

Rio protest over transport fare rise ends in violence

Hundreds of people in Rio de Janeiro have clashed with police during a protest against increased fares for the Brazilian public transport system

Commuters were caught up in the violence at Rio de Janeiro's Central Station during rush hour. Riot police fired tear gas and tried to disperse the crowd, while activists hurled stones and petrol bombs.

Six other people were also injured and at least 20 protesters were arrested.

Last year, similar protests grew into a nationwide movement against corruption and excessive spending ahead of the Football World Cup, which Brazil will host in June and July. Those protests began at the end of May 2013 in Sao Paulo, when the local authorities announced ticket prices would rise. The fare increase was revoked after weeks of protests, with the federal government helping the state and municipal authorities to foot the bill.

Recently Rio's Mayor Eduardo Paes announced a 9 percent increase in transport fares, coming into. The single bus fare goes up from 2.75 Reais (\$1.20; £0.70) to 3 Reais (\$1.30; £0.80). A demonstration was called against the rise. It began peacefully, with hundreds of protesters gathering outside the Candelaria Cathedral, in Rio's city centre. They marched towards the Central Station, a major underground, train and bus hub.



Members of the 'Free Pass' movement invade the Central Train Station in Rio de Janeiro

"We won't pay three Reais," chanted the demonstrators.

"We want Fifa-standard hospitals too," they shouted, making reference to the high standards demanded by the World Cup organisers for the event's venues.

Some activists jumped the gates

and vandalised ticketing machines. Police charged against the crowd and fired tear gas. The activists hurled petrol bombs. The clashes took place around 18:00 local time, during the busy Rio rush hour. There was panic inside and outside the station. Shops were vandalised,

several commuters were hurt.

The violent clashes have increased concerns about security during the World Cup, which will kick off in Sao Paulo on June 12th and will end in Rio on July 13th. Rio will also host the 2016 Olympic Games.

Multi-million Euro violin recovered from attic

An extremely rare multi-million-Euro Stradivarius violin has been found in a suitcase in an attic in Milwaukee, America

The 300-year-old instrument, which had been lent to a symphony concert violinist, was stolen last month. It was recovered following the arrest of three unidentified suspects, one of whom has a history of stealing art in Milwaukee.

Critics slam new Internet curbs in Turkey

A vote in Turkey's Parliament to tighten government control over the Internet has sparked condemnation at home and abroad

It will mean that telecommunications authorities can block web pages within hours, with no need for a prior court order, and it will allow individuals' browsing histories to be stored for up to two years. As the EU expressed concern at the news, the opposition claimed it was part of efforts by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to stifle a corruption scandal. Some in Turkey fear Big Brother style surveillance if the law is given final approval by the president.

"People won't be able to make comments as they please," said Istanbul resident Yilmaz Aslan.



"Freedom will be limited. You were able to share via the Internet what you can't say in person. But that it not possible anymore. Freedom has gone."

"It is damaging Turkey's reputation, if we look at it from an international perspective," added fellow Istanbul dweller Burak Orhan.

"Turkey is becoming a more oppressive country. People's freedoms are being limited."

Turkey already has strict internet laws under which thousands of websites have been blocked, from news portals viewed as close to Kurdish militants to gay dating sites. Social media sites have been awash with alleged recordings of ministers including Prime Minister Erdogan and businessmen close to him, which are presented as evidence of wrongdoing. While their authenticity may be in doubt, Erdogan continues to reject corruption claims, saying they are part of an organised bid to undermine him.

Sony and Volvo to cut more jobs

Big names in the electronics and transport world are making major job cuts

Sony is reducing its payroll by 5,000 — just over three percent of its global workforce — as part of an effort to trim the equivalent of 730 million Euros a year from its fixed costs in the longer term. The company also warned it expects steep losses this year.

The layoffs come as it quits the personal computer business and splits off its heavily loss-making TV division to focus more on making smartphones and tablets. Sony already announced 10,000 job losses in the past year. The additional 5,000

include 1,500 in Japan. The rest are in its overseas operations.

Charges associated with the moves will combine with weaker than expected showings in mobile phones, TVs and PCs to pitch the company into a net loss this fiscal year of 110 billion Yen (803 million Euros) it said. Speaking to reporters in Tokyo, Chief Executive Kazuo Hirai said spinning the TV unit off into a wholly owned subsidiary did not mean a disposal is imminent. "If you are asking if we have any plan to sell off our TV business, I can say we have absolutely no plan to do so right now," he said.

But the CEO underlined that

while he believes he can restore the company to lasting profit, it has to change. "I think we are heading in the right direction, and by making it a separate company we will speed decision-making up. As for the future, there are many possibilities, and not just for our TV business."

Lorry maker Volvo has announced it is to increase its planned job cuts to 4,400 this year. That is more than double its original layoff total announced last year and will involve staff in manufacturing, sales and marketing.

Volvo makes heavy-duty trucks under the Renault, Mack and UD brands, as well as its own name.

No holiday cheer for Eurozone retailers as shoppers cut December spending

The Christmas shopping season was a big disappointment for Eurozone retailers

There was a sharp fall in demand. It was down 1.0 percent from December 2012. Even spending on food and drink was lower. There was also a month-on-month decline from November of 1.6 percent.

Consumers are the weak link in the Eurozone's recovery from its worst ever recession. They are reluctant to spend at a time of near record unemployment. The temptation is for retailers to lower prices to entice shoppers back.



People carry bags near a department store in Vienna

But that risks deflation, which could force the European Central Bank to come up with more stimulus measures. "A weakness in domestic demand doesn't help the picture on prices. Even if we do see

some modest growth in the economy, that doesn't mean that inflation risks are immediately disappearing," said Giada Giani, an economist at Citigroup.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



Berlin Film Festival opens with Hoffman a noted absence

The 64th Berlin Film Festival opened with a muted fanfare, with the gala overshadowed by the death of celebrated US actor, Philip Seymour Hoffman

The 46-year-old, who is suspected of overdosing on heroin, was meant to attend the event with *God's Pocket*. Jury Chair and film producer and screenwriter James Schamus said Hoffman would still be there in spirit.

"That news was pretty tough on all of us," Schamus told a news conference, with all the jury members present. Wes Anderson's comedy *The Grand Budapest Hotel* has had its premiere and is one of 20 movies in competition for the festival's Golden Bear trophy.