THE BBC has announced plans to pull its radio and TV stations from satellite broadcaster BSkyB's channel line-up and move them to another close-by satellite which has a much smaller coverage area.

Viewers in the UK won't notice much difference after the changeover on May 30, but it will have disastrous consequences for the many British expats and second home-owners all over Europe who use Sky set-top boxes to watch BBC TV.

The BBC is touting the move as a cost saving measure; the corporation has paid Sky £85 million over the last five years to scramble and broadcast its programming on the Astra 2A satellite. Broadcasts from the new ‘2D’ satellite will be unencrypted.

Greg Dyke, the BBC’s Director General, said “This is a very important decision for the BBC which will save us a considerable amount of money.”

The BBC claims to have made this decision for two reasons. First, their contract with Sky runs out in May and second, as the Astra 2D satellite is more tightly focused on the UK, they will not have to encrypt signals in order to meet contractual obligations not to broadcast programmes into other countries.

But some experts feel that the BBC’s coverage maps are very conservative and that the Riviera’s viewers have nothing to worry about.

Sports

Riviera residents now face the prospect of having to learn to live without their BBC channels and favourite programmes such as Eastenders, news and major sports events - Wimbledon, The Grand National and Six Nations Rugby are only shown on the BBC.

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Bigger dish

“You’ll definitely need to buy a bigger dish,” Grant Rennell of What Satellite magazine told The Riviera Gazette. “We would recommend that you buy at least a 90cm dish.”

The BBC, however, doesn’t consider viewers outside the UK a priority. “If people are picking up our services in other parts of Europe, they really shouldn’t be,” Amy Mulclair of the BBC press office told The Riviera Gazette. “We are legally obliged to provide better services to license payers in the UK,” she explained.

“People will have to go out and buy dishes four or five times bigger than the ones they currently use. They will also have to be pointed in a different direction,” Mulclair asserts.

Sit tight

There is hope for Eastenders addicts, though. ITV2 already broadcasts from the Astra 2D satellite and, although it demands accurate positioning of the dish and is notoriously difficult to pick up on the Côte d’Azur during bad weather, during sunny weather the signal is quite good. Viewers with larger dishes report good results receiving ITV2.

Local satellite TV dealer Martin Hull takes a more pragmatic view, though: “Don’t fret yet. Sit tight and wait for the end of May, and see what happens. I suspect this is simply a negotiating position taken by the BBC, and that in the end a deal will be struck and it won’t leave Sky at all.”
Got a hot story? Call our newsdesk on 04 93 09 66 43!
Monaco creeps further into sea

MONACO has reclaimed 5,000 square metres of land in Port Hercule to provide room for extra seating at the Grand Prix. A new stand on the reclaimed area will provide seating for five thousand extra race-goers, and the circuit will be slightly modified to allow a further stand to be slotted in next to the swimming pool, facing the Rascasse café.

The works, which followed a plan drawn up by race organisers at the Automobile Club de Monaco, are nearing completion and will be ready for this year’s Grand Prix, which takes place on June 1.

The tiny principality is no stranger to the concept of reclaiming land from the sea; the entire Fontvieille district is built on 22 hectares of land reclaimed in the 1970s. And with what little real-estate there is in the Principality being worth so much, Monaco has also been creating extra space through buying land in France. It already owns, through various companies, the Monte Carlo Golf Club at La Turbie and a warehouse complex on the edge of Nice which is used for logistics purposes. And earlier this month the Principality purchased 54 hectares of land on Mont Agel, overlooking Monaco, sparking a critical article in Le Monde newspaper.

Jean-Pierre Puliti, of the Association for the Defence of the Environment of Mont Agel, attempted to invoke article 53 of the French constitution in a bid to stop Monaco’s purchase of the land. Article 53 requires the ceding of any part of French territory to a foreign power to be approved by Parliament.

“There is no obstacle to a foreign state purchasing land in France so long as there is no cessation of territory,” Patrick Leclerq, Monaco’s head of government, was quick to retort – “there is no obstacle to a foreign state purchasing land in France as long as there is no cessation of territory.”

Puliti says he is trying to use the law to “prevent the last green space in the area from becoming, bit by bit, a private garden for the jet set.”

Chirac unpopular?

PRESIDENT Chirac may be taking a verbal battering in the US over Iraq, but he’s being hailed as a champion of peace elsewhere.

The French embassy in London has received hundreds of letters supporting the president’s anti-war stance – and denouncing Tony Blair’s support of America, French Catholic daily newspaper Le Croix has even compared Chirac to Nelson Mandela.

Arrest me please!

A DRUNKEN youth went on a crime spree in Tourrette-Levens this week – and then begged Police to arrest him. After crashing into the gate of a retirement home, he demanded local cops arrest him and then took them to the local branch of Credit Agricole where he confessed to having smashed the window. He is now awaiting trial.

Monaco war plans

THE Principality of Monaco has released its plans for increasing security in the event of war.

