

News at a Glance

FURTHER DEFENCE CUTBACKS

Ten years ago the defense sector had a workforce of 700 000. Today that number has dropped to 40 000 and a further 1000 to 2000 employees will soon lose their jobs as the government has called for further cutbacks in the amount of SEK 2.1 billion.

NO BIRD FLU YET

Tests on a duck that died of bird flu in Sweden have shown that it was not infected by the strain of H5N1 that has killed more than 60 people in Asia. It carried the moderate variant of the virus.

In order to prevent the spread of bird flu, Sweden's Board of Agriculture has ordered all poultry and tame birds in the Stockholm and Gothenburg areas to be kept indoors. Poultry raised for commercial purposes is to be kept indoors and cannot be given water from ponds or other open-air sources that may have been used by migratory birds. Other restrictions include a ban on the hunting of wetland birds such as ducks, geese and swans, and a ban on bird fairs.

HÖGRE PENSIONER MED NYA SYSTEMET

S Försäkringskassan har överlämnat sin beräkning av inkomstindex för år 2006 till regeringen. Av den framgår att de inkomstgrundade pensionerna kommer att öka med 1.1 procent vid årsskiftet. Med de gamla ATP-reglerna hade ökningen varit 0,8 procent. Det nya systemets indexering av pensionerna användes första gången år 2004. Indexeringen har hittills gett pensionärerna högre pensioner jämfört med vad de skulle ha fått om det gamla systemet varit kvar. Under ATP-systemets 40-åriga existens ökade inte pensionerna reallt i värde ett enda år.



Old pension poster

I ATP-systemet räknades pensionerna årligen om i takt med inflationen. I det nya systemet räknas pensionerna årligen om med förändringen i genomsnittsinkomst minus 1,6 procentenheter. En person som 2001 hade en ATP-folkpension om 10 000 kronor per månad skulle med ATP-systemets indexregler i januari 2006 haft en pension om 10 760 kronor. I och med pensionsreformen är denna pension i stället 11 106 kronor.

Grundtryggheten i det nya systemet, garantipensionen, följer alltså prisutvecklingen.



TEACHERS HELPLESS IN CONFLICTS

Six out of ten teachers do not know how to deal with troublesome students. In more than every third school in Sweden there are serious conflicts during lessons or during a break in which a teacher has to intervene, at least once a week. The majority of teachers have dealt with incidents where they have been uncertain about what intervention measures they are allowed to use by law.

The teachers are now calling for clearer guidelines in the school law so that they can feel secure about intervening in conflicts without facing the threat of being reported to the police. Rules about temporary confiscation of objects like cellphones that are a disturbance are also unclear. Teachers have been reprimanded for taking care of a student's cellphone until the end of the lesson.

There have been several cases of teachers being convicted of physical assault when they have intervened in a conflict or have had to physically remove a violent student from a class. Recently a 62-year old teacher, who had had a clean record throughout his career, was fired because he slapped one of his students after being seriously provoked.

According to a recent study 43 percent of teachers have to spend a considerable time everyday to create a sense of security and a calm working environment during class time. It is not only the troublesome boys in grades 7-9 that are the problem. There are problems in grades 4-6 and even as early as in grades 1-3. 4 percent of Swedish teachers have been assaulted by their students and 8 percent have received threats of violence. In international comparisons, a lack of a proper working environment is a bigger problem in Swedish schools than in schools in other industrialized countries.

Teachers demand guidelines for handling school conflicts so that they do not face the risk of being reported to the police

ACCESSIBILITY TO HIGHER EDUCATION

According to a study by the Educational Policy Institute on the affordability and accessibility of higher education Sweden ranked as the most affordable nation, followed by Finland and The Netherlands.

But in terms of accessibility, The Netherlands garnered first place overall, with Sweden, Italy, Germany, Belgium and Austria coming in the last five places in the survey.

KAROLINSKA ÖPPNAR NY SEXRÅDGIVNING

S Varannan svensk man har erektionsproblem vid 50, och i genomsnitt väntar han i tre år innan han söker hjälp. Nu öppnas en rikstäckande rådgivning för män på Karolinska sjukhuset. Den som lider av erektionsstörningar kan få hjälp av sexualrådgivningen, anonymt för den som vill. Via telefon eller internet kan man ställa frågor och antingen få råd direkt eller hjälp att få kontakt med rätt läkare.

De allt vanligare problemen med erektionen hänger ofta ihop med andra sjukdomar.

Ökningen går helt parallellt med ökningen i hjärt-kärlsjukdomar, säger Stefan Arver, överläkare på Karolinska.

GRATISMUSEER POPULÄRA

S Svenskarna har tänt på gratis museibesök. Den 1 januari införde 17 statliga museer, som till exempel Historiska Museet och Nationalmuseet fri entré och under årets tre första kvartal var antalet besök nära 1,4 miljoner fler än under samma period 2004, en ökning med 152 procent.

PROPERTY PRICES TOO HIGH FOR FAMILIES

Average families with both parents in blue-collar jobs on a collective wage agreement are no longer able to afford to buy a house in most parts of Sweden, according to a new report by the National Association of Homeowners. House prices in 270 of Sweden's 290 municipalities are too high for such a family. Furthermore if one of the parents ended up working only 75% of the time or became unemployed, the family would not be able to afford a property anywhere in the country.

