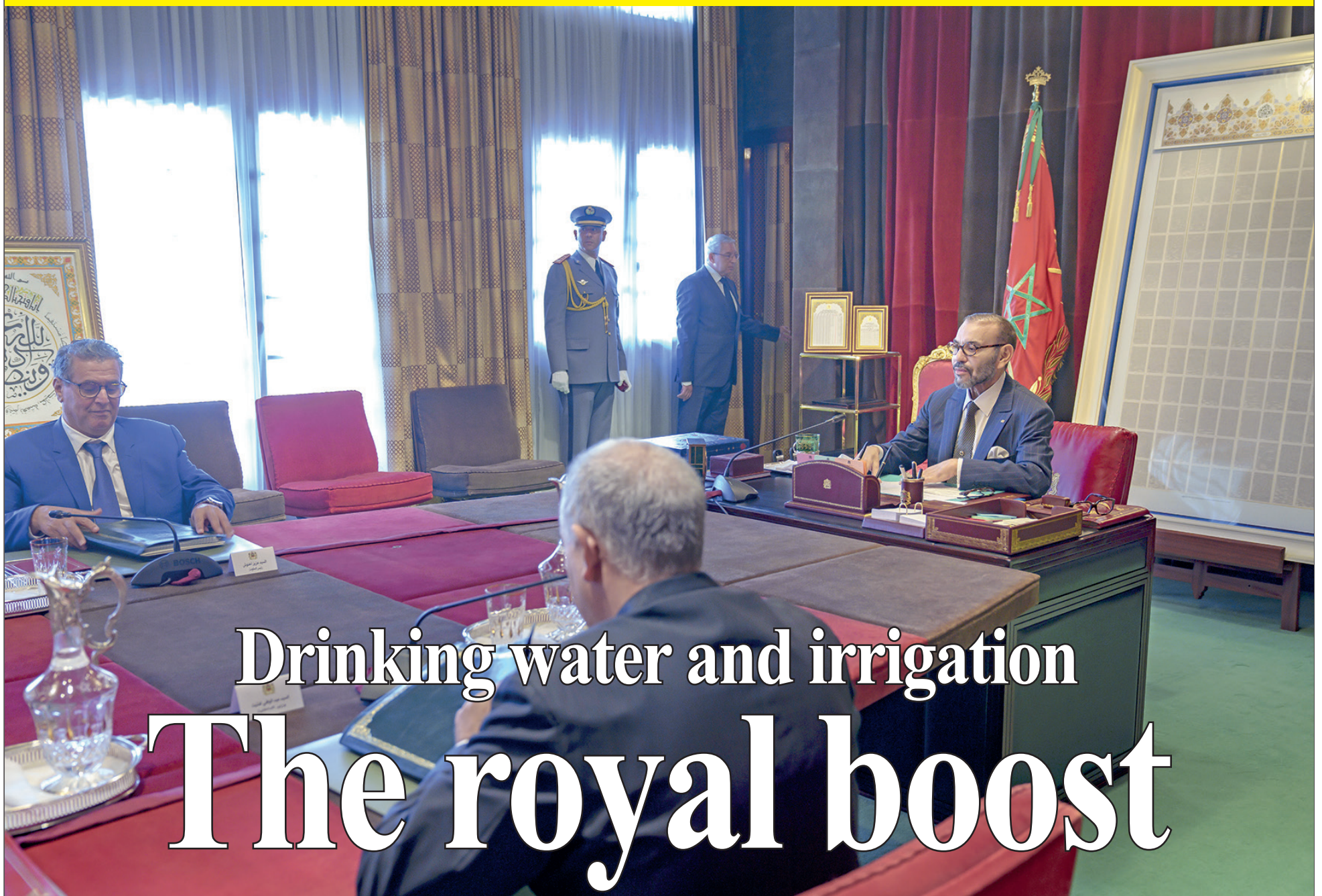


Weekly highlights by L'ECONOMISTE



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EDITORIAL

Stakes

Meriem OUDGHIRI

A major societal subject are our fundamental freedoms which are so large and so sensitive that many do not want to touch them too much at the risk of not to come out of it unscathed. Nonetheless, some people do try to rise up to the challenge. Invited by Le Club de L'Economiste to participate in a debate around this issue, a group of persons explained and analyzed its approach and its proposals for reform in an area where aberrations are still so blatant.