They include regularly checking people’s passports and bags, checks on packages received by public services and businesses, and withdrawing bot-tles banks from public use.

Tax return time

THE deadline for your 2002 tax return is Monday March 24 but you can get an extension until midnight on April 6 if you file your return online at www.impots.gouv.fr.

Buzz off

RIANAIR will discontinue the old Buzz route between Toulon-Hyères airport and the UK from 1 April.
Tourists face visa hell as fingerprinting mooted

By Sarah Clark

Immigration authorities are fingerprinting all foreign passport holders visiting France and are closely inspecting marriage applications between French nationals and foreign nationals in a bid to stop them on illegal immigrants.

Interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy has allowed all visa applicants, regardless of their country of origin, to be required to apply for visas in person at their local French embassy. As part of the process their fingerprints will be taken.

Cumbersome

Nationals of EU countries do not require visas and are therefore exempt, but English-speaking visitors from outside Europe, including the US, Canada and South Africa, will all have to go through the cumbersome process.

French authorities say foreigners arriving on the current tourist visas who want to overstay their welcome can simply throw their papers away, making it impossible to determine which country they came from and, therefore, where to deport them back to.

Currently only 17% of deportations orders are actually carried out.

Under the new system, immigration officials will be able to see new fingerprints from suspected illegal immigrants and compare them against visa application records to determine the identity and country of origin of the suspect.

“France must remain a land of immigration but it cannot welcome all the miserable of the world, which is an aberration, but I am also against the kind of lax attitude that says that anyone who wants them can have their papers,” Sarkozy told reporters.

Cheek

“They’ve got a cheek making it out all foreigners in their country are criminals. I may come from Australia, but this does not automatically make me a law breaker. I just ignore all the stupid bureaucracy in France anyway,” Andy Hughes from the US told The Riviera Gazette.

The move comes as the number of marriage applications being sent for approval to the Procureur of the Alpes-Maritimes – the head of the local legal service in the region – by local mayors has increased by up to 33%.

Suspicious

French law requires any “suspicious” marriage application to be sent to the Procureur for further investigation.

Echoing the hit movie Green Card, where French actor Gerard Depardieu tried to get US residency via an arranged marriage, these cases include all marriages between French nationals and foreigners where there is any suspicion that the marriage is only taking place in order to give the foreigner the right to reside in France.

In Nice over 30% of all marriage applications this year have been sent to the Procureur for investigation. In 2002, 20% of marriage applications in Grasse were forwarded, 10% in Cannes and Menton and 15% of marriages between French nationals and foreigners in Antibes.

Permission was only refused in fifteen cases and authorities believe that many arranged marriages are still slipping through the net.

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July 17, claims the five-times Cannes winner was attempting to extort money from his client. Her lawyer dismisses the claims as an attempt to extort money from his client. Her lawyer dismisses the claims as an attempt to extort money from his client.

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Five arrested in Nice city hall corruption probe

A FRESH corruption scandal has rocked Nice this week with the arrest of a city hall official, an elected official, a municipal worker and two senior businessmen. An inquiry has been opened into alleged dodgy dealings, looking particularly at contracts handed out for work on the town’s new football stadium.

Investigators are examining a €100M contract to install 32,000 seats at the new Stade du Ray, due to be completed in 2016. Police swooped on the five early on Tuesday morning in an operation which involved dozens of officers working in conjunction with investigators in Nice.

One of the bunged-up bosses heads a corporation in Marseille and the other a company in Paris. Investigators have also seized boxes of documents from the city hall for further examination.

Nice’s public prosecutor, Eric de Montgolfier – who famously takes a hall for further examination.

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I married a French girl, Corrine, in London twenty years ago. We then moved to Paris, and, after seven years, I found a job in Sophia. I was vice-president of a company and responsible for fifteen countries. I used to do 200,000 kilometres a year in planes. We lived in a Zurich hotel room if you live here.

After ten years of that, I wanted a lifestyle change. The south of France is an absolute paradise and you don’t want to be in a Zurich hotel room if you live here.

I’d always wanted to start my own business and I wanted to spend time at home with my wife and three kids – Thomas, 22, Sebastien, 18 and Margot, 11. I wanted a better quality of life.

My new company, Clin Services, supplies and installs air conditioning, a rapidly growing business in this climate. As the whole of March and, look, it’s already warm and sunny. After all, the Riviera is a great place for a country house.

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Thursday 20

- The 12th Festival Musical du Grand Hotel du Cap Ferrat continues tonight with "Une Amazone en bleu" by Dee Dee Bridgewater, at 20:00. Tickets are €30. Email banqueg@grand-hotel-capferrat.com for bookings.

- Nich's Phillipharmonic orchestra is performing the music of Ravel and Debussy at the Auditorium Muzio Chagall, Nice, at 20:30. Tickets are €10. Tel: 04 93 43 26 87.

