

Weekly highlights by L'ECONOMISTE



Majority

Storm warning



■ The PAM criticizes the head of government for his lack of communication

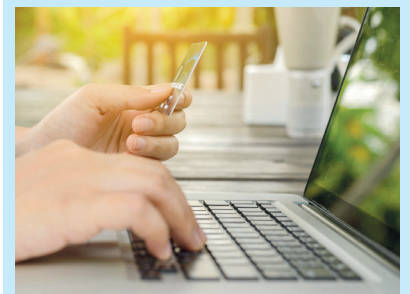
■ A release that looks like taking distance from Akhannouch

■ For now, radio silence by the prime minister and the RNI



CGEM: After resilience, heading for growth

Online payment: How to defend oneself against abuse?



Payment terms: A slight improvement but the plague is still there



The red wave of WAC

EDITORIAL

Reading

Meriem OUDGHIRI

HOW many books do you read? Do you read at all? This is the great existential debate that has existed for years. In the rankings, Moroccans are at the bottom of the scale of the reading barometer. Various reports show this, including that of the Economic, Social, and Environmental Council (CESE) entitled “Promoting reading, urgency and necessity”, which dates from 2019.

In fact, people have never read or written so much, but more on screens, and therefore text messages or tweets. In other words, the zapping culture and the snapshot culture has left literature reeling. To justify the lack of interest for reading books, many reasons are invoked, including the high cost of books. People do not touch books but they do not hesitate to buy the latest smartphone and renew their internet subscription, even if it means taking out a loan! This is too bad when you know all the benefits of reading....

Fortunately, there are key events and dates to remind us that it is still a good thing to read books, such as the International Publishing and Book Fair which opened its doors this Thursday in Rabat, thus offering an opportunity to stroll through the aisles to take a look at the new products offered by publishing houses, bookstores, institutes, and other players. An opportunity to leaf through books, listen to speakers, and forget about your smartphone, text messages, and snapchat for a while.

To read is to have the will to go further, to make your thinking work, and to develop your patience. Did you know that reading generates a certain plasticity of the brain? When one reads, one creates new synapses, that is to say new connections, and therefore one strengthens his or her memory. In the end, books are only good for us. Give it a try ! Books do not need battery and charging. Their autonomy is guaranteed for a long time. A Very, very long time. □

Weekly highlights

CGEM: After resilience, heading for growth

THE first public statement of the presidency of the employers' confederation since its re-election was made last May 16, for a second term (2023-2026). Indeed, if the first mandate (2020-2023) of the Chakib Alj - Mehdi Tazi pair, at the head of the Moroccan employers association (General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises, CGEM), will have been that of resilience to preserve the achievements of the economic fabric in a context marked by strong turbulence (Covid crisis, war in Ukraine, all-out inflation, sluggish economic conditions, and other turbulence), the second term is resolutely that of growth and industrialization with the effective implementation of the Investment Charter. The current mandate is betting on improving the business climate and professional training to anticipate future challenges, changes and economic issues, the development of human capital, inclusion, and the energy transition, among other challenges.

In short: "Unleashing the energies for sustainable and inclusive growth". These are in essence the multiple challenges that the re-elected leaders of the



Chakib Alj, president of the CGEM, and Mehdi Tazi, general vice-president (Ph. F. Alnasser)

employers' federation intend to take up over the next three years.

Invited as guests of Le Club de L'Economiste, Chakib Alj, President of CGEM, and Mehdi Tazi, General Vice-President, unveiled their vision for the coming years, the current and future challenges, the priority areas by 2026, the opportunities, constraints, and limits of the business environment... "Whoever says new mandate, says new challenges. We are called upon to adapt to new trends, improve the business climate, free up capital,

further promote the social and economic inclusion of regions and territories, and prepare and anticipate the economy of tomorrow", said the boss of CGEM. From now on, according to Chakib Alj, the priority consists in consolidating and succeeding in the industrialization of Morocco, improving the business climate and the competitiveness of companies, strengthening SMEs, and promoting the emergence of a strong middle class... It is a long-term work that affects several lines of business. In fact, during the next three

years, the management team of CGEM intends to mobilize even more for the revitalization of industrial activities so as to optimize the attractiveness and competitiveness of companies, and attract national private capital or even SMEs in specialized industries such as the automotive sector, aeronautics, and other sectors.