The Moudawana (Family Code) is a striking example. Nineteen years after its entry into force, this legislation suffers from major dysfunctions which slow down the achievement of the goals of this revolution of the Family Code. Also on the list is the marriage of underage girls, which continues to top the charts of the most basic human rights violations for "sociological reasons". This is a brutal societal reality that is catastrophic and is destroying freedom.

Similarly, inequity and inequality between men and women in matters of inheritance dominates without anyone daring to oppose the conservative currents. Today, Morocco has embarked on a major economic stimulus project, but for this plan to bear fruit, society must also change, so that the reforms do not remain artificial or isolated from the reality of people's lives. This tendency towards quasi-neurotic identification with religion for all aspects of society must be stopped. Wanting to penalize sexual relations between consenting adults is, neither more nor less, than an invasion of privacy. It is pedophilia or rape that must be punished. Reforming is regenerating, fighting the status quo, and being disruptive, while respecting the rights and freedoms of each other. This is one of the best ways to defeat obscurantism. What is at stake is fundamental. □

Weekly highlights

Telework: The great legal silence

THE Covid pandemic was the driving force behind the practice of teleworking as part of health measures. This relaxation of the work practices was recommended by the public authorities and professional organizations without being governed by any legislative or regulatory provision. After the health crisis, teleworking continues to be practiced, albeit to a lesser extent, most companies having resumed the usual mode, but some employers continue to offer this teleworking possibility to part of their staff, or on a rotational basis.

However, this organizational mode is not regulated by law. This is one of the provisions that employers want to introduce into labor legislation because teleworking has become a reality on the ground.

"We have set up teleworking during the Covid period because it was planned within the overall framework of the state of health emergency, and based on a recommendation from the authorities. Today we keep a certain flexibility while waiting for a change



in the legislation in force", explains Zakia Hajjaji, HR Manager of the multinational company Orange. The absence of a legal framework is a problem for the entities concerned. Indeed, labor legislation should include some provisions for the protection of the interests of employers as well as employees, in particular with regard to

accidents at work, delimitation of the scope covered by insurance contracts, coverage of commuting accidents, and other issues. The labor legislation should also define telework, teleworkable activities, the proportion of telework, the conditions of telework, the return to face-to-face work, its duration, the proportion of face-to-

face work, its compulsory or optional nature, and other provisions.

In principle, telework, if applicable of course, as well as its terms, must be specified in the internal regulations of each company which must be approved by the regional labor directorates. However, as long as telework has not been included in the labor legislation, it is difficult to imagine that it will be validated with a provision that is not yet governed by law. Indeed, when companies include a clause on remote work in their internal regulations, the latter is systematically rejected by the regional directorates of the Ministry of Employment.

The option of teleworking can be adopted without being referred to in the internal regulations of a company. The law must therefore specify whether this form of work organization must be mentioned in the internal regulations. It now remains to be seen whether teleworking should be regulated via the Labor Code or a simple decree. □

Hassan EL ARIF

Teacher absenteeism continues to wreak havoc

THE report of the Court of Auditors, recently presented to the Parliament by Mrs. Zineb El Adaoui, President of that Court, probably demoralized Chakib Benmoussa, particularly concerning the issue of human resources. The Minister of National Education is certainly aware of all this, but the institutional reminder and the need to debate these issues at the level of the two Chambers of the Parliament add new concerns to the Minister.

In any case, the staff of the education sector represented in 2022 nearly 55% of all the civil servants of the State and whose number rises to 311,943. Expenditure of the staff of the Ministry and of the Ministry's regional academies reaches 50 billion Dirhams (USD 5 billion), namely 80% of the sector's overall budget and 3.9% of GDP.

The Court of Auditors looks at the teachers recruited by the regional academies. There are 83,422 teachers and barely 4.28% of the first five waves of teachers have undergone a professional skills examination. For Mrs. Zineb El Adaoui, transfers of



Teacher absenteeism in the education sector is considered one of the main factors that negatively and directly impacts the school calendar of students. An increase of 77% has been noted for academic years 2016-2017 and 2020-2021

National Education staff (from one city or school to another) are among the factors of educational instability within schools.

Thus, teachers, executives of the regional academies, who benefited from the transfers (from one city or school to another) for 2019, 2020, and 2021, were 53,683 in number, which corres-

ponds to 63% of all of these teachers estimated at 85,000. This contributes to pedagogical instability in schools that have recorded high rates of transfers of teachers, knowing that sometimes the duration of their exercise in a region does not exceed one year.

