



CATALONIA TODAY

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30, 2004

EDITED IN BARCELONA



Portuguese leader chosen as new EU president

NEWS, 5



Saddam Hussein to be handed over to Iraqis today

NEWS, 5

INSIDE

NEWS	2
OPINION	6
BUSINESS.....	7
CULTURE	11
WHAT'S ON.....	13

Record mortgage debt rise

Fears that bubble will burst as homeowners' debts soar to half a billion euros

Homeowners' mortgage debt across the country has risen to half a billion euros, an increase of over 100 million euros over last year, the Spanish Mortgage Association reports. The April rise was the highest in five years. The news fuelled fears that the housing bubble must soon burst, as pre-

dicted last year by the Bank of Spain and the International Monetary Fund, who are aware of precedents in Britain in the late 1980s and in Japan when demand could no longer keep up with prices. The situation is particularly acute in Catalonia where the growth in the building sector out-

stripped general economic growth by 13 per cent, according to a study by the Caixa Catalunya. After Greece, Spain has the highest rate of home ownership in Europe and the younger generation are increasingly inclined to buy, when they can afford to, rather than rent.

Bargain hunters get set - the summer sales start tomorrow

The sales start tomorrow and will continue until the end of August, the legal limit for summer sales, by when goods may be discounted by as much as 50 per cent. Strict rules govern sales, among other things insisting that goods be of normal condition and are not on sale because they are damaged.



More than 5,500 people and 680 vehicles will be on standby in a bid to avoid the disastrous fires of last summer

UN peace officers feared dead in Sierra Leone crash

All 24 people aboard a United Nations helicopter were feared dead last night after it crashed in eastern Sierra Leone. The Russian-built aircraft was transporting members of the UN peacekeeping mission from the capital, Freemantle, when the accident occurred.

Generalitat readies 5,000-strong force to fight summer fires

The Generalitat has approved the Summer Plan 2004 with a priority given to fire prevention. During the unusually hot summer of 2003 thousands of acres were destroyed

by fire, especially in the north of Catalonia, leaving hundreds homeless. Eighty-five look-out posts will be manned and the more than 4,000 members of the emergency services

will be supported by 1,400 volunteers. The government also announced plans to deploy 370 extra members of the medical services over the summer.

CULTURE, 12

Underwater tour of ancient Empúries port



OPINION, 6

Lies and deceit are no substitute for peace

ANTONI SEGURA i MAS

CULTURE, 11

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The Catalan government was caught off guard by last year's rash of forest fires and more than 800 heat-related deaths

Catalan government preparing for problems with summer heat

Summer plan being implemented to deal with health problems and forest fire risk

ROBERT KIMPLETON

Different agencies of the Catalan government are taking measures to avoid getting caught off guard as they were last summer, when unusually high temperatures resulted in a rash of forest fires and more than 800 deaths related to exposure to extreme heat.

The Catalan government has approved the *Pla d'Estiu* (Summer Plan) with the aim of carrying out interdepartmental actions to improve the government's ability deal with fires and the effects of the summer heat on health, as well as citizen security, traffic safety, beach security, water quality.

Most of the last year's heat wave victims were elderly or people who had some medical condition which

made them more susceptible to the heat.

A plan for the prevention of the effects of heat waves on health will be co-ordinated by the Department of Health and Family Welfare. One key element will be the an integrated emergency plan designed to give health professionals special training in dealing with heat-related illnesses. There will be 370 more personnel and 31 more ambulances available for medical transport and the department will distribute 4,000 informative brochures about the effects of heatwaves on the elderly.

In the area of forest fire prevention, the Department of the Interior will increase in the number of personnel and technical resources in-

involved compared with last year. The department reports that a total of more than 5,000 people, 681 vehicles and 24 aircraft will be available.

To guarantee early detection of forest fires, 85 lookout posts will be manned by 170 people. To put out any fires that may start, 4,208 fire-fighting professionals and 1,400 volunteers will be on hand.

A mobile park will house 681 vehicles. There will also be four amphibious aircraft, four helicopters ready to fly on a moment's notice ten helitankers and five observance and firefighting planes. The total extinguishing power will be more than 55,000 litres.

The Department of the Interior is also counting on a more intense co-operation between the emergency,

firefighting, forestry and law enforcement agencies in each local region of Catalonia.

The fire prevention campaign will also be assisted by the Catalan Meteorological Service. This agency will carry out the same duties it does all year long such as distribution of the weather forecast, a 24-hour meteorological watch, forecasts for the sea conditions.

Although there have been several warm nights so far this summer, with temperatures not dipping below 20 degrees, officials say they do not expect Catalonia to experience the extreme temperatures of last year, pointing to the fact that the high temperatures of summer are taking longer to arrive this year compared with last year.

SITGES

Police seize 430 kilos of cocaine

The police have confiscated 430 kilos of cocaine from a yacht in Sitges, near Barcelona. They have also arrested 11 members of an alleged cocaine smuggling group, who were caught with cash worth 1.5 million euros. According to police spokesman, Miguel Angel Vázquez, the alleged smugglers had been detained in San Sebastián, Bilbao, Lleida and Barcelona during an operation started last year in co-operation with the Andorra police.

The police confirmed that the suspects were part of an alleged network used to transport drugs from the Caribbean in ships with which they sailed the coast of the Americas, pretending to carry passengers, but receiving two million euros for each shipment, although on this occasion they had decided to keep a part of the cocaine and distribute it directly. The police said that haul of cocaine taken from the yacht in Sitges, allegedly comes from Columbia, but it was collected near the coast of Barbados, where it had been dumped into the sea from a plane. According to the police two or three members of gang transferred the drug in vehicles to Andorra and Geneva in Switzerland where they deposited the money obtained in small quantities and in different currencies, in a bid to keep the alleged crime secret.

Only in Andorra have the police been able to freeze 14.6 million euros belonging to the alleged suspects but the police have still not calculated the full amount of money deposited in Swiss and Spanish bank accounts. The police confirmed they had arrested the suspected leader of the gang who lives in San Sebastian, saying that they had arrested him in 1986 together with other members of the gang after confiscating 9 kilos of cocaine. The gang's activities allegedly started in 1993, when the suspected leader left prison and he came to police attention after they discovered he had deposited 12 million euros in bank accounts, even though he was only the boss of cruise yacht business.

Police started to follow the suspected leader and his gang after receiving a tip-off from the Andorra police, who were responsible for investigating laundered money in the principality. They discovered his link with three boats that carried out journey's to the Caribbean, and a yacht with an English registration with a name to an 'off-shore' company in Guernsey.

The police said the suspects were all away from Spain last summer and restarted their activities in the last three months of 2003, when the police in Andorra discovered damp smelling bank notes deposited in banks in the principality. In the last few days police confirmed that they had intensified their watch over the group.

Salou installs new underground rubbish collection containers

Salou Town Council put into operation yesterday its first underground rubbish collection containers. The advantage of the new containers, according to the town's Environment and health Manager Montserrat Porter, is that they are less odorous and increase the amount of recycled waste.

A total of 10 container islands, seven of which are in the centre of the city and three in the main tourist area, have been installed. Each collection area is made up of separate containers for organic wastes, paper/cardboard, glass and tins. The

containers will also have a foot lever to make it easier to open the lids when throwing away rubbish.

The installation of these containers has been designed to coincide with the refurbishing of the streets and the development projects such as the PPR-1 residential plan. In this area, seven sets of containers will be installed at a cost of 6,000 euros per container. This first installation will mark a trial phase for this kind of system.

Three more sets of containers could be installed in Via Roma and Ciutat de Reus street.



The town's new underground rubbish containers are designed to be less odorous

All tourists' medical bills must be repaid

Measures part of summer safety campaign

REBECCA WARDEN

The Catalan autonomous government or Generalitat wants to make foreign health authorities foot the bill for all of their tourists' medical costs. The Catalan authorities will be "strict and inflexible" when it comes to recovering these costs and will therefore "charge for all of this expenditure," vice-president of the Generalitat Josep Bargalló said yesterday.

