

PUBLIC COMPANIES

Council in debt

Icodemsa, the public services administration company in Icod de los Vinos, has run up a debt of nine million euros.

The figure was revealed recently by the mayor, Diego Afonso, who blamed the previous local government for the debt. He said the socialist party's disastrous management of council affairs was responsible for

95 per cent of Icodemsa's debts. The current nationalist-conservative governing coalition has managed to reduce the annual loss in the last two years to €300,000 whilst the socialists were running up annual debts of €1.5 million. Like Pamarsa in Puerto de la Cruz, Icodemsa was formed by the socialist party. Far from benefiting their respective councils, both public companies have proved economic disasters

and a drain on town hall accounts. In fact Icodemsa has been expected to be dissolved since 2005. It still exists and seeps money from the council coffers because administrations have been under pressure to protect the jobs of the company's 102 employees. To protect those jobs the council has to continually inject cash into Icodemsa. The current mayor has proposed selling off the council property development at Santa Barbara,

a project which he claims was also mismanaged by the previous administration. He has also suggested that the administration of the town's water supply should be privatised as it generated 63 per cent and 74 per cent of Icodemsa's debts in 2007 and 2008 respectively. He warned those who were either not paying for water or actually helping themselves illegally that they would be traced and penalised.

BATTLE ROYALE

Tenerife woman's inheritance shock

The strange decision by a millionaire to leave all his wealth to the Spanish royal family looks set to cause a bitter legal battle.

María Carmen Arregui Llabrés, a retired doctor from Tenerife, is almost certain to ask for the legality of the inheritance to be verified after discovering that she and her sister, the only surviving relatives of the recently-deceased Ignacio Balada Llabrés, were excluded from his will, despite moving to the Balearic island of Menorca to be with their cousin during the last weeks of his life. Balada's fortune, estimated at 30 million euros, has been left to Prince Felipe, his wife Letizia, and the eight



The deceased was a great admirer of the heir to the throne

grandchildren of Spain's King Juan Carlos. Half of the fortune is to be used to set up a charitable foundation

in Balada's honour, administered by Prince Felipe.

Media reports say that the bachelor millionaire,

an only child, was a committed monarchist and a great admirer of the heir to the throne.

GARACHICO

Leisure ideas

A novel idea to turn the abandoned banana packing shed on the old harbour in Garachico into a leisure centre has the backing of the local council.

The building covers nearly four thousand square metres on the old fishing mole and was originally built as a tuna canning factory in the mid-1900s. A private concern now wants to develop the area as a shopping centre and leisure area for cultural activities such as a theme museum. The local mayor,

Ramón Miranda believes the development, together with the construction of the new marina at the other end of the seaside avenue, would revitalise a spot which has virtually been at a standstill for over thirty years. He hopes the project will be approved by the regional government because the future centre would also create 60 direct jobs. It is to be hoped that this time, unlike the hotel planned for the same spot, the project gets off the ground.

New plans for an old building



News in Brief



Illegal arms

Fairground shots

• A member of the fairground attraction in Puerto de la Cruz was arrested at the beginning of January after a shooting incident.

It's a tradition for the travelling fair to set up camp on the car park alongside the harbour every Christmas and reports suggest that the arrested person became enraged after his caravan had been moved without his consent. In fact the shooting occurred at between three and four in the morning when the man, a 29 year old from Jaén on the Spanish mainland, returned to his caravan and began a violent discussion with another individual. He took out a revolver from his caravan and shot twice into the air before aiming the weapon at the other man. Witnesses said he was actually going to shoot when the revolver jammed. He then made off towards the plaza, threatening a woman on the way. The police gave chase and eventually arrested him close to the square and charged him, initially, with the illegal possession of a gun.

Reckless drivers

'Over the limit' mum

• A Tenerife woman who crashed her car with her year-old baby in the back could face jail for driving well over the alcohol limit.

Police at the scene of the early-evening incident in La Victoria breathalysed the young mother and found her to be three times over the legal limit. The woman said she had lost control of her vehicle on a bend and crashed into a walled garden. The case has been sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Tenerife for further action, given the driver's reckless behaviour in drinking and driving with a baby on board.

The drunk mother was not the only strange case local police had to deal with that week. A one-armed man, who was also drunk and had no driving licence or insurance, was stopped at a routine check point on the road from Mt Teide to La Orotava a few days later.

Attacks

Swedish tourist raped in Verónicas

• A man has been arrested in Playa de Las Américas in connection with the rape of a young Swedish tourist earlier this month, the second in the space of 48 hours according to local residents.

A number of residents phoned police to report screams in a poorly-lit spot near the Verónicas centre and the distressed Swede was discovered shortly afterwards by a patrol. A Moroccan man matching the description given by the tourist was detained shortly afterwards and appeared in court the following day charged with the rape.

According to the *El Día* newspaper, another rape took place in almost exactly the same spot two nights earlier.