This wave of staff transfers mainly concerned rural areas, particularly

primary schools, whose teachers represented 64% of the total of teachers who moved from place to another, which impacts the level of education of these children.

An evil never comes alone. Indeed, this shortcoming is accentuated by absenteeism in the education sector, considered as one of the main factors that negatively and directly impact the school calendar of students. There has thus been a significant increase in the number of unjustified absences by teachers, to the point that they increased by 77% during the 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 academic years, which further aggravates the situation. The negative impact lies in the evaluation system adopted by the ministry and which is mainly based on seniority in the promotion of teachers in the absence of any evaluation of profitability. The criteria retained for the teachers' scorecard concerning productivity, discipline, research, and innovation, remain ambiguous and difficult to apply in the absence of a system allowing individual monitoring of each civil servant. □

Mohamed CHAOUI

Drinking water and irrigation: The royal boost

IT took a meeting on May 9, 2023 chaired by the King to give a boost to the National Program for Drinking Water Supply and Irrigation 2020-2027, which shows that the Sovereign attaches crucial importance to the water issue. Already, at the opening of the autumn session of Parliament, things were clearly announced. Indeed, HM the King defined a new roadmap intended to speed up the completion of the projects contained in this priority program. The goal is to complete the construction of the planned dams and water interconnection networks, seawater desalination plants, in addition to promoting an approach aimed at saving the use of water, particularly in the field of irrigation and the reuse of wastewater, with a rationalization of the use of groundwater. The royal message also focused on the need to put an end to the approach to water management based on a sectoral policy. On the contrary, water management is a matter that is common to all sectors, which requires



On Tuesday, May 09, 2023, the Sovereign chaired a working session devoted to the monitoring of the 2020-2027 National Program for Drinking Water Supply and Irrigation (Ph. MAP)

the continuous updating of sectoral strategies, in the light of the pressure on water resources and their future evolution. According to the Minister of Equipment and Water, Nizar Baraka, important modifications have been made to all the projects

of the initial program. The aim is to accelerate the pace, and support the development of water resources, including non-conventional waters. The most important projects relate to large, medium, and small dams, hydraulic interconnection between river

basins, support for drinking water in urban and rural areas, desalination of seawater, and water saving. The additional cost to finance these modifications amounts to 28 billion Dirhams (USD 2.8 billion). This means that the overall budget of the revised program has been increased to 143 billion Dirhams (USD 14.3 billion) instead of 115 billion Dirhams (USD 11.5 billion) originally planned, for a good reason since the new version has several amendments. The new version of the program provides for the programming of two additional large dams and six medium reservoirs with a total additional capacity of 885.2 million cubic meters, which will bring the total capacity of the dams from 19.9 billion currently to 23 billion cubic meters in 2027. Also on the list are 129 small hill dams to supply groundwater, local irrigation, livestock watering, and flood protection. The construction of these dams will be implemented by the regions, noted Minister Baraka. □

Mohamed CHAOU

Complete digitization of medical insurance within 3 years

THE pace of activities of the CNSS (National Social Security Fund) has strongly increased recently. The reimbursement records filed daily are an example of this. Indeed, in April, the milestone of 60,600 files per day was crossed, compared to 22,000 in December 2020. This upward trend also extends to the total level of AMO (Compulsory Medical Insurance) beneficiaries, estimated last April at 23.2 million people, while this number did not exceed 7.8 million in December 2020. Despite this massive influx of new policyholders, the service is regularly delivered. Reimbursement records are processed within an average of 10.5 days. This average rises to 12 days due to the collection time of the files which are deposited in the 2,000 local offices set up to get closer to the population concerned. 70% of files pass through these offices. It must be recognized that in terms of reimbursement period, the CNSS does better than private insurance companies and better than the CNOPS (National Fund for Social Welfare Works). This is at least what emerged from



the meeting of the Finance Committee of the House of Councilors which had looked at the progress of the major project of the generalization of social protection. The Director General of CNSS, Hassan Boubrik, was accompanied by Fouzi Lekjaâ, Minister in charge of the Budget. One of the questions asked by the M.P.s was whether the necessary means are given to the

CNSS to ideally fulfill its missions. Concerning this point as well as other points, Hassan Boubrik was categorical: "We have strong support from the Ministry of Economy and Finance and from the Government. All the means requested are granted to us to such an extent that we have multiplied the investment budget by 8, particularly in information systems".