The Generalitat has been tracking the amount it spends on foreign visitor's medical bills for several years now and recognises that although foreign governments are billed for some of this amount, the amount actually recovered is low. The Generalitat spent a total of 5.7 million euros on foreigners' medical bills in 2002. Just over 65 per cent of this was for EU citizens.

However Catalan health minister Marina Geli recently informed central government that the Generalitat gets back far less money from foreign governments than it spends under reciprocal health arrangements.

French, German and British visitors account for the lion's share of foreigners' health bills; 21.2 per cent or 1.2 million euros are used up by the French alone. German tourists take second place, accounting for 13.87 per cent of the budget or 700,158 euros. The British are close behind, accounting for 11.94 per

cent of spending or 687,959 euros.

The new measures Bargalló announced yesterday form part of a special summer plan drawn up by the Catalan autonomous government to look after the country's health during the busiest time of year. It includes a plan of action to ward off the effects of a possible heatwave.

Last summer high temperatures killed a total of 800 people in Catalonia, according to Bargalló. The Generalitat is understandably keen to make sure the mortalities are much lower should the temperatures soar during the summer months.

Coastal resorts and other places popular with tourists will increase their medical staff with the addition of 373 more doctors, nurses and administrative staff to cope with the extra population during the summer. Many of the extra medical staff - 62 doctors, 54 nurses and 42 administrators - will be sent to top tourist destinations on the Costa Daurada such as Cambrils and Salou.

Preventing fires in Catalonia's forests by boosting human and material resources is another priority outlined in the plan. 85 new surveillance points have been set up in forest areas to be manned by 170 people. The fire-fighting forces, currently made up of a total of 4,208 firemen, will be supplemented by



Bagalló is keen for Catalonia to recover all of foreign visitors' medical bills

1,400 extra people during the summer campaign. The Catalan ministry of the environment will provide special 24-hour a day weather reports for the emergency services.

The Generalitat is also aiming to reduce the number of deaths on the roads by setting up 110 permanent control points by roadsides. Radar equipment will be set up to catch

drivers breaking the speed limits, especially in areas with an 80km per hour limit.

The current average speed on Catalan highways is 98km per hour according to Bargalló. This is too high and the aim of this summer's campaign will be "to reduce the average speed by five kilometres per hour," he said.

EDUCATION

Marks on final exams posted

Students who took the university entrance exams (PAU) this year can find out today from 10 a.m. via internet what they got at www.gen-cat.net/dursi, a government webpage for the University Council. Only the test taker may check his or her results, as they will need to enter their PAU registration code. The 25,000 students can also find out their overall grade for secondary school.

WINERY

Parliament urges winery plan

The Agriculture Council in Catalan Parliament voted unanimously yesterday in favour of a bill calling for a plan to be drawn up for the wine sector. The plan is to ensure the viability of all aspects related to the wine industry, such as companies involved in wine-making and bottling.

MUSIC

Summer music on Montserrat

Starting 10 July, the Basilica de Santa Maria will play host to the latest Montserrat summer concert series. It will be set off with a performance by the quartet El Misteri d'Elx. On 6 August the programme continues with the Ensemble Kapsberger, playing music from 17th and 18th century Spain and Italy. The series ends on 3 September with the Janas Ensemble, playing Mediterranean Baroque music.

ITALY

Prodi has a score to settle

The Italian left chose Romano Prodi yesterday to be prime minister. Prodi, who had presided over the European Commission, will head the opposition to wrangle against the Silvio Berlusconi government. This is a first step towards creating a broad opposition, composed of a combination of parties ranging from leftist to moderate, and in the future, the communists and the greens.

ENTERTAINMENT

New member for tv talent team

Josep Maria Mainat has been selected to join the new Global Creative Team. He is the creator of "Operation Triunfo" as well as the manager of production company Gestmusic Endemol.

Hungarian low-cost airline Wizz Air begins flights to Girona-Costa Brava airport

The Hungarian air carrier Wizz Air has started to operate flights from the Girona-Costa Brava airport. The company is offering connections three times per week from Budapest and three more to Katowice, Poland.

Wizz Air, with 20 planes is predicted to be the largest airline in Hungary in 2005.

The company started its flights from Katowice on 19 May and just last week began to offer flights from Budapest. According to figures given by the company, they have operated 246 flights with more than 20,000 passengers in the last few weeks, and claim a 65% occupancy rate on their flights.

The airline's main objective, according to its finance minister is to unite the central and eastern European countries, which consist of a combined market of 70 million peo-



Wizz Air currently has 20 planes and is predicted to become Hungary's largest airline

ple, according to the company's vice president and chief financial officer András Hajdu.

He also said the company expect-

ed much success with its Girona-Costa Brava flights because it is a very attractive destination for Eastern European citizens.

The company currently offers flights from Budapest to London, Brussels, Stockholm, Paris, Girona, Rome and Athens. From Katowice, it has flights to Athens, Girona, Dortmund (Germany), London, Minal, Paris, Rome and Stockholm.

According to Hajdu, the company will soon offer flights from Warsaw to London and from Gdansk (Poland) to London.

Wizz Air started flights from Budapest on 24 June to Athens, London and Girona. The company claims 80% on-time reliability and a total absence of flight cancellations due to technical reasons.

Earlier this month, Wizz Air began its final phase of negotiations to secure 60 million dollars of venture capital from American and European investors. The company sees Poland as its best business opportunity.

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IMMIGRATION

Seasonal migrant workers not finding jobs in Lleida fields

The situation in the Baix Segre, Lleida caused by a massive wave of immigration in search of work on the fruit fields has grown unstable. The number has already reached four hundred, according to police, the majority of them sub-Saharan. Frequently, they arrive only with what they are wearing and soon find themselves in what would be considered here as precarious living conditions. Worst of all, the possibility of them finding work is next to nil, Lleida government official José Flores told *La Vanguardia*. This is not, however, the first time that this has happened, and measures by the Catalan government and fieldworkers unions have done little to get the message across that, once again, in Lleida there will not be work for everyone this year. Many of the seasonal arrivals have already been settled in the area for weeks without finding work. Nowadays farmers plan far in advance, requesting as many workers they need ahead of time, and the fieldworkers union (Unió de Pagesos, UP) facilitates the hiring in the emigrants' country of origin. The UP foresees giving work to over 3,600 temp workers in Lleida for this year's harvest. Over half of them have been hired in Romania, and the rest were either contracted in Colombia or Morocco. This harvest will see a drop in production by 20 to 25 per cent, UP representative Joan Josep Vergé told *La Vanguardia*.



FRANCO PLAQUES

Fatxa symbols begone!

For decades Franco-era symbols throughout Catalonia have continued to irritate barely healed wounds. A community located in Sant Feliu de Llobregat has decided to take action to finally rid themselves of the painful markers. Ciutadania.cat has called on the removal of 67 Franco symbols remaining in the city. Its members put special emphasis on the plaques of the former National Housing Institute placed on subsidised buildings from the fifties, sixties and seventies. The group invokes a bill approved in Council in 2001 saying that Franco plaques should be removed.

LANGUAGE

Petition to Ireland over rejection of Catalan

The president of the association JN Roca i Farreras, Enric Padrosa, sent a letter yesterday with 6,000 signatures to the Irish Consulate demanding that Catalan be recognised in the EU treaty. The petition showed the support of 53 different organisations. Associació JN Roca i Farreras has requested that it be sent to Irish president Mary McAleese, to make her well aware of the "deep dismay" that is felt by Catalans over the refusal to include Catalan as a language of the EU, whose president, Pat Cox, is Irish. Padrosa emphasises the importance of Irish-Catalan solidarity.