At the same time, the priority will be to revitalize the ecosystem of service-oriented activities (like what is done in the automotive and aeronautical sectors) both in terms of competitiveness and attractiveness or communication and promotion of companies. "The fact is that we do not communicate enough about services as we do with the aeronautics, the automotive sector, and other sectors", regrets Mehdi Tazi, general vice-president. However, the (services) sector is full of potential and flagships that transcend borders.

In the same vein, the employers' confederation says it is determined to speed up the development and massification of the ecosystem of startups and technology firms capable of raising funds and going beyond borders. □

Amin RBOUB

Online payment: How to defend oneself against abuse?

"DEAR 36 million consumers, stop paying your bills online." This could be the subliminal message from a company to its customers in order to thwart presumed unfair competition. And for good reason, some telecom, water and electricity utilities, as well as private education operators charge payment fees ranging from 3 to 20 Moroccan Dirhams (0.3 to 2 USDs). "Even worse, service providers apply a 1% fee on the amount of the invoice to be paid", specifies the Competition Council in an initial analysis of the market. "It is an abusive and economically unjustified practice. It could distort free competition", warns the presidency of the regulating agency (see L'Economiste No. 6518 of May 18, 2023). A press release was issued to mark the occasion. It could be used as evidence in a possible dispute between consumers and suppliers. The law on consumer protection and the law on freedom of prices and competition do converge. A customer or a consumer association can take legal action. An investigation for anti-competitive practice is also possible.



■ Clear and detailed information

Online payments raise two issues, namely the issue of the right to information and the issue of deception. "A consumer must be clearly informed. His or her invoice must be detailed by mentioning the nature of each amount", indicates lawyer Younes Anibar. The law on consumer protection enshrines a general duty to inform. It consists in "providing the information allowing a rational choice to be made taking into account the needs and means" of consumers,

states Article 3 of this law, a law which consists in paying knowingly.

■ Taking legal action is possible

There is deception if the obligation to inform is violated. Its violation may justify civil proceedings. "Companies exploit consumer ignorance. Consumers pay a surplus without any real consideration. Paying online is not a commercial service", says our judicial source. For the Competition Council, "customers have to pay a surcharge in addition to the amount of the invoice.

However, companies take full advantage of it by significantly reducing their operating and investment costs related to the collection of invoices". The additional costs "do hinder the development of the digitalization of the economy and are at odds with the national digital development strategy", says the press release of the Competition Council dated May 16, 2023.

■ Five years to challenge an invoice or payment

Going to court must be done within a specific legal time limit. "Facts become time-barred beyond 5 years when a merchant is involved in a case". A consumer can therefore avail himself or herself of any damage that is spread over half a decade. He or she can thus claim the reimbursement of undue expenses for this entire period, which could represent a nice jackpot, at least enough money to buy coffee for a month! but on condition of proving the existence of a damage. The proof is free in principle. An invoice, a wire transfer, a receipt of payment can serve as proof. □

Faïçal FAQUIHI

Majority: Storm warning

AZIZ Akhannouch's ears must have been burning when he learned of the content of the press release from the political bureau of the PAM party, his first ally in the government coalition. One of the paragraphs of this document officially calls into question the homogeneity of the majority, a concept very dear to the Head of Government. Moreover, no meeting of the staffs of the three political parties that make up the Executive has been held without the leaders of these parties parading in front of the cameras and the microphones of the press to praise this homogeneous majority.

No matter, today, they are overtaken by the harsh reality. Thus, the political bureau of the PAM made a thunderous public statement. According to the press release, released after its meeting last Wednesday, the political bureau stresses the importance of deepening external communication between the government and citizens, and intensive communication of all ministers with the public opinion in order to curb rumors and fake news. It is also about enabling citizens to enjoy their right to information. In the same vein, the political bureau emphasizes "the importance of internal communication between members of the Government to accelerate the implementation of reform projects". As such, the political bureau of the PAM "invites the Head of Government to ensure that effective internal communication with our ministers is intensified," the statement read. Before drawing conclusions, it is imperative to set the scene. The political bureau of the PAM is made up of the leaders in addition to several



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ministers belonging to this party. The meeting in question was chaired by Secretary General Abdellatif Ouahbi, Minister of Justice.

For the time being, the Prime Minister's office and the RNI party keep silent. With the open letter from the PPS, the party that leads the government has been very responsive. From a political angle, this unexpected declaration can be interpreted as a decision to distance the party from the Head of Government. This practice is

common in Moroccan political history. It consists in having one foot in and the other out, you never know.

