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DELEGATE PROTECTION

Bodyguard decision query

The decision to allocate protection officers to the Spanish government's most senior representative in the Canaries has triggered a war of words between police unions.

Carolina Darias, whose official title is Government Delegate, has had police bodyguards accompany her on all her engagements for several

months but the measure has been criticised as a needless waste of resources when the officers could be put to better use. "The Interior Ministry has withdrawn personal protection for senior judges at the National High Court, who issue the arrest warrants for ETA terrorists and are at greater risk, but for some reason feels Ms. Darias needs to be protected in the Canaries. It is becoming

fashionable for members of the PSOE party to flaunt their importance by walking around with bodyguards" complained a spokesman for the CEP union.

However, its main rival (SUP) says that tourist areas are not exempt from the terrorist threat, as shown in Majorca in the summer, and Islamic terrorism cannot be ruled out here.

MARTÍN/PAREJO

Ex-president weds

Former Canarian president Adán Martín has wed his long-time partner Pilar Parejo in a ceremony which was watched with interest thousands of miles away.

The wedding in Tenerife is believed to have been brought forward due to health reasons (Martín is undergoing extensive treatment for cancer at present)

but the circumstances surrounding the event failed to put a dampener on matters and the couple, both of whom are divorcees, said the private ceremony had been "absolutely fantastic".

In addition to the select group of guests, including several members of the former President's cabinet, the wedding was 'attended' by the bride's brother from the Caribbean. According to

the *La Provincia* newspaper, a special internet link was set up to allow him to watch the proceedings live on computer from his beach home in Jamaica.

Back in June, the 65-year-old politician admitted in an interview that there was no cure for his cancer and said he "wanted to enjoy the rest of his time in the world".

WATER CHARGES

A drop in the...

The latest report on water charges in Spain compiled by the Spanish Water and Wastewater Association has found that users in the province of Santa Cruz de Tenerife pay more than their neighbours in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the rest of Spain.

Tenerife water users are paying €1.87 per cubic metre of the wet stuff as compared to €1.84 in Las Palmas; the average charge in Spain is currently €1.50. The asso-

ciation are hoping that with the publication of the figures they can initiate a general debate about the price of water as part of urban services and promote an analysis of the cost structures used to charge consumers, and the effect of public and private investment in water supply amounts. They add that it is important that there is transparency in the detailing of water charges to the customer and that people should be made aware of how much they are paying in comparison

to other countries.

Comparing the cost here to some of Europe's capitals the price may not seem too high – in Paris the average €/m³ is €2.62, in London it is €2.49, and Copenhagen consumers are paying €4.54, though your average shower in Rome will be cheaper at €0.83 per cubic metre. However if you take average wages into consideration as well the price we are paying here in the Canary Islands does fall into the higher bracket for most users.

Fuerteventura

Costa Calma, even 'safer'

New Civil Guard office

Costa Calma in Fuerteventura will have a permanent Civil Guard presence as of next month thanks to an agreement between the force and the local council, which is to lend council-owned premises for a mini-station.

However, the decision to allocate the premises is not a reflection of growing crime

in the fast-growing holiday area, which has one of the lowest crime rates in the Canaries, according to Pájara Council. Mayor Rafael Perdomo says the presence of the Civil Guard will have "an even bigger deterrent effect in an already safe area" and will bring added value to the reputation of Costa Calma in the holiday industry. Work to refurbish the premises is due to be completed in March.