DRIVING

Driving licenses to be revoked after twelve strikes

After twelve points against them on the traffic record, drivers will have to go take the exam all over again. Some new rules, already being implemented in other parts of the world, have been added to list such as no driving while chatting on mobile phones or without buckling up. Once both the written and practice parts of the driving test is passed, drivers will be subject to a psychophysical examination and will have to take a driving sensibility course. Only then will drivers gain the four points necessary to obtain a new license.



Bargain hunters eagerly await their big moment — the opening of the Corté Inglés for a winter sale / Mireia Sabartés

“Shop till you drop”: summer sales set to begin 1 July in Catalonia

Consumers who know a few basic ground rules can avoid headaches

ROBERT KIMPLETON

If you find yourself in or near any shopping centres or department stores on 1 July prepare yourself for an onslaught of bargain-hunting shoppers madly dashing from shop to shop looking for the best bargain. If you count yourself amongst those who plan to take advantage of the July-August sales, knowing some of the basic regulations that merchants have to follow might save you an unpleasant surprise or two.

The legal period for summer sales in Catalonia is from 1 July to 31 August. Items which are usually discounted are clothing and footwear and accessories, although you will find a variety of other items on sale from appliance and electronics to sporting equipment. Discounts typically start at about 10% in July and can get as low as 50% in August.

The objective and rationale for summer sales is to sell off all merchandise that was not bought during the regular shopping season.

Seasonal sales are not to be con-

fused with liquidation sales, which occur when a business is closing down and needs to get rid of all stock, or special offers, which might be used to promote a new product.

Summer sales merchandise should be in normal condition and of normal quality. Merchants are not allowed to use summer sales to get rid of damaged or inferior goods.

Goods on sale must have a price tag with both the regular and reduced price clearly visible. Stores must also have enough stock on hand to last throughout the sale period. Also, if a store normally accepts credit card payment for goods they must also accept them during sales without any additional charge.

Clothing items must indicate what materials items are made of as well as washing instructions. Consumers should check that all zips work and that no buttons are missing, and be on the lookout for any other signs that damaged items have been mixed in with regular merchandise.

When buying appliances or electronic goods, check the date of manufacture as a way of ensuring that there will be an adequate supply of spares should the item need repair. Manufacturers are required to make replacements for their goods available 5 years after the date of manufacture, and the store must give and stamp guarantees during sales periods just as during the rest of the year.

Of course, shoppers should keep all receipts and chargeslips to return or exchange defective goods. Merchants have to make exchanges for defective items, but not in other cases unless they have announced otherwise. If a shop accepts returns during the year they must also accept them during sales periods.

Most consumer organisations advise summer shoppers to make a list of what they intend to buy before leaving home so as to avoid impulse buying. It is wise not to buy too much on the first or second day of the sale period.

Catalan Tourism Department plans to create tourism observatory

Barcelona's Department of Commerce, Consumption and Tourism will create a tourism observatory to consolidate all the different data routinely collected from the sector with the eventual objective of devising a tourism strategy for Catalonia. A preliminary report on the new strategy is expected by March 2005.

The director of the department, Isabel Galobardes, has announced that in order to be able to prepare a Tourism Plan for Catalonia, it will be necessary to have all the necessary

data from all the relevant social and academic sectors.

She made this announcement after attending a meeting at the Forum with tourism officials from different Spanish autonomous communities. She commented that between January to May the number of tourists visiting Catalonia increased more than had been predicted. "Not only did we meet our objectives but we also surpassed the expectations of those who were expecting a good season", she said.

On the negative side, she mentioned that there is also a change afoot in the systems of commercialisation of the tourism industry in which travellers wait until the last minute to make reservations, which makes it hard for tourism operators to plan ahead.

In April, however, she had commented to PR Newswire, a news agency, that the presence of discount tour operators such as First Choice could have a positive impact on Catalan tourism.



Portuguese prime minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso / PAULO CARRICO/EPA

EU leaders anoint Portuguese Barroso

Javier Solana to become EU's future first foreign minister

REUTERS, BRUSSELS

European Union leaders were set to anoint Portuguese prime minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso as the next European Commission chief yesterday, as a battle began over the orientation of the new EU executive. Ending a bitter two-week wrangle that pitted supporters and opponents of the US-led war in Iraq and of the federalist and nation-state visions of Europe against each other, they were due in Brussels for a brief special summit to approve a package of key personnel decisions, followed by an informal dinner.

As well as nominating the 48-year-old conservative lawyer to succeed Italy's Romano Prodi for five years, they will reappoint foreign

policy high representative Javier Solana of Spain and designate him as the EU's future first foreign minister. Early Tuesday afternoon, Barroso said he had accepted an offer from member governments to become EU Commission president. German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder made clear that Barroso had not been his first choice, regretting that Britain, Italy and others had blocked pro-integration Belgian prime minister Guy Verhofstadt, a key Iraq war opponent. "I don't go back on the fact that I was for Guy Verhofstadt. But I think that Europe is always about finding compromises," Schroeder told a news conference at a NATO summit in Istanbul. Diplomats said Germa-

ny and France were pushing Barroso hard to appoint a vice-president for economic affairs to promote growth as a counterweight to the strict free-market orientation of the bloc's monetary and competition authorities.

The European Parliament has to endorse the leaders' choice in a vote on July 21 or 22 after Barroso outlines his policies. "We expect Barroso to present his ideas on organising the European Commission tonight. Leaders need to know whom he will appoint before giving him their final support," a senior EU official said. "The Germans are certain to demand, and receive, a powerful portfolio of economic reforms overseer," he said.

US to transfer legal custody of Saddam Hussein to Iraqis

REUTERS, BAGHDAD

The United States military will transfer Saddam Hussein to Iraqi legal custody, but not physical control, today, two days after Iraq formally regained sovereign powers it lost when the dictator was deposed in April 2003. Interim prime minister Iyad Allawi said Tuesday that Saddam, with up to 11 others, would appear before Iraqi judges to be charged Thursday, a day after the legal transfer.

"This government has formally requested the transfer of the most notorious and high profile detainees," he told a news conference. "These people...will face justice before the special Iraqi court created in January to try members of the former regime for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes."

Saddam, accused by Iraqis of ordering the killing and torturing of thousands of their compatriots during 35 years of Baathist rule, has been held as a prisoner of war since US forces found him hiding in a hole near Tikrit in December.

Allawi said the US-led multinational force would keep physical custody of Saddam and the other 11 until Iraq's nascent police force was capable of detaining them securely. The special tribunal would give them a fair and open trial, but it would not start for several months, Allawi said.

Once Saddam is in Iraqi legal custody, he will cease to be a POW. The formal end of US-led occupation Monday also marked the end of international conflict in Iraq. At

that point international law says POWs must be released or charged. International conflict may be over, but there was no let-up in the violence gripping Iraq. Three US Marines were killed and two wounded in eastern Baghdad in a roadside bomb blast that wrecked a Humvee vehicle escorting a convoy carrying engineering equipment.

"I don't know why the terrorists want to kill us. We just want to help Iraqis," said a Marine at the scene. Since the start of the war last year at least 632 US soldiers have been killed in action in Iraq and at least two have been captured by guerrillas. An Arabic television station aired a video tape Monday showing what militants said was the execution of a US soldier.

While uncertainty shrouded his fate, three Turkish hostages walked free after their release by a group led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a suspected al Qaeda ally.

His group had previously threatened to behead the Turks on Tuesday unless their government told companies to stop dealing with US forces in Iraq. Ankara had rejected the demand.

"Jama'at al-Tawhid and Jihad announces the release of the Turkish hostages for the sake of Muslims in Turkey and their demonstrations against (US president George W.) Bush," a masked man said on a video tape aired by Arabic Al Jazeera TV. A three-day visit by Bush to Turkey for a NATO summit has been met by widespread protests against his policies in Iraq.

