

Avalanche risk on Costa Brava beaches

The Catalan government sent out notices to 18 cities

Catalonia's coastline has just got a little more *brava*. Holidaymakers and local residents along Catalonia's coastline should beware of falling rock. Approximately 20 of the coves and beaches along the Costa Brava run the risk of avalanches, the Catalan government has warned. Throughout the counties of Alt and Baix Empordà, municipalities have been officially alerted by the general minister of architecture and housing that their coastline is in danger.

The advisory falls particularly close to home in parts such as La Cala del Senyor Ramon, where two bathers were killed by the crumbling cliffs last summer. Half a dozen rocks fell from the cove's cliffs in the municipality of Santa Cristina d'Aro, taking two lives - one was a local politician, Joaquim Turró i Roselló - and seriously injuring others. The environmental minister of the area, Ramon Vancells, has announced that the cove will be reopened to the public at the end of June.

The official advisory was sent to 18 municipalities: Portbou, Colera, Llançà, el Port de la Selva, Cadaqués, Roses, L'Escala, Torroella de Montgrí, Begur, Palafrugell, Palamós, Calonge, Castell-Platja d'Aro, Tossa de Mar, Lloret de Mar and Blanes. In response, the government officials in Girona have created signs to be posted on those beaches and coves where avalanches could occur. One safety measure will be to prohibit beach bars from setting up at the foot of the cliffs.

In Tossa de Mar, the city council



La cala del Senyor Ramon reopens after last year's accident

has done a geological study on its two beaches, Codolar and Porta Pi, which were listed in the official report as dangerous areas. In Blanes, Capellans beach will be marked as well. Roses received the notice on Friday and has not yet responded.

In Palafrugell, a popular spot for both foreign and Catalan holidaymakers, the Golfet beach will be

closed. Signs have been posted on El Cau, Llis, Aigua Dolça and Cala Marqués. The measure may not be so happily received by beach-goers in Cadaqués where Sa Costa was also included in the list of hazardous beaches. "We have found that there are people sunbathing, even on the very rocks that crumbled down," the city's mayor says.

MEDIA

Catalan newspaper goes bankrupt

The owners of *Avui*, the first daily newspaper to be published in Catalan, has filed for bankruptcy, the newspaper announced yesterday. Amongst the newspaper's financial problems are the sizeable debts it has with the Spanish Tax Ministry and the Social Security Administration. In May, the Catalan government approved a special subsidy of two million euros to meet immediate financial needs and give the newspaper time to find investors willing to take on the ownership of the business. One of the conditions of the subsidy was that because of its extraordinary nature it would only be granted once and that the newspaper would have until 15 July to obtain external investors.

financially and Nevertheless, the newspaper claims it will continue to publish "in a normal manner".

The newspaper's editor, Victor Sanchez, in a Radio interview expressed the wish that the new management of the newspaper would respect the ideals that the paper currently has.

According to an editorial published on the first page of yesterday's edition of the newspaper, the decision to file "was not easy, but it was the only responsible decision that we could make that could guarantee the survival of this newspaper", Sanchez says.

The newspaper is soon expected to propose an agreement that will be satisfactory to its creditors and at the same time afford the newspaper more financial stability than it has had in the past. "We think that a newspaper written in Catalan that operates independently and without interference is viable. *Avui*'s current financial situation should allow the paper to remain viable", Sanchez says. *Avui* made history in 1976, when it became the first daily published in Catalan after more than 40 years of prohibition under the Franco regime. In 1995 it became the first Spanish newspaper to publish on the internet.

HEALTH

Aids virus not under control

Contrary to scientific advancements, Catalan health officials say the AIDS epidemic is far from under control. The virus continues to threaten the population, moving increasingly beyond groups previously considered at risk. With this underlying message, the department of health recently made public its latest report on AIDS in Catalonia. The study found that 47 per cent of Catalan carriers contracted HIV through heterosexual intercourse, and 76 per cent are women, younger and younger in age.

Health officials fear that there is an increasing tendency in Catalan society to have unprotected sex, prompting the health minister, Marina Geli, to exclaim, "don't drop your guard" in AIDS prevention.

In regard to population groups, Geli shows particular concern for the growth in the number of young women infected by HIV. According to the health experts, vaginal penetration makes women twice as prone to the virus as men. Another sector with an alarming rate of HIV is made up of immigrants. The study shows that one in every four people carrying the virus are from abroad. In most cases the virus is contracted here, rather than their county of origin. Geli points out that AIDS cannot be fought against without a coordinated plan to combat the rest of the sexually transmitted diseases as well as undesired pregnancies. Health experts are concerned with the lack of condom use.



Nudists find their sea legs on Mediterranean cruise

Cruising has acquired a whole new meaning after the *Flamenco* docked in Barcelona with 450 naturists on board. For between 430 and 1,500 euros holidaymakers can cruise naked, calling at a variety of Mediterranean ports.

The majority of the voyagers were couples, some

with their children, and were of all ages, ranging from a two-week-old baby to a 74-year-old couple.

The cruise is organised by the Valencian firm Viajes Gheisa who have devised an itinerary to take in nudist beaches. There are 30,000 practising nudists in the Spanish state and 3,000 nudist federations.

Classrooms over crowded says report

A trade union claims that a fifth of all classrooms in Catalan schools are over crowded. According to the teachers union the USTEC-STE this situation is the result of the Education Department who have continued a policy of increasing classroom numbers by 10% over the past year, to deal with an influx of students because of trends like immigration.

The trade union has done a study in to the problem of overcrowding during this year and found that 18.31% of classrooms suffer from excess students.

It revealed that in the private sector the problem is more severe where excess students per classrooms is 30% compared to state schools where just over 11% of classrooms are overcrowded. Caroline Ruis a spokeswoman for the trade union claims overcrowding is a tactic for schools to earn more money and that they must not accept any

more students during the course of an academic year.

The trade union also said that in some regions of Catalonia like el Garrafiel Maresme, that next term many classrooms were already full of extra students. It means that they cannot spend their budget correctly on those students that arrived during term time were being penalised.

The majority of these extra students that arrive after the start of a school year are immigrants that actually need special education services, as for example they need help to learn the language.

The trade union says that their studies prove that the new Catalan Government is continuing with education policies followed by the former administration of the Convergència i Unió. The trade union wants to see a situation in the classroom where overcrowding does not penalise immigrants.