Besides the high prices, it is the property tax, that has become prohibitive. Families in the Stockholm suburb of Danderyd face the highest housing costs at an average of 15 970 kronor per month. At the other end of the scale, a family in Ragunda pays an average of 4 045 kronor per month.

According to the report, housing expenses take up between 16% and 58% of a trade union member family's disposable income, compared to between 12% and 46% for a professional family.

ARMED ROBBERY EPIDEMIC

A Securitas security vehicle has been involved in an armed robbery once again. It happened early in the morning on the E4 near Hölö, south of Södertälje.

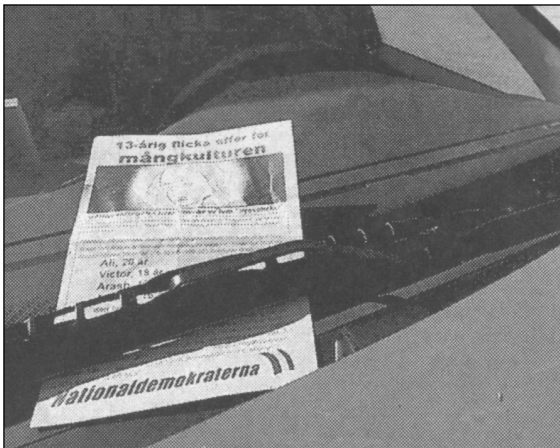


Popular target

The latest in a series of cash transit robberies in Sweden began just after 4am. Two cars brought the vehicle to a halt and at least two masked robbers jumped out, firing several shots into the air with their automatic weapons. The two guards were forced out of the van at gunpoint before it was blown open. After the explosion the robbers set fire to one of their cars and headed south in the other. The escape vehicle was later found burning outside the railway station in Vagnhärad.

The last raid on a security vehicle in November prompted a walkout from guards, whose union demanded increased security. After a weekend during which cash machines ran low and stores accumulated cash, the Swedish Work Environment Authority tightened the regulations concerning cash transits.

Since then Securitas has increased the variation in the timetable and routes of its transportation. It has reduced the amount carried on each transit and more technical equipment has been installed in the vehicles.



DE INVANDRARFIENTLIGA SVERIGEDEMOKRATERNA ÖKAR I SKÅNE

SSverigedemokraterna stärker sitt grepp om Skåne. I nästa års landstingsval tar populistpartiet hjälp av en rad lokala missnöjespartier för att ta sig in i Region Skånes landsting. Det kan i sin tur komma att fungera som en språngbräda mot riksdagen.

2006 har Sverigedemokraterna den nya förmånen att landets samtliga vallokaler utan kostnad tvingas distribuera partiets valsedlar.

Sverigedemokraterna har skaffat sig kommunalpolitisk erfarenhet sedan 2002. Partiet sexfaldigade sitt inflytande från åtta mandat i fem kommuner till 50 mandat i 30 kommuner. På flera håll har partiet lyckats ställa lokalpolitiken på huvudet. Socialdemokraterna och moderater har i många fall känt sig tvingade att ingå delvis smärtsamma kommunala allianser för att hålla Sd borta från vågmastarpositionen.

Att Skåne fortsätter att fungera som Sverigedemokraternas särskilda drivhus befästes i kyrkovalet i höstas där partiet fördubblade sina röstsiffror, från 0.8 till 1,7 procent. I Landskrona fick Sd nästan 11 procent och i Helsingborg närmare 10 procent. Redan i kommunvalen 2002 röstade drygt en tiondel av skåningarna på Sd och de andra lokala, ofta invandringsfientliga missnöjespartierna.

Sverigedemokraterna har sin bas i den rasistiska organisationen Bevara Sverige Svenskt, BSS. Under tidigt 90-tal bestod partiledningen bland annat av våldsamma skinnskallar. I sina radiosändningar har Sverigedemokrater krävt att invandrare i första, andra och till och med tredje generationen ska utvisas till det land de kommer ifrån. Sd vill också riva alla moskéer och andra "etniska kulturhus". Adaptioner av barn från utomeuropeiska länder ska i det närmaste upphöra. Partiet har tagit emot stöd av Frankrikes extremhögerparti Front National.

The Sverigedemokraterna party is up in the southern parts of Sweden thanks to racist propaganda and a promise to tear down buildings like the Stockholm mosque (above)

IMMIGRANTS COMMIT 25% OF CRIMES

In a report studying 4.4 million Swedes between the ages of 15 and 51 during the period 1997-2001, immigrants are clearly over represented in crime statistics.

They are four times more likely to be investigated for lethal violence and robbery than persons born in Sweden to Swedish parents, according to the National Council for Crime Prevention. They are also three times more likely to be investigated for assault and five times more likely to be investigated for sex crimes. The report is based on statistics for those "suspected" of offences for reasons of comparison, but the Council for Crime Prevention says there is "little difference" in the statistics for those suspected of crimes and those actually convicted.

"Slightly under 60 percent of the almost 1520 000 offences ... registered during the period can be attributed to persons who were born in Sweden to two Swedish-born parents," says the report. One quarter of the crimes were committed by people born overseas, while almost 20 percent were committed by those born in Sweden to one or two parents born abroad.

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