- The Sweet Potatoes are playing live blues music at O'Sullivan's Irish Pub in Mandelieu at 21:30. Tel: 04 94 69 42 85.

- The exhibition of stunning volcanic photography continues this week at the Grimaldi Forum, Monaco. Tel: +377 99 99 20 20.

- Friday 21

- MJC Picaud in Cannes is hosting a workshop on "Insomnies de Filomene", a show starring two clowns and suitable for non-French speakers. Saturday 22

- The Baî de la Rose, a major event in Monaco's social calendar, is tonight at 20:00. A host of celebrities and Europe's brightest young stars will descend on the Principality for this signature event, part of a whirlwind weekend of social engagements. Black Tie. Tickets €700. Tel: +377 93 22 10 10.

- The Théâtre George Brassens in St Laurent du Var is hosting a homage to jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt tonight at 21:00. Entry is €10. Tel: 04 92 12 40 46.

- The CIV School in Sophia Antipolis is holding an International Day from 20:30 to 23:30 with international food stalls, student art displays and live music from 11.00 to 15.00. Tel: 04 92 96 52 24.

- The Bar on Baïj jazz club is celebrating its 10th birthday with a performance by Django Reinhardt tonight. Entry is €10. Tel: 04 93 74 10 98.

- Footnote Nice plays Lyon at the Stade du Ray at 20:00. Admission from €7. Tel: 04 93 18 07 27.

- Eddy Ray Cooper plays country music from 21.30 at the Bar Théâtre des Oiseaux in Nice. Entry is free. Tel: 04 83 40 27 33.

- Continuing today is the Festival de Pétanque, the comic strip festival, the artistic expression course, the Salon Nautique de Nice, the Salon de la Mode, the Symposium International d'Aromathérapie et Plantes Medicinales, and Rosmira Fidel.

- Monday 24

- The world's television industry executives descend on Cannes today for the start of MIP TV, an international tradeshow and market for TV programming, at the Palais des Festivals. The show runs until March 26, from 9:00am to 19:00 each day. Tel: 04 93 24 24 53.

- Continuing today is the Salon Nautique. Tuesday 25

- Continuing today is MIP TV and Rosmira Fidel.

Wednesday 26

- The British Association of Monge is holding its AGM today at the Hotel Miréden Beach Plaza's Sea Club, from 18:30. Tel: +377 93 50 19 86.

- Continuing today is MIP TV.

- Thursday 27

- The 8th Salon de la Moto – a motorcycle and scooter exhibition with all makes on display – is open as entertainment and demonstrations – is on at the Hippodrome in Cannes-Sur-Mer from today until Sunday. Doors open from 10h to 20:00; entry is €7. Tel: 04 93 20 26 64.

- L’Ensemble Baroque de Nice is performing "Insomnies Fédèle", a Vivaldi opera, at l’Opéra de Nice at 20:00. Performances also on Sunday afternoon and Tuesday night. Tickets range from €7 to €89. Tel: 04 92 17 40 40.

- The 30th Symposium International d'Aromathérapie et Plantes Medicinales is at the Palais des Congrès de Grasse from today until Sunday 30th to 19:00 today and tomorrow and 8:30 to 11:00 on Sunday. Tel: 04 97 05 31 30.

- The 8th Riviera Weather

- What’s On and Where To go...

- At 08 99 70 11 11 for today’s weather in your town, or to get a three-day forecast in English. Calls cost 0.34 per minute.

- Traditional English SUNDAY LUNCH

Enjoy a perfect English Sunday lunch with beef, lamb or chicken, roast potatoes, vegetables, Yorkshire pudding, mint sauce and gravy – all in a beautiful restaurant with a flattering non-cumbersome service. Senior from noon to 5pm. Reservations essential, especially for large groups. To book call your local English or French office on 09 19 28 70 72.

- SPECIAL: Dessert & wine sharing glass – ask your Riviera Marie for more details. Treat yourselves to something a little different in good company.

- Le Relais des Coches

294 de Nice, Théâtre de l’Odéon-Cannes. Tel: 04 97 21 60 20. www.lerelaisdescoches.com

- Riviera Weather

Call 08 99 70 11 11 for today’s weather in your town, or to get a three-day forecast in English. Calls cost 0.34 per minute.

- MIP TV: The 28th International TV programme is on today at 20:00. Tickets are €70. Tel: 04 93 09 66 43.

- CIV Charity Walkathon: A sponsored walk to raise money for the guide dog school in Biot, is taking place on March 29 at the CIV School in Sophia Antipolis from 8am. Tel 04 92 96 52 24 to take part.

- Pupils at the International School of Nice will be regional produce, plants, jewellery and more from some 180 stands between 8:00 and 14:00. Tel: 04 92 96 52 24.

- Le Relais des Coches

294 de Nice, Théâtre de l’Odéon-Cannes. Tel: 04 97 21 60 20. www.lerelaisdescoches.com

- Vote – buy a property in France mortgagefrance.com

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