



4 de Enero de 2006

## Hurricane damage keeps 5 Mexican hotels closed

Jan 4, 06: CANCUN, Mexico - Sol Melia SA, one of the largest hoteliers in the Caribbean, is keeping five of its properties in Mexico closed longer than planned after damage caused by Hurricane Wilma.

The Palma de Majorca, Spain-based company has closed three five-star hotels in Cancun and two resorts on the island of Cozumel until as late as June, according to Sol Melia's Web site. The company said in November that it planned to open the hotels, with 1,844 rooms, by Jan. 10.

Sol Melia has closed half of its hotels in Mexico after hurricane damage there. Concern about travel safety after more than 20 tropical storms last year is leading some tourists to travel to destinations such as Spain for their beach holidays, Exceltur, a Spanish tourism trade group, has said.

The Melia Turquesa, which has more than 400 rooms, is closed until June. 30, while the 800-room Gran Melia Cancun is shut until March 31. Sol Melia will open two other hotels with more than 600 rooms total in Mexico on Jan. 14. The company didn't give a date for the Sol Cabanas del Caribe.

The closings mean more than half of Sol Melia's 3,500 hotel rooms in the country are unavailable. Sol Melia said in November that it expected insurers probably would cover the damage to its hotels. The company also said it has no plans to cut jobs at those resorts, which employ almost 1,700 people.

No one at Sol Melia was immediately available to comment.