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PLATFORM

ANTONISEGURA i MAS

Lies and deceit are no substitute for peace

The investigation into the identification process used for the victims of Yakolev-2 has clearly revealed the anti-democratic attitude of a government - Aznar's government, especially Aznar himself and Trillo, pictured - which scorn on public opinion and their obligation to provide any explanations to parliament.

"Let the dead rest in peace!" This was the blunt response that José María Aznar gave last March in answer to a question about the doubts that had arisen over the identification of the Yakolev-42 victims. During this same meeting - a press conference with Óscar Berger, the president of Guatemala - Aznar went on to strongly criticise the PSOE, claiming that "elections can justify many things, but there is one thing that I believe to be unjustifiable, and that is preventing the dead from resting in peace. Please, let the dead rest in peace."

At the height of the pre-electoral frenzy, the then-president chose to ignore the fact that the doubts and misgivings over how the transport and identification of the victims had been managed, as well as the investigation into the causes of the accident, were not just an electoral manoeuvre on the part of the Socialists, they were actually demands from the victims' families. Bloated with arrogance and scorn, Aznar also added (referring once again to the PSOE), "certain people are bent on stirring up the



dead, while other people are talking about the future of Spain".

Fortunately, this future has now become the past, and never came to be a reality, though the consequences of the poor administration and bad government of Aznar's party still represent a dead weight which we must get rid of as soon as possible. The re-checking (using DNA tests) of the original identification process of the bodies (mistakes had been made with 22 out of 39 corpses), as well as the way the government tried to cover up the errors that had taken place in the operation to bring back the Spanish troops from Afghanistan all serve to emphasise the mean-spiritedness and sheer lack of humanity of these politicians. They did not consider that they were under

any obligation to provide explanations for their actions, neither to parliament, nor to the families of the victims. They were the power and they were always right. That was the way they always behaved, the way they dealt with all the crises of recent years: mad cow disease, "Bosnia syndrome", the Prestige disaster, the isle of Perejil and the government's support for the war in Iraq. And, last but not least, the manipulation of information with respect to the brutal massacre of 11 March in Madrid.

In contradiction to Aznar's words regarding letting the dead rest in peace, the fact is that the Aznar administration has always used victims for electoral and party political purposes, whether they were the victims of Eta's terrorism or those of Yako-

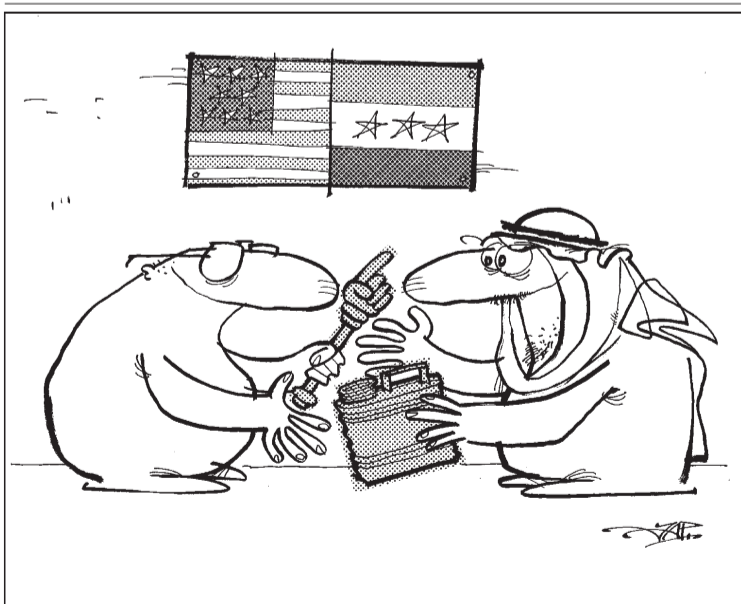
lev-42. On one hand they would invent an argument by which Eta and democratic Basque nationalism were tarred with the same brush, while on the other they tried to silence the reasonable demands of the victims' families with patriotic speeches.

Aznar's was a government which thought that it was destined to perpetuate itself indefinitely and which, therefore, did not hesitate to give its support to an illegal war and occupation and to ignore the majority opinion of Spanish citizens. Purely from a need for democratic hygiene, as well as a desire to repair the harm caused to the victims and their families, we simply cannot leave the dead to rest in peace, as long as the lying remains unmasked.

There are still too many unanswered questions for us to simply turn the page: what were the real reasons for Spain's support for the Iraq war? What were the members of CNI doing in Iraq, before the Spanish military forces had even arrived on their humanitarian mission? How, why and who really made the decisions in the mismanaged Prestige crisis? What was the so-called "Bosnia syndrome" in fact? What were the true reasons that led to the diplomatic crisis with Morocco, and which caused such an over-the-top response by Spain to the occupation of Perejil by the Moroccan police?

Antoni Segura i Mas is professor of contemporary history at the University of Barcelona

THE STING BY JAP



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONGRATULATIONS

Sir, Having just visited Barcelona for the sixth time over the last few years, we found it a refreshing change to see your newspaper on the stands. We were very impressed with your first two weeks' publications. In fact we bought some issues back to the UK as mementoes and to show our friends. The content was, we found, well presented and very informative and we wish you continued success in your venture.

We don't know whether it is your intention or not, but as you are an English publication in Barcelona, if as well as the comprehensive "What's on in and around Bcn", you might consider offering the occa-

sional tips for the new visitor to the city. As I have said our visit was not our first but we were amazed at the amount of people who were conned by the tic tack toe villains on La Rambla, both old and young, just as an example.

We were also interested in your article about the Forum, it fact it was this (the Forum) that sealed our decision to visit again this year. We have been in receipt of regular updates since last year on the progress that was being made on the Forum via email. We were in Bcn last November and were intrigued at the building progress at that time. We immediately purchased four days tickets on our arrival this year.

Sadly we only used three days'

worth. Actually one full day and two four-hour sessions. We felt that while the whole concept was in itself very good, the Warriors of Xian were absolutely awesome. The actual on-site event information for the overseas visitor very poor. We felt that some events could be repeated more often. It was more by luck than judgment that we actually caught some events at all. Also we were surprised at the lack of advertising in the UK press, as it is an international and multicultural event we didn't, see any at all. Some other visitors in our Hotel from the UK and New Zealand hadn't even heard of it.

Trevor Machin, Stephen Brooke
Co Durham



CATALONIATODAY

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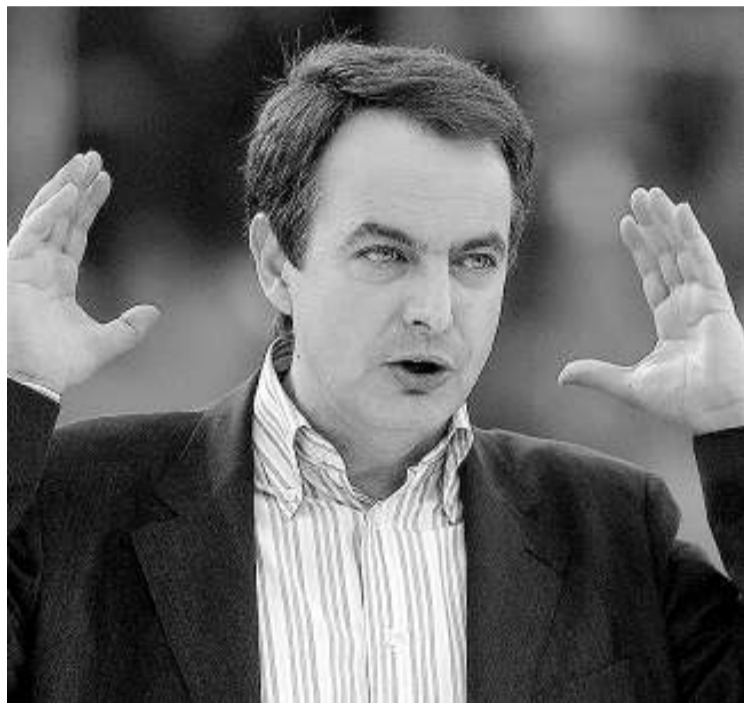
Inflation jumps again to 3.5% and reaches a new yearly high in Spain

The annual rate of inflation has risen to a new high as economic challenges for Spain intensify

RICHARD MCCRANN

Inflation in Spain has risen to 3.5% according to the country's National Statistical Institute (INE). According to the INE it has gone up by one tenth of a percentage point. During the first three months of this year inflation stood at 2.1% but it started to go up in April due to increases in petrol prices brought about by factors such as the threat to oil pipelines in Iraq. The rise in inflation as measured by the consumer price index in Spain, was predicted due to the combination in the rise in the prices of oil and gas in the first half of the year and their strong fall in the last financial year after the invasion of Iraq. However, in May this year the rate of inflation rose by nearly one per cent to reach 3.4%, which represents a monthly change from April to May of 0.6%.