One must be prepared for any contingency, especially since this occurs in a context marked by persistent rumors about the advent of a cabinet reshuffle, a change in the government team, just to restart engines that seem to be broken down. In any case, if one follows the logic of this statement made by the PAM party, Aziz Akhannouch would be a team leader who lacks the

resources to instill momentum within the Cabinet. According to a source familiar with the matter, "some ministers consider themselves as second-rate ministers, subcontracted by others". In other terms, some ministers are of the opinion that the Head of Government does not give them the credit and consideration they deserve. Others reproach him for being attentive only to members of the government who belong to his party. □

Mohamed CHAOUI

LA NEWSLETTER

3 FOIS
PAR JOUR

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Weekly highlights

Payment terms

A slight improvement but the plague is still there

THIS is an issue that poisons relations between businesses and constitutes a dark spot for the business world. Payment delays are the cause of business failures, and complicate life for small and medium-sized businesses as well as for very small businesses. The trend may soon reverse once the new law is in place.

In the meantime, the year 2021 has been marked by a decline, even if the level of payment terms remains a concern. The latest statistics delivered by Inforisk show an overall drop in customer payment terms of 10 days, bringing them down from 253 days in 2020 to 243 days in 2021, which corresponds to an 8-month delay, and this is the first time in 10 years that these customer payment terms went down.

These two years, 2020 and 2021, have been exceptional: they are

marked by the repercussions of the Covid-19 crisis to which the Government, through the Economic Watch Committee, has set up an aid system and business loans that are conditional on the payment of suppliers. In any case, 2021 is also marked by a

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Very small enterprises suffer from the balance of power and the dictates of large companies

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The red wave of WAC

“HO-ho Wydad Athletic, ho ho champion of Africa”. Monday, May 29 was synonymous with match day for all Wydadis (supporters of the Wydad Athletic Club). The WAC faced the Moghreb de Tetouan as part of the 26th day of the championship.

Two hours before the meeting, the atmosphere was already very animated and the pressure was rising little by little. More than two hundred meters from the stadium are the first police roadblocks. A red wave surges from all corners of the city and converges on the stadium. 100 meters further, a new dam. For a “small” match, the system put in place is impressive. Families, groups of friends, children... all city dwellers unite to support their favorite team.

In the grandstand, all eyes are riveted on the resplendent “tifos” of the winners. The face of the clown Pennywise, the creepy monster from Stephen King’s novel, ‘Ça’, stares at the players and at the (few) opposing supporters. The message was clear: “Fear us”. And there is reason to fear this supercharged human tide, which passionately devotes a large part of its life to the WAC. This supporters’ stand



located in the Northern part of the stadium catches the eye. It was difficult to concentrate on the lawn, because the supporters’ stands were so mesmerizing.

The call of freedom

A flag of Palestine flies proudly among the ultras. Freedom. This is the watchword that seems to emanate from the fervor of the so-called “Virage Nord” (“North Turn”) voted many times best group of ultras in the world. The chants

are sometimes political, sometimes encouraging, and sometimes mocking towards the opposing team, without forgetting to taunt the rivals of the Raja club even when these are not physically present. It is still the commitment and the convictions of these supporters that are the most impressive.

A stadium is a great agora where people can vent their anger and sadness, before letting their joy burst at the feats of the men in red. “Filled with all the problems of the week, I come to the stadium to forget everything”,

chant the supporters. This is a popular football, which threatens to die out in many countries, and sees its flame rekindled in the burning cauldron of the Mohammed V stadium, the ultimate representative of the city’s social mix.

“La la there, bring home the victory, guys.” No respite for supporters. Drums resound almost ceaselessly during the match, and the sound of the chants is exhilarating. Then a first goal is scored. The stadium ignites. Everyone hugs and the crowd is immersed in a cloud of smoke and red light.

Conclusion, this was a victory by two to zero which keeps Wydad in the title race, a small point behind AS FAR. This battle against Tetouan was only a warm-up. At the end of the match, supporters were already looking forward to the next battle that WAC will have to wage.

The “Champions” song resounded throughout the stadium during the moment of communion between the players and the supporters. The battle to come promises to be grandiose, with a double confrontation against the Egyptians of Al Ahly to seek, “God willing”, a fourth title of winner of the African Champions League. □

Laura HUE & Mathieu OZANNE