

Athens witnesses clashes between police and protesters

Police have clashed with demonstrators as thousands marched through the Greek capital, Athens, in protest at the Government's austerity measures

At least 17 people were injured, one critically, as police used tear gas and stun grenades to disperse youths hurling stones and petrol bombs. Police said there were several arrests and that two officers were hurt. The march was part of a 24-hour strike that has brought public services to a halt and paralysed transport networks.

At least 20,000 people marched through the capital, police said, while another 8,000 protested in the northern city of Thessaloniki. Those injured during the clashes in Athens were treated at two hospitals.

The strike was called by unions after the Greek Government proposed a new austerity package to try to reduce the budget deficit and ease the country's crippling debt crisis. Unions say the policies are making Greece's problems worse. Many Greeks are angry over job losses, tax rises and pension and wage cuts, enforced by the Government to meet the terms of an international bail-out. But there is concern that the bail-out has not worked.

Protester Vangelis Papadoyianis, a 46-year old IT worker, says, "They want to suppress social rights



A woman shouts at policemen in front of the Greek Parliament in central Athens

acquired in past decades and take us back to the Middle Ages to save banks and bankers."

A four-hour strike by air traffic controllers badly disrupted flights in a country heavily dependent

on tourism. Unions said hospitals would be operating with skeleton staff only, schools would be closed, and all train and ferry services were being suspended.

Some banks were shut, while

others were open but kept their shutters half-rolled down, fearing violence that might erupt during the day. Last May, three bank workers died in a petrol bomb attack during anti-austerity demonstrations.

New green plastic made from milk curd

This new plastic is made using whey protein, which means it is biodegradable

"We have developed a new bioplastic based on whey protein, used for making recyclable food packaging," says Elodie Bugnicourt of Barcelona-based Research Institute IRIS. "Whey is a by-product of cheese production. It contains about 7 percent of dry matter, rich in protein that can be used to manufacture the so-called 'whey layer' — our new bioplastic," he explained.

Each year, European cheese factories produce 50m tonnes of whey. Some of it is reused but almost 40 percent of it is discarded. A group of small companies in Spain's Catalonia has got together under an EU-funded project with the aim of cutting the waste and using this by-product to create new materials. The whey collected from cheese-making is filtered and spray-dried to extract the pure whey protein. This is then used in several thin layers to create plastic film for food packaging.

This new technology can be implemented on an industrial scale over the next two years, to produce biodegradable plastic film, other forms of food packaging and even food trays. "There are 14 partners working on this project, specialised in plastic, packaging, recycling and engineering, so we have brought together all the right players to make the project a success," says Mr. Bugnicourt.

Major overhaul for HSBC to cut costs

HSBC, Europe's biggest bank, wants to save up to \$3.5bn by cutting the scale of its wealth management and retail divisions

The bank is also streamlining IT operations and the operational structure, though no figures were given for the number of job cuts. HSBC disclosed the plans ahead of a meeting with key investors. The bank's problems were revealed after a big rise in costs held back profits. The proportion of revenue spent on operational costs was 61 percent in the first quarter, and HSBC said it wanted to reduce this to 48-52 percent by 2013.

HSBC said in a statement that it would now focus its wealth management business on 18 key economies, and limit retail banking to markets where it can achieve profitable scale. The bank said it would be directing investment into fast-growing national economies including Mexico and Turkey, and to certain wider regions, such as Asia and the Middle East.

Social media in the classroom

Social media can be a tool for political and social change, it can also be a powerful aid in the classroom

In Saskatoon in the middle of Canada, primary school children are going to Brazil — via the Internet. They link up with other children all over the world to collaborate on projects, ask each other questions and send each other videos. The children also

make videos about issues like the environment and upload them. For them, leisure and learning have moved a step closer to each other. Anna, one of the pupils, explains, "When you read a text book it tells you about what the land, the geography, the climate is like. But when you're actually talking to them and getting the information from word of mouth, and not from an encyclopaedia, it's kind of like

you're getting the full story."

While social media can bring teachers together, it can also divide them. However, social networking can be a great teaching tool, as long as it is balanced with other learning tools and privacy is protected. Social networks also keep people in contact with their schoolmates long after they've left school and moved on into adult life — which can't be a bad thing.

Denmark makes its case for stricter border checks



A Danish custom officer at border control

Denmark, one of the Schengen states, is to re-impose controls on its frontiers with Germany and Sweden

Finance Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen said customs booths would be erected at crossings, as well as at harbours and airports. Insisting the controls were

compatible with Schengen membership, he blamed a rise in cross-border crime. A populist right-wing party allied to the Government had called for the move.

The Schengen Agreement, which dates back to 1995, abolished internal borders, enabling passport-free movement between a large

number of European countries. Denmark joined in 2001 along with other Scandinavian countries. "We have reached agreement on re-introducing customs inspections at Denmark's borders as soon as possible," the Danish Minister of Finance, Hjort Frederiksen, says. "Over the past few years, we have seen an increase in trans-border crime, and this is designed to curb the problem. We'll be building new facilities at the Danish-German border, with new electronic equipment and number-plate identifiers." He adds that he wants Danish customs officers to be permanently present at the Oeresund Bridge border crossing between Denmark and Sweden.

Spain earthquake: thousands in Lorca sleep out in fear



A man carries his belongings. Thousands of people have spent the night outdoors in the southern Spanish town of Lorca after an earthquake which killed at least eight people

The magnitude-5.2 tremor toppled several buildings after striking at a depth of just 10km, 120km southwest of Alicante. Lines of cars lay crushed under tonnes of rubble after Spain's worst earthquake for 50 years. Shocked residents and workers rushed out of buildings and gathered in squares,

parks and open spaces after the quake struck.

Spanish TV captured dramatic images of a church bell tower crashing to the ground, landing just metres from a cameraman. As night fell, many of Lorca's 90,000 residents were either unable or still too afraid to return to their homes.

The Red Cross had set up a temporary shelter with 800 beds on the edge of town, but many people preferred to 'sleep outside' to be near their homes or for fear of aftershocks.

Many people spent the night huddled under blankets in parks and other open spaces including an outdoor basketball court and playgrounds. The Interior Ministry says 225 emergency military units and 400 workers, including rescuers with dogs, have been sent to Lorca. Some 350 ambulances have transferred 400 patients out of two of the town's hospitals.

Spain has hundreds of earthquakes every year but most of them are too small to be noticed.