In addition to controlling inflation, the Spanish prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, faces many tough economic challenges. He appears to have inherited a healthy economy but a big problem he confronts is the demand for housing, which is an important aspect of economic growth. Last year Spain started to build 700,000 homes, four times as many as Britain. But prices for new Spanish houses rose by



The prime minister must tackle many economic problems to modernise the country

18.5% and for existing ones by 16.7%. The housing boom shows no sign of slowing down but for many ordinary Spanish couples they cannot afford to buy their own property due to the high prices, and many workers have to refuse jobs that involve moving house, as they simply

do not have the income to buy property. Coupled with this is the fact that many households are in debt, as nearly half of their income goes on housing debt.

The tax system is due for reform as evasion is widespread, and the black economy accounts for one

fifth of gross domestic product (GDP). The government is also committed to more social spending, which has been falling as a share of the GDP since 1994, and at 20%, is below the EU-15 average of 27.5%, more police and other costly projects such as linking Barcelona with the high speed train project. Zapatero faces a real headache with the budget, which is expected to be in deficit this year by 0.9% of the GDP.

The Spanish government also has to tackle other issues of prices, productivity and pensions. Price inflation is reducing the competitiveness of Spain's exports, particularly in Europe. However, Zapatero will find it difficult to hold down prices as this might mean cutting wage costs through labour-market reforms. This might mean taking on the unions, but so far the government has shown no signs towards this, he has just announced an increase in the minimum wage of 6.6%. Productivity in Spain will mean boosting research and development and there is an urgent need to change the pension system, to bring retired people's pensions into line with their contributions, and to slow the growth of pension spending after 2015-20. More people will live longer adding pressure.

World famous organic wine makers expand business to open new 2 million euro facilities

For the last 25 years, Penedes wine-growers, Albet i Noya, have been leaders in the field of ecological wine production in Spain. Agriculture minister, Antoni Siurana visited them this week for a private viewing of their new facilities worth 2 million euros.

As pioneers in the Spanish ecological wine growing sector, Albet i Noya's prize-winning wines have long received international acclaim. In fact, they are recognised abroad more than in Spain with only 5% of their overall production being consumed in Catalonia and a further 5% in the rest of Spain. The other 90% is consumed by customers from twenty countries. Josep M^a Albet explains that ecological products in general receive a poor reception in Spain and adds, "The world is large and exporting is easy, and we have help. Also in Spain we are criticised for labelling in Catalan, while

abroad we are considered original. In the end, though, what matters is the quality of the wine."

In 2003 Albet i Noya produced a million bottles of wine, 200,000 more than two years ago. With most of this leaving the country, the company wish to increase exports even more, in particular targeting Germany, Switzerland, the UK, the USA, Japan and France. Still, production will be kept to a million bottles despite the firm having the capacity to produce more.

Their new facilities are to be inaugurated next Sunday and consist of warehouse, a cellar for 1,200 casks and a bottling plant. This 2 million euro investment is to allow them to match the growing demand, which has even forced the company to rent extra storage space. Besides this, in September for the first time they will harvest a new 30 hectare plot called Can Milà, which is destined to pro-

duce red wines.

On a less positive note, in his visit to Albet i Noya this week the Agriculture Minister, Antoni Siurana, spoke about the problems in the wine business, calling for the wine sector of the Penedès to, "discuss and analyse the causes of surpluses and the low price of grapes." Siurana justified his demand for the sector to agree on a pricing policy, saying, "the profitability of grapes is fundamental for the whole chain of production."

Albet i Noya has pioneered the organic winemaking and instead of using chemical fertilisers, the vineyards are planted in winter with a variety of grasses which are ploughed back into the soil in the Spring. After a number of years without excessive nitrogen inputs into the soil, the vines themselves become more resistant to many of the diseases that forced overproduction causes.

Throughout the year, the treatments are reduced to the use of copper hydroxide and sulphur dusting, that is more healthy for the environment.

Internationally renowned wine critic, Robert Parker, whose opinions can influence whole markets of consumers, has published a report on the wines and cava of Spain, which he refers to as, "a sleeping giant that has begun to awaken."

Among the 19 Penedès wines he analyses, at the head of the list is the red Sot Lefric 2001 with a score of 93 points out of 100. This wine of merely 5000 bottles is the only product of the tiny wine cellar from Vilafranca, Alemany i Corrió, which already received Parker's blessing for their 1999 vintage. The red wines, Absis i Dominio Cusiné 1790 of Parés Baltà and Petrea 2000 of Mas Comtal were both awarded 90 points by the American critic.

WINE

Bordeaux goes into the red

France's famous wine producing region, Bordeaux, is to cut back on sales to cope with competition from abroad and slump in domestic consumption. The Bordeaux Wine Council, which includes legendary names such as Chateau Latour, Chateau Margaux and Chateau Haut Brion, had agreed to limit sales from this season's harvest to 5000 litres per hectare. A 900-litre barrel now sells at 710 euros compared to 1,500 euros in the late 1990's. French domestic wine consumption is down and export sales are in steep decline, unable to compete against new world wine. "The collapse in price of some Bordeaux wines has reached an unacceptable level that threatens the viability of our vineyards, the unity of our industry," said Jean Louis Trocard, from the Bordeaux Wine Council. The region has also seen the wholesale price of a standard red collapse by almost half in the last three years, to a point where wine making can be profitable.

FAST FOOD

McDonald's sales jump

Spanish sales of fast food outlet, McDonald's, went up by 5.7% during the first three months of this year to reach 175 million euros. Last year the company exceeded sales of 554 million euros, a 9.4% increase on the previous year. According to a company spokesman the increasing sales is the result of a restructure to many areas of the company including marketing, advertising, promotions and design as well as the launch of new products to meet new tastes in the consumer market. During 2003 the company invested 14 million euros and opened 12 restaurants, creating 600 new jobs. "It is important that the restaurants have good locations, space and specifications, with a special emphasis on their profitability," said Philippe Walch, president of McDonald's Spain. The company reckon the launch of the salad's plus campaign last May helped sales.

MEDIA

Free paper forces share rise

Shares in Spanish media group Recoltes climbed over four per cent after the company said it was considering launching a free newspaper. "We are studying launching a free newspaper, but no definitive decision has been taken," says a company spokesman. Shares rose by 4.4% to 5.7 euros as a response to the news. The company is owned by British media group Pearson, also publishes the popular sports daily Marca. The free newspaper would be launched at the beginning of September it got the go-ahead. "They have done their homework, and a business plan already exists," a source close to the company said.

