

(L-R) Island president Ricardo Melchior and Felix Sierra, councillor for the south, in the new offices



DECENTRALISATION

Cabildo in the South

On Wednesday 27 January, the Tenerife Cabildo president, Ricardo Melchior, paid his first visit to the offices of the Cabildo's Special Territorial Delegation for South Tenerife.

He was hosted by the island councillor Felix Sierra, who heads the office and is also the Island's councillor for municipal cooperation throughout Tenerife and for tourism in the south. Sierra showed Ricardo Melchior

around the new offices at the Zentral Center in Playa de las Américas and also explained some of the objectives set out for 2010.

This office was set up with the same aim as its northern counterpart – to make the

services of the Island Government more easily accessible to the population as part of a de-centralisation strategy and to try to develop sectors which are not considered primary. The characteristics of the area (territorial extension, distance from centres of strategic decision making, diversity of economic activity in the different municipalities in the region, etc.) mean that a policy of planned activities needs to be carried out to guarantee and improve the quality of life and support economic activity in this part of the island. In this way, through its office in South Tenerife, the Cabildo has opted for the drawing up of a Strategic Plan for the South. In effect this will see a two pronged strategy, whereby the Island authority will have a strategy for action to be implemented by the South office as well as carrying out planned action to enable the south of Tenerife to diversify its economic model and boost other sectors which have great potential such as farming and industry.

For the lifetime of this legislature, the office in South Tenerife has planned a series within the framework of the Competitiveness Plan, Training & Education Plan, Courses, Financial Aid & Subsidies and political decentralisation.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Registration row spreads to Tenerife

Allegations that several councils in south Tenerife are refusing to register illegal immigrants have served to add the Canaries to the national controversy which could force the country's Constitutional Court to intervene.

The row started when it emerged that the council in Vic (Barcelona) had issued orders to staff not to allow illegals to be included in the local 'padrón' (register). The

council insisted the measure was consistent with immigration policy and the growing number of illegals was placing a massive strain on council resources and services, including schooling and housing.

The Spanish government stepped in and reminded Vic that it was obliged to register all people living within its boundaries and could not exclude them from access to services. The row was followed several days later by unconfirmed reports that

some immigrants living illegally in Tenerife have been unable to register at their local town halls. "It is not so much a blatant refusal but deliberate obstacles are placed in the path of the applicants" said a source at an immigrant help group on the island.

The Vic controversy has served to reopen the whole question of how to deal with illegals, many of whom arrive on tourist visas and stay on after the visas expire. A few years ago, the Zapatero

government was criticised by its EU counterparts for legalising several hundred thousand immigrants on the sole basis that they had registered with their local 'padrón' several years previously. More recently, a council official was arrested in Tenerife in January of this year in connection with the sale of fake registration certificates, which were sold to Pakistani illegals for up to €3,000 to help them obtain full residency in other parts of Spain.

KNIFE ATTACK

€15,000 snatched

Businesses have been urged to take extra precautions when lodging their takings in banks in Los Cristianos and Playa de las Américas following another violent mugging.

In what they describe as a well-executed robbery, police say the manager of a local filling station was attacked

outside a bank in a busy Los Cristianos square. The lone raider made off on foot with approximately €15,000 after threatening his victim with a knife.

Witnesses say he behaved perfectly normally before the attack and appeared to know exactly where his target was heading. "We believe the manager's movements were monitored closely in the run-up to the mugging and the

perpetrator knew what he was carrying. The fact that he carried out the snatch in broad daylight in a busy area indicates it was well thought through and a means of escape pre-arranged" said a police source.

The incident is one of several in recent months in the area and has triggered fresh concerns that organised gangs are operating in the resorts.

Tenerife man arrested

Child porn swoops

• A Santa Cruz man is one of thirteen people arrested across Spain in the latest nationwide police operation against Internet child pornography.

Dozens of homes across the country were raided after the authorities were alerted several months ago to the exchange of explicit pictures and videos of young children on a P2P network thought to be based in Valencia. Over 2,000 DVDs were seized in the raids and the computers of the people arrested have been taken for examination to detect other Internet addresses involved in the file exchanges. No details have been released of the identity of the Tenerife participant in the network, except that he is in his late 30s.

Postal mobbing

Bullying boss

• Five out of seven full-time post office workers in Gufa de Isora have been forced to go on extended sick leave due to alleged bullying by their female boss.

The Correos employees say they have been subjected to harassment continuously over the past six months and want a full investigation into the conduct of their boss. The situation has forced Correos to recruit temporary help until the crisis is sorted and normal service is not expected to be resumed for some time.

Allegations of bullying in the town's office first surfaced in the local media back in December but the victims say nothing has been done to address their concerns and senior managers have been more worried about plugging the leaks to newspapers than reprimanding the alleged bully. However, the Correos head office in Tenerife insists it has offered to meet the staff affected and discuss the problem but have received no proposal for a date for the meeting.

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Arona and Cabildo representatives at the signing of the co-financing agreement



Urban bus for Arona

• The mayor of Arona José Alberto González Reverón and Tenerife president Ricardo Melchior have just confirmed an agreement which will see the island authorities assuming some of the cost of the recently introduced urban bus route into Arona.

The route, the 468, covers areas that up until now were not on any public transport service line, including Parque La Reina and Palm Mar. The line operates hourly, Monday to Friday, with two trajectories; from Parque La Reina, via Guaza, to Palm Mar, Las Galletas, Las Rosas, Guargacho and Oroteanda, returning to Parque La Reina. The second route takes in El

Fraille, Costa del Silencio, Virgen del Carmen, La Cañada, as well as other serviced areas.

The service will now be jointly financed by the Arona council (73 per cent) and the Cabildo (27 per cent). Mayor González Reverón said "the introduction of an urban transport system is one of the priorities of the local government, fundamental for this part of the borough".