

# Greece hit by new general strike against austerity

Thousands of people protested across Greece against the next round of spending cuts, required in return for another bailout installment

The 24-hour strike is the country's 20th national stoppage since the debt crisis erupted two years ago and comes as EU leaders met in Brussels. Taxi drivers, doctors, teachers and air traffic controllers were among those taking part in the rallies. Athens police used tear gas to disperse demonstrators throwing petrol bombs.

Syntagma Square was temporarily shut down but has since reopened to traffic; it was quite a small protest as Greek protests go and remained mainly peaceful. Protesters threw petrol bombs and stones at police blocking off parts of the capital's main square before parliament. Officers responded with tear gas and stun grenades. Thousands of protesters gathered for rallies ahead of two separate demonstrations in central Athens, amid a heavy police presence. Other protests were also planned across the country. The strike takes place as European leaders are meeting in Brussels for a summit in which Greece's economic fate is likely to feature large.

Greece is currently preparing a 13.5bn-Euro (£11bn; \$17.7bn) austerity package to satisfy the 'troika' of International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank lenders in return for its next 31.5bn-Euro tranche of



Members of Greece's Communist Party march during a 24-hour labour strike

aid. The country is due to run out of money next month.

However, trade union leaders say they hope to show EU leaders that a new wave of wage and pension cuts will only worsen the plight of the

Greek people.

Greece is in its fifth consecutive year of recession and more than a quarter of its workforce is unemployed. Anger has led to a loss of faith in the state, he says, with Greeks

increasingly turning to political extremes such as the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party. Although the Greek government has vowed to stay the course, social unrest could yet prove explosive, our correspondent adds.

## EU acts against harm from biofuel crops

**The EU is changing its policy on biofuels to encourage energy production from waste rather than from food crops**

The European Commission says clearing land in order to plant biofuel crops can often cancel out the environmental benefits of biofuel. In some cases forests are chopped down.

The EU is putting a cap of 5 percent on the food-based biofuel allowed in the renewable energy used in transport. The EU's total renewable energy target for transport fuel is 10 percent by 2020. The Commission will change the 2009 Renewable Energy Directive and the 1998 Fuel Quality Directive. New biofuel installations will have to meet a minimum 60 percent threshold in terms of their efficiency in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Now the EU is trying to shift biofuel production from food crops to farm waste, algae and straw.

Clearing land to plant food for biofuel releases the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) through ploughing and can involve deforestation, which reduces the 'carbon sinks' — the trees that absorb CO<sub>2</sub>.

## Devices with next-generation screens

**HTC and Sharp have unveiled devices featuring next-generation screens**

HTC's J Butterfly phone has a 5in (12.7cm) display offering an industry-leading 440 pixels per inch. This offers 25-40% higher resolution — meaning more detail — than comparable devices from Samsung, Apple, Nokia and LG.

Sharp's new Aquos Pad tablet is the first to use its new Igzo technol-

ogy which promises sharper images while using less power. Sharp has previously said at least one of its customers also planned to incorporate the innovation in its devices. Several device makers have signalled plans to announce new tablets over the coming weeks.

HTC's Android-based device is set to go on sale in Japan in December. Its size places it somewhere between a typical smartphone and

tablet in a category some term a "phablet". Smaller, densely packed pixels mean users can hold a device to their face without being able to distinguish the individual blocks of colour used to make up an image. HTC's 440ppi — pixels per inch — resolution offers a performance-boost over rival flagship devices including Samsung's similarly-sized Galaxy Note 2 with a 267ppi screen.

## China's economy slows but data hints at rebound

**China's economy has slowed for a seventh quarter as problems in Europe and the US hurt demand for its goods**

The annual rate of growth was 7.4 percent in the third quarter, down from 7.6 percent in the previous three months. However, there were signs that the world's second-biggest economy was now stabilising and rebounding. That would be good news for China, which is facing a leadership change, and the rest of the world, which has benefited from its recent boom.

China's growth over the past few years has been led by the success of its export and manufacturing sector, as well as by a credit-fuelled investment boom directed by the government. But a number

of issues have recently hurt demand for China's exports, not least the debt crisis in the Eurozone and a sluggish rebound in the US. This had increased worries that China's economic growth would slow further in coming months, and may even dip below the 7 percent mark, leading to a longer economic slump both inside and outside of the country.

That is something that China was keen to avoid as it prepares for a once-in-a-decade leadership change. China's ruling communist party is about to unveil its next generation of leaders in November. The fears had been that a sharp slowdown in the economy may result in business cutting jobs, leading to higher unemployment.



China's economy slows

## Spain education strike leaves lessons disrupted for third day

**Parents and teachers joined the third and final day of student protests in Spain last Thursday over proposed cuts to the education budget**

Rallies were held in several cities to demand that austerity measures, that have seen the number of classroom teachers shrink, be reversed. Student unions say assistance for students from low income backgrounds has been reduced while tuition fees have been hiked.

"More than three million young people have showed with this fundamentally democratic action that they won't allow the Popular Party's government to destroy public education," said Tohil Delgado from del Sindicato de Estudiantes. Around 5 billion Euros has been cut from the education budget since 2010.

Last month, the government revealed its tightest budget yet in a bid to cut the deficit. With more than 50 percent youth unemployment and the highest school drop-out rate in Europe, Spain's leaders are facing increasing discontent over the severity and speed of their debt reduction plan.

## Compromise deal on Eurozone bank supervisor

**EU leaders have agreed to phase in a single supervisory body for Eurozone banks during the course of next year. A legislative framework is to be agreed among member states by January 1st, 2013.**

The European Central Bank (ECB) will be given supervisory responsibility, with the power to intervene in any bank within the eurozone. The deal appears to be a compromise between France and Germany, who earlier disagreed over the timing and over the number of banks the ECB would oversee. France and the EU Commission wanted joint banking supervision, with the ECB in the lead role, to be launched in January. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been more cautious. She says national budget discipline is the priority.

Germany had been at odds with the European Commission over the scope of the proposed ECB supervision. Under the draft plan, all 6,000 banks in the 17-nation Eurozone would be included, but Germany wanted it limited to the biggest, 'systemic' banks. Previously, the German government has expressed concern about retaining supervisory responsibility within Germany over the country's Landesbanks.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**