Homeowners in Spain owe half a billion euros in mortgage loans

Catalonia is at higher risk than other communities of its housing bubble bursting

JOAN OLLER

Homeowners in Spain now owe the banks more than half a billion euros on their mortgages, an increase of over a hundred million on last year, according to the Spanish Mortgage Association (AHE). The rise in the mortgage balance for April of 9,429 million euros is the highest since 1989 and represents a quarter increase over the same month in 2003. The AHE reported that April 2004 was "higher than that of other years, despite this month coinciding with Easter."

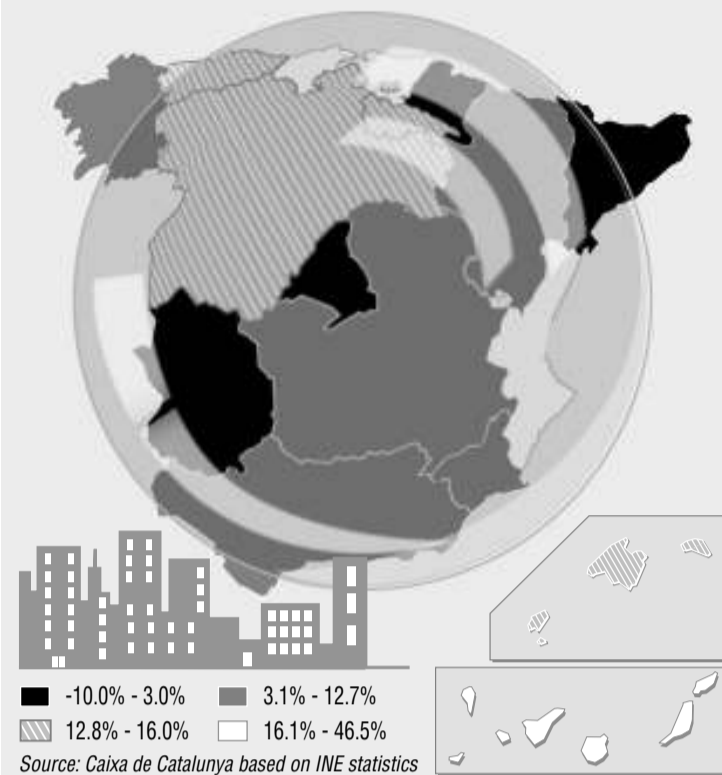
In terms of mortgages, in April the financial bodies who are owed the most are the savings banks (249,053 million euros), followed by the banks (180,084 million). The gap between them continues to narrow with banks seeing a 23.9 per cent rise in April compared with 20.8 per cent for savings banks. Co-operative credit firms and loan companies registered balances of 4,718 and 1,341 respectively. Still, the largest rise in the growth rate of the mortgage balance in the last two

months was for loan companies, while the co-operatives saw the lowest increase of 20.2 per cent.

Recent debate in both mainstream and specialist media has increased with more attention being paid to the relationship between real estate prices and the wider economy. Fears that the bubble will one day burst have been expressed by official organisations including the Bank of Spain and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Precedents already exist in countries like the UK and Japan. In Catalonia, the relation between the housing construction boom and the economy is clear. Figures for the period of 1995-2002 show that while construction rose by 24.6 per cent, the economy paralleled that climb at 21.4 per cent. When compared to Spain — where building and the economy grew by 38.1 and 25.2 per cent respectively — Catalonia's growth was nearly 13 points ahead, according to a study by Caixa Catalunya. This is where the highly disputed concept of the *bombolla immo-*

PRE-TAX VALUE OF BUILDING SECTOR 1995-2002



biliària, or the "housing bubble", comes into effect, all the more relevant in Catalonia than in other communities such as the Canaries, Cantabria or Valencia. In a report published in October 2003, the Bank of Spain warned that prices for new homes had risen beyond what could be considered a "balanced level".

Spain has a longer homeownership tradition than Britain, Germany or France, where people tend to rent

more than buy. When stock markets around Europe collapsed, few in Spain suffered huge losses in their investment portfolios. Spaniards avoided the worst of the fallout by tucking their euros into tangible assets — mainly real estate — rather than buying equities. And now the 70s generation have come of age and begun to buy houses. Top economists are fearing the worst as the market could be more overvalued than ever.

COURT BATTLE

Naked Barbie art off the hook

In a ruling that ended a five-year court case, judge Ronald Lew ordered toymaker Mattel to pay \$1.8 million in legal costs after throwing out a copyright infringement suit filed by the company against a photographer who posed Barbie dolls naked in suggestive positions in or around household appliances. "I thought the pictures needed something that really said *crass consumerism*, and to me that's Barbie," Tom Forsythe, an artist and photographer, told *The New York Times*. Forsythe exhibited such crassness in his show *Barbie's power as a beauty myth* and sold several thousand photos.

UK SHOPPERS

Debt nearly 1 trillion pounds

Money owed on cards, mortgages, loans and overdrafts by British consumers rose by 10.2 billion pounds in May, according to the Bank of England. The total that consumers now owe is 993 billion pounds, just short of the one trillion milestone. The historically high level of UK household debt may present "considerable challenges" to UK financial stability, the bank warned. Credit card spending and personal loans sped up to an all time high during May, rising by over 1.5 billion pounds, up from 1.2 billion in April. The data was seen as "ambiguous" by top economists such as James Carrick at ABN Amro, saying mortgage borrowers would have a month's reprieve before the next rise.



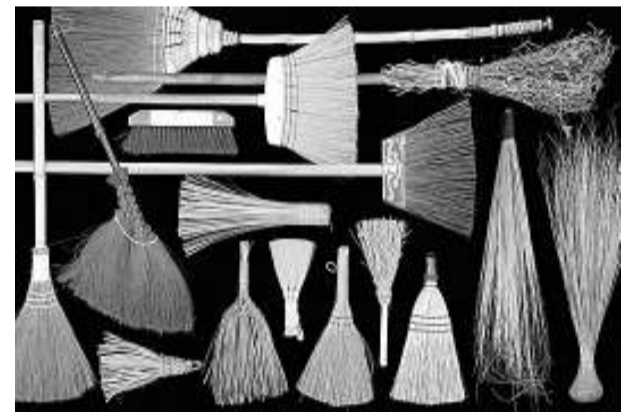
WHY? WHEN? WHERE?

THE ANSWER TO ALL YOUR QUESTIONS

CATALONIA TODAY

THE FIRST CATALAN NEWSPAPER IN ENGLISH





Above, exhibition visitors observe objects from the exhibition. To the right, objects such as stools, aphrodisiacs, brooms and kitchen utensils / ANDREU PUIG

The universal nature of kitchen utensils

Exhibition of more than 1,000 objects shows how cultures adapt to their surroundings to meet their basic needs

XAVIERAGUILAR

"This is not the biggest of the Fòrum's exhibitions but it is one of the most genuine," said Juli Capella, president of the FAD (*Foment de les Arts Decoratives*), talking before the opening of their new exhibiton, *Igualment diferents*.

The exhibition, that carries the subtitle, *Everyday Objects from around the World*, attempts to encourage a reflection on how we meet our needs with the diversity of implements and materials we have to hand. "Unlike others we have done

before, this exhibition is not only for architects and designers. It is for the wider public and we want to be cultural agitators and make it clear that we have to choose diversity," said Capella.

More than a thousand objects are exhibited in seven large areas, all representing basic needs - feeding oneself, washing oneself, protecting oneself, reproducing, relaxing, communicating and the world of work. Apart from their function, what the objects that make up each segment of the exhibition have in

common is that they have all been acquired in different cities and villages around the world in markets and shops frequented by the native populations. This guarantees that the teapots, sheets, mousetraps, aphrodisiacs, toys and newspapers, to name a few examples, are all presently used in countries such as Canada, the USA, Mexico, Brasil, Morocco, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, India, China, Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand and Chile.

