

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Doctors dispute waiting list figures

Doctors here say recent figures showing apparent improvements to surgery waiting lists give a misleading impression of the problem.

Within days of the Department of Health announcing that the number of people waiting for over three months for an operation had been cut by almost a quarter in recent times, doctors in Las Palmas held a press conference to rectify the "biased picture painted". Dr Isidro Rexachs, head of the Las Palmas Medical Association said "the impression given is that all is well but the Depart-

ment fails to say that up to 11 steps must be followed between the first consultation with a family doctor and actually entering an operating theatre". He added, "completing all the steps can take up to a year, depending on the health centre which refers the patient to a specialist". Rexachs criticised the health authorities for presenting the figures as a worst case scenario when "nobody gets a surgery appointment in less than three months".

The Association says that 42 family doctors are needed urgently to fill positions in local health centres.



INGENIO

Low-flying plane

Ingenio council has taken up the case of dozens of local residents whose life is being made a misery by aircraft noise from Gran Canaria airport.

The council says it has received a flood of complaints from locals in recent times about planes that disregard the minimum height of 300 metres when overflying the El Burrero and Las Puntillas districts. Local police have monitored the situation over the past couple of years and have noted 62 separate breaches of the height rule by Binter, Islas Airways and the local air force base, which



has been identified as the main culprit.

"The noise is so deafening when the air force jets fly over that you cannot have

a normal conversation. Our windows shake with the sonic bangs the fighters give off" said the chairman of the local residents association, Jacinto

Melián. One resident, María Morales, said the noise has made her four-year-old son "a nervous wreck and he covers his ears at the sight of all planes".

The council is concerned that the planned extension to Gran Canaria Airport will make the problem worse, even though steps are already being taken to soundproof the houses affected with double-glazing.

The airport authority has admitted that an environmental impact assessment has identified almost 600 homes in the area that will see the decibel levels rise due to the extension.

News in Brief

Judicial investigation

Karate sex abuse allegations

• A Canarian judge has launched a nationwide search for more victims of alleged sexual abuse at a top Las Palmas karate school.

Judge Miguel Angel Parramón has already contacted several former pupils at the popular school, whose owner has been arrested on abuse charges. In all, five people, including two women, are being investigated in connection with the alleged abuse. Three have been remanded to Las Palmas prison pending further inquiries.

News of the arrests has prompted many current and former pupils to come forward in the media with similar accusations. A number of the alleged victims are now adults and the judge wants others to come forward in order to have as full a picture as possible of the abuse that is said to have taken place for at least fifteen years.

The school regularly sweeps the board at regional and national championships. The three people on remand are the owner, his girlfriend and another female karate instructor.

News in Brief

El Laurel Parents Association

Puerto Rico school delays

• Parents in Puerto Rico (Mogán) are threatening to organise protests at the failure of the education authorities to build the promised school for the area.

The El Laurel Parents Association says six years have now passed since the promise was made to create a new school for pupils up to the age of 16 to take the pressure off the secondary school in Arguineguín, which suffers overcrowding problems. "The money was set aside years ago but we fear it will be diverted elsewhere. The local primary school cannot cope either and is badly under-funded, and we do not understand why this project is being delayed constantly when there is a spiralling population here that needs to be catered for" said a spokeswoman.

Among the measures being considered are demonstrations at the two existing schools during school hours over the coming weeks.



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