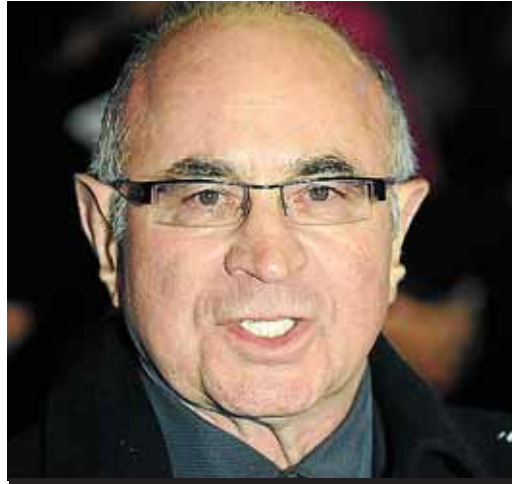


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Business group backs curb on all inclusive holidays

● Bar and restaurant trade fears that these pre-paid packages could destroy their businesses in tourist resorts.
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FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR BALEARIC BOAT SHOW: P4

Spain's recovery gains pace but remains hard sell at home

Madrid.—The Spanish government raised its 2014 economic growth forecast yesterday following a robust start to the year, but is still struggling to persuade voters that a solid recovery is underway as job creation and consumer spending remain anaemic.

Spain's economy grew at its fastest quarterly pace in six years at the start of 2014, data showed earlier in the day.

Gross domestic product rose 0.4 percent from January to March as the nation gradually pulled away from its second recession since a property bubble burst in 2008, gutting the banks and sending the jobless rate to the highest in the euro zone after Greece.

"This year will mark a 'before and after' in the Spanish economy; we're going to have growth in employment, in GDP, in income and, over this (legislative term), we will have reduced the total number of unem-

ployed," Economy Minister Luis de Guindos said.

The government updated its forecasts for this year to growth of 1.2 percent, up from a previous projection of 0.7 percent and last year's contraction of 1.2 percent. The economy will grow 1.8 percent next year and 2.3 percent by 2016, it predicted. However, the economic improvement has yet to filter down to many Spanish families and support for the ruling People's Party is flagging. Opinion polls show the

centre-right party will suffer its worst showing in a European Parliament election in 25 years when voters go to the polls on 25 May. Some economists do not expect the kind of sharp upturn which the government needs to combat its budget deficit. "It's hard to see how the economy is going to grow much more than 0.3 percent on average in the coming quarters," said Bank of America Merrill Lynch economist Ruben Segura-Cayuela.

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