"It's been hard work analysing and selecting the pieces," said Ca-

pella, "but this is no eulogy for the Third World." The FAD president went on to say that *Igualment diferents*, "is the FAD's contribution to the Fòrum promoting the spirit of peace, multiculturalism and dialogue, even if there are differences of opinion about how to put those things into practice."

With a budget of 240,000 euros, funded equally by the FAD and the Fòrum, many of the exhibits are worth little more than a euro. The vast majority of the operating budget has gone towards transporting

the objects.

Exhibition representative, Uli Marchsteiner, was charged with selecting the objects and has travelled the world, visiting thirteen countries, where Leo Schatzl also made a video and photographic record.

The section about food brings together the most objects. The image of the spoon collection used for the advertising poster shows an abundance of sizes and colours. However, the most disturbing are forks that were used by natives of Fiji for cannibalistic rituals.

Empúries launches first underwater archaeological tour

An archaeologist will take swimmers on a guided tour floating above the Roman port

DANICHICANO

Fancy trying your hand at cultural diving? The Archaeology Museum of Catalonia (CASC) is pioneering this new activity by offering visitors the chance to go on a subaquatic tour of the old Roman port of Empúries.

The remains now lie totally submerged just off the coast in front of the archaeological site onland. The site is actually two sites; the Greek settlement Emporion and the Roman city Emporiae that replaced it. The activity has been called 'a dive into the past' and participants will be taken on a guided underwater tour of Empúries during which they will be swimming along the sea's surface.

The remains of the Roman port of Empúries were discovered in 1996, thanks to research undertaken by the Catalonia Subaquatic Archaeology Centre. The port was once the point of entry to the Iberian peninsula for a number of classical cultures.

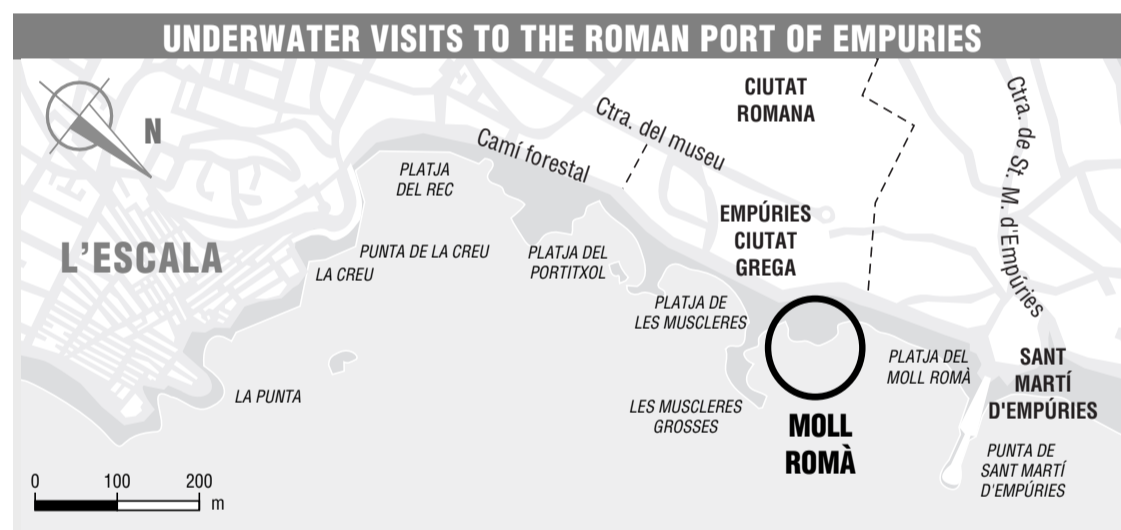
This discovery led experts to reinterpret their understanding of the old city; the submerged port is made up of 350 stone blocks which were found less than 200 metres from the coast in front of the Greek city. They occupy an area of 50 square metres and date back to the early 1st or late 2nd century BC.

The idea of providing underwater tours was first hatched in the year 2000, - the first and only one that exists in our country - to allow the public to explore this impressive submarine archaeological site. The CASC, the Museum of Catalonia-Empúries and Arqueolític, the company running the tour, are joint promoters of the scheme which begins from next Thursday July 1 until 31 August (open 11 am - 7 pm).

Visitors will be taken on their gui-



What remains of the Roman city of Empúries. The Roman port lies some fifty metres off the coast



ded tour by an archaeologist and they will be able to look around underwater Empúries as they swim along the sea's surface within an area that has been designated as a swimming area by l'Escala town council.

Visitors will not need to swim more than 50 metres from the beach to see the remains and will not be required to dive underwater.

All swimmers will be provided with goggles, snorkels and life jack-

ets. Then they will be given a short talk on the tour and how it came about, as well as an introduction to subaquatic archaeology and the port remains. The visitors can then take to the water and begin the tour.

ART

Finnish police raid Dalí show

Helsinki police shut down an exhibition on Dalí on Monday after complaints that some exhibits are not genuine. The police were tipped off by art collectors who had bought pieces only to discover they were fakes. The authorities have confiscated etchings, woodcuts, sculptures and pictures which are now being examined by experts. All 400 exhibits will now be looked at and, if they are found to be forgeries, criminal charges may be pressed. The show is to mark the centenary of the Catalan artist's birth.

FLAMENCO

Son of Camarón makes debut

Luis Monje, oldest son of legendary flamenco singer Camarón de la Isla, has formed a group *De Buena Rama* which has brought out its first recording *De buena rama*. The group, which includes Monje's cousin Rodo and brother-in-law José Heredia *Nene*, will combine a note of nostalgia with the up-to-the minute style of flamenco fusion. The first album includes vocals by Niña Pastori is produced by J. Jiménez *Chabolí*, son of one of original Falmenco pop band *Los Chichos*.

TELEVISION

BBC maps out digital future

British broadcaster the BBC has published its blueprint for a digital future, including expanded digital distribution and a renewed commitment to making sure the viewing public gets value for money for the \$5.4 billion it pays in licence fees every year. The corporation also pledged to pay more attention to current affairs and less to ratings. Commentators view the timing of the 135-page document as an attempt to rebuild its reputation after one of the worst crises in its history caused by the Kelly enquiry.

VANDALISM

Vandal attacks Venice art

An unknown attacker has mutilated statues and bas-reliefs in Venice in four incidents over the past few days. A statue of Saint Mark and a second one of Saint Francis by the 17th century artist Girolamo Campagna, situated on the outside of a church on Guidecca island, were the first to be attacked. The Italian police believe the man being called "the madman with the hammer" is either unbalanced or bears a grudge against symbols of Christianity. The attacker was spotted, hammer in hand by Italian tourists, at the scene of one of the attacks, but escaped before the police arrived.

FILM

Cast changes for Woody Allen

Scarlett Johansson, co-star of *Lost in Translation*, will join the cast of Woody Allen's 36th film, replacing Kate Winslett who dropped out last Friday. Winslett reportedly wanted to spend more time with her family. Johansson joins Emily Mortimer and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers on the untitled feature, due to begin production shortly at London's Ealing studios. As per usual, Allen is keeping the story under wraps.

Diversity comes home to roost in the Raval

MICHAEL BUNN

Anyone interested in art and diversity will be fascinated by Quorum, a new exhibition just opened at La Capella on Carrer Hospital, 56. It aims to provide "a view from the street of the diverse mix that currently exists in Barcelona, especially in the Raval," says exhibition curator Rosa Pera.

The exhibits use a wide range of styles and approaches, but what they all have in common is the desire to encourage local residents to take part in the debate on their surroundings. A 28-minute video by Iban del Campo and Elena Marín features Mohammed Ramzan, a Pakistani who came to Barcelona 14 years ago. It shows him at work lug-



Artists invite immigrants to engage in the debate on their surroundings

ging gas bottles through the streets and talking about his life and work as an immigrant in Barcelona.