In any case, the CNSS is in the process of strengthening its capacities, particularly in the treatment of AMO teams through the creation of a box-office operations center. Added to this is the expansion of local networks by providing more opportunities for beneficiaries to present the reimbursement applications that concern them. An information system will make possible the complete digitization of the AMO insurance system within 3 years. Still, the soft underbelly of this major project lies in the payment of contributions which remains low on the part of self-employed workers. Only about 250,000 of these latter, out of 1.9 million, pay their dues. A large part of self-employed workers, especially farmers, do not pay their contribution to AMO. Their line ministry must tackle this issue with the support of professional organizations in the sector to make farmers aware of the need to contribute financially to AMO in order to be able to benefit from the services of this compulsory insurance scheme. □

Mohamed CHAOU

Weekly highlights

Gnaoua and world music, a festival that lives in the city



THE Gnaoua and World Music Festival returns, from June 22 to June 24, to the city of Essaouira. Having become, over the years, one of the major artistic events of the Moroccan and international cultural agenda, this edition promises, say the organizers, exceptional moments that will be rich in terms of exchange and emotions. After a long absence due to the pandemic, the festival is finally returning to its usual format, with more than forty concerts spread across the city, unprecedented fusions between gnaoua mâalems and musicians from the four corners of the planet, improvised jam sessions, and great debates of ideas. It will be a gigantic and continuous party, made of communion, joy, and the sharing of ideas and emotions, which have always characterized this authentically Moroccan meeting with deep African roots. An exceptional line up is offered by this 24th edition with a program that is both unique, coherent, and accessible. The performers include Selah Sue, Ky-Mani Marley, Eliades Ochoa, Jaleel Shaw, El Comité, Gnawa Diffusion, Hoba Hoba Spirit, Trio Joubran, Faiz Ali Faiz, and Les Amazones d'Afrique... to name but a few. This edition in-

This 24th edition intends to celebrate, once again, the richness and diversity of Gnaoua music and many other forms of world music



The opening parade is always a moment of joy and happiness. This event is highly anticipated by festivalgoers and the inhabitants of the city of Essaouira

tends to celebrate, once again, the richness and diversity of Gnaoua music and many other forms of world music from the United States, Cuba, Pakistan, Mali, Burundi, France, Belgium or from Germany. The sounds of the ubiquitous guembri (plucked string musical instrument) and crotales (antique cymbals, percussion

instruments) will mingle with the sounds of jazz in all its diversity, flamenco, reggae, salsa, or even Tuareg or Tamil rhythms. Apart from the concerts, and sheltered from the tumult of the festive city and the overflowing energy of the big stages, there is another way of experiencing the festival, a more intimate way, in

exceptional places, where purists and lovers of Gnaoua acoustic sounds rediscover a centuries-old tradition, as well as world music. This year the theme of the forum is "Identities and affiliations". This is a hot topic in a world crossed by identity tensions and the refusal of otherness.. □

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Some highlights of the festival

■ The parade, a beautiful moment of joy and sharing

The opening parade is always a moment of joy. Much awaited by festivalgoers and the inhabitants of the city of Essaouira, the parade is a prelude to three days of festivities, conviviality, exchanges, and intense moments. Three days of pure happiness to be experienced in a city that has made tolerance a way of life. A colorful show, led by the gnaoua maâlems, strolling

through the streets to meet the inhabitants of the city and the festivalgoers to celebrate together the launch of the 24th edition.

■ An opening concert under the auspices of hybridization

A veritable hymn to the continent, the opening concert, which is the result of an exceptional residency, will bring together maâlem Mohamed Kouyou and maâlem Said Kouyou in fusion

with the drums of Burundi Amagaba, Jaleel Shaw, and Sanaa Marahati. This concert already promises to be explosive, with nearly 25 artists on stage.

■ El Comité residency in agreement with Mâalem Khalid Sansi (Morocco-Cuba)

Being accustomed to the most daring collaborations, Mâalem Khalid Sansi does not hesitate to dare to mix and match, from contemporary dance to

hip-hop, while rising up to the challenge of remaining in the purest gnaoua lineage. For this twenty-fourth edition, Khalid Sansi is going to meet the most bubbling band of Afro-Cuban music. Considered to be among the most brilliant and recognized Cuban musicians of their generation, El Comité brings together the greatest talents of the young generation of Cuban jazz. The concert promises to be the grooviest of the season. □