Binary relations, a video installa-

tion by Argentinean Emiliano Mora Lewis, consists of quirky interviews with couples from different countries on how they met and fell in love

and how they have dealt with their cultural differences. Each couple is presented as a separate world but, as Mora says, there can be no doubt that "love is an important factor in achieving integration."

The speaking photo by Colombian Consuelo Bautista, features black and white portraits taken during a one-month period in Carrer Hospital, the same street in which the exhibition is being held. But this is no ordinary exhibit - as visitors wander from photo to photo, they trigger sensors which emit the street sounds Bautista recorded while taking the photographs.

Entry to Quorum is free and extra activities, including poetry, debates and video screenings, are planned.

CT BACK

WEATHER

CROSSWORD

Generally hot and sunny

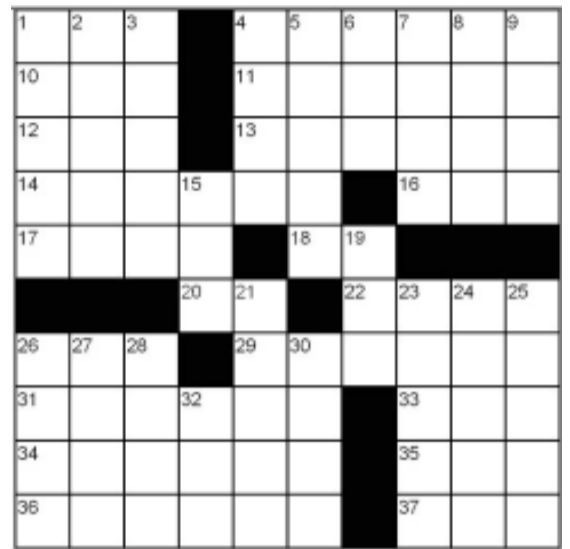
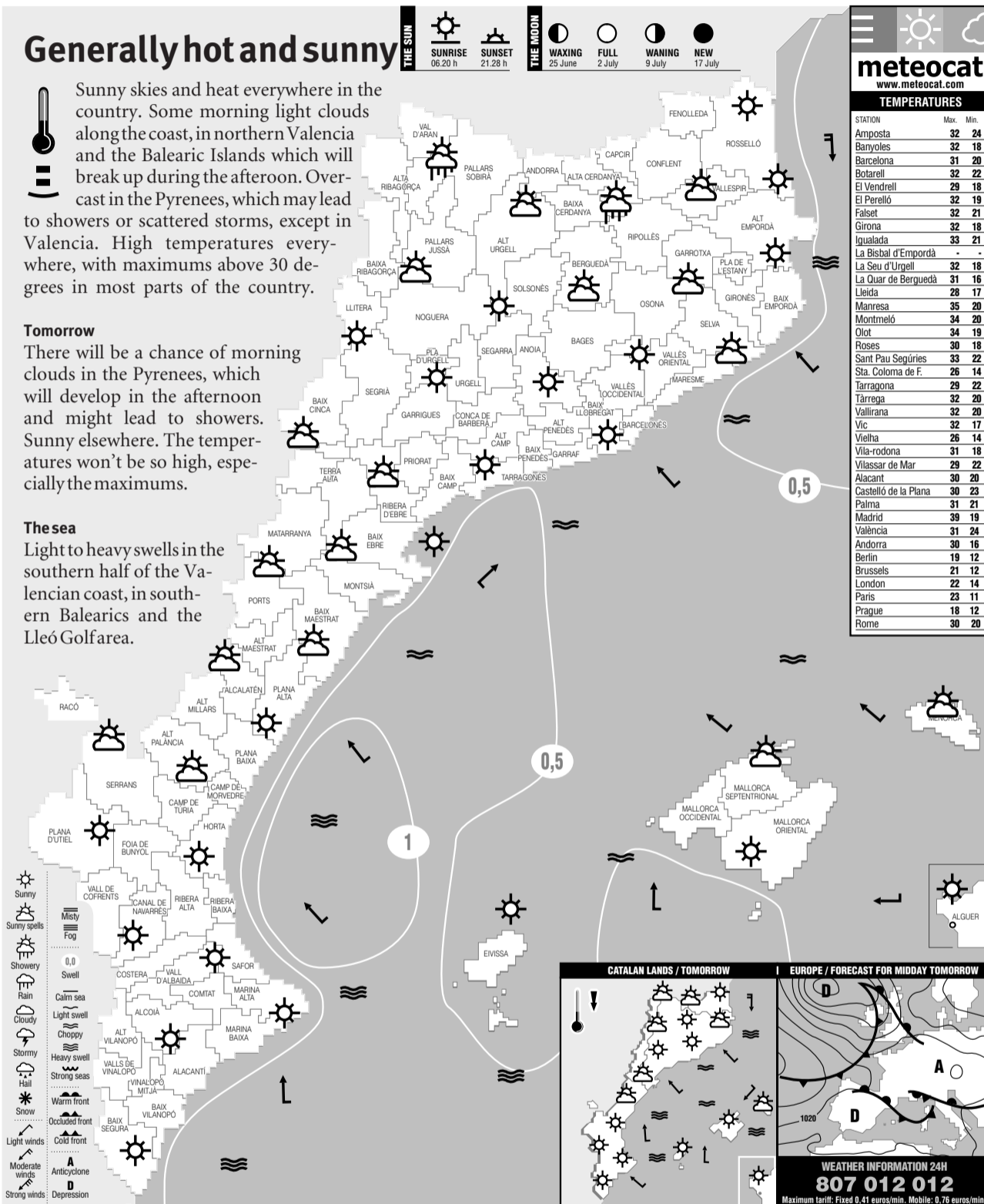
Sunny skies and heat everywhere in the country. Some morning light clouds along the coast, in northern Valencia and the Balearic Islands which will break up during the afternoon. Overcast in the Pyrenees, which may lead to showers or scattered storms, except in Valencia. High temperatures everywhere, with maximums above 30 degrees in most parts of the country.

Tomorrow

There will be a chance of morning clouds in the Pyrenees, which will develop in the afternoon and might lead to showers. Sunny elsewhere. The temperatures won't be so high, especially the maximums.

The sea

Light to heavy swells in the southern half of the Valencian coast, in southern Balearics and the Lleó Golfarea.



ACROSS

1.Beg. 4.Snatch. 10.Cow Speak. 11.Saying. 12.Epoch. 13.Fabric. 14.Credd. 16.Skit. 17.Arabian. 18.Frequency modulation. 20.Montana (abbr.). 22.Thoughtless. 26.Cheat. 29.Without difficulty. 31.Covered. 33.Fawn's mom. 34.Lizard. 35.Long Time. 36.One who dies for a cause. 37.Hotel.

DOWN

1.Very tiny animal. 2.Madder. 3.Australian bear. 4.Peak. 5.Fake it. 6.Hades. 7.Ca. University. 8.Fashionable. 9.Teepee. 15.Computer makers. 19.Mr.'s wife. 21.Small amount. 23.Assistants. 24.Sailing vessel. 25.Laughing dog. 26.Grisly. 27.Meditation. 28.Serve a drink. 30.6th month (Jewish calendar). 32.Fleshy.

ANSWERS

ACROSS

1.Ask. 4.Abduct. 10.Moo. 11.Cliche. 12.Era. 13.Muslin. 14.Belief. 16.Act. 17.Arab. 18.Fm. 20.Mt. 22.Rash. 26.Gyp. 29.Easily. 31.Roofed. 33.Doe. 34.Iguana. 35.Eon. 36.Martyr. 37.Spa.

DOWN

1.Ameba. 2.Sorea. 3.Koala. 4.Acme. 5.Bluff. 6.Dis. 7.Ucla. 8.Chic. 9.Tent. 15.lbm. 19.Mrs. 21.Teeny. 23.Aides. 24.Sloop. 25.Hyena. 26.Grim. 27.Yoga. 28.Pour. 30.Adar. 32.Fat.

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