

Madrid 'indignant' protesters clash with riot police

At least 20 people injured — including seven police officers — in recent clashes between riot police and protesters in Madrid

Police stopped the demonstrators, known as 'the indignants', from entering a square which has become a focus of anti-government protests. It was the most serious incident since the protest movement began in mid-May. The indignants are complaining

about the Government's handling of the economy and high unemployment. More than 200 police had been deployed to close the Puerta del Sol Square last week.

Hundreds of demonstrators marched across the city to protest against the closure. Monitored



Demonstrators from the 15M movement shout slogans at police during a protest in central Madrid

by police helicopters, they held a rally at the Plaza de Cibeles and many then gathered outside the Interior Ministry on the Paseo de la Castellana. Witnesses said several police vans arrived and riot

police charged into the crowd.

A spokesman for the Emergency Services said that 20 people were slightly injured, including seven policemen. Four people were taken to hospital for

observation.

Spain's unemployment rate is the highest in the EU, at 21.3 percent, and is particularly high among the under-25s, at 44.6 percent.

Third of adults use smartphone

Nearly one in three adults in the UK now uses a smartphone, according to a report by the telecoms regulator Ofcom

Apple's iPhone was said to be the most popular brand. However, teenagers appeared to favour RIM's Blackberry devices. The report notes that the increased uptake of smartphones has led to a dramatic rise in mobile Internet use. Facebook was the most visited website on handheld devices, with 43m hours spent on it in December 2010.



Ofcom's study also looked at how people use the Internet via home fixed line connections. Its analysis was based on a survey of 2,481 adults who have access to broadband. Among those who took part, the most popular task was sending and receiving email (89 percent). More people turned to their computer to do online banking than used it to watch television. Online privacy was a concern for the minority of people surveyed, with worries appearing to grow as people got older.

US avoids default as Obama signs debt bill into law

President Barack Obama signs legislation to increase the US debt ceiling and avert a financial default, after Congress votes in favour of a bipartisan compromise deal

The bill cleared its final hurdle in the Senate by 74 votes to 26, after negotiations went down to the wire. It raises the debt limit by up to \$2.4tn from \$14.3tn, and makes savings of at least \$2.1tn in 10 years. But the bill's passage failed to lift financial markets.

The bill's signing came just 10 hours before the expiry of a deadline for Washington to raise its borrowing limit, after drawn-out talks between Republicans, Democrats and the White House.

Without a deal to raise the debt ceiling, the US would have been unable to meet all its bills, the Treasury Department had warned. Speaking at the White House shortly after the decisive vote in the Senate, President



A trader works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange

Obama said it was 'pretty likely that the uncertainty surrounding the raising of the debt ceiling for businesses and consumers has been unsettling'. "It's something we could have avoided entirely," he added.

The President said more action was needed, saying it was impossible for the US to 'close the deficit with just

spending cuts'. He urged Congress to now look to boost the economy through measures to create jobs and increase consumer confidence. "We can't balance the budget on the backs of the very people who have borne the biggest brunt of this recession," the President said, reprising one of his key themes of recent weeks.

Too popular Swiss Franc causes forthcoming rate cuts

Swiss National Bank announces a shock cut in interest rates to try to stop investors buying the country's currency, which is seen as a safe haven in times of economic turmoil

The Central Bank has called the Franc 'massively overvalued' and plans to cut its target rate to 'as close to zero as possible' from an already rock-bottom 0.25 percent. It will also significantly increase the supply of Francs to the money market. "The

SNB is keeping a close watch on developments on the foreign exchange market and will take further measures against the strength of the Swiss Franc if necessary', the bank said.

The Euro shot up in response, gaining 2.5 percent on the day versus its Swiss counterpart after hitting a new record low before the SNB news. The Dollar also rose sharply. But analysts said that trend could prove temporary.

With low-debt Switzerland seen

as a refuge for investors from an escalating Eurozone debt crisis and fears of a US rating downgrade, the Franc has surged 18 percent against the Euro and 22 percent against the Dollar in recent months.

Swiss exporters have called on both the SNB and the Government to take action against its steep rise although the bank has also been criticised for the heavy losses it incurred in its post-crisis interventions in 2009 and 2010.

UK student wins Microsoft Excel World Championship

UK student Rebecca Rickwood wins global competition to find the best user of Microsoft's spreadsheet software, Excel 2007

Rebecca, 15, was one of 228,000 competitors from 57 countries. She beat 78 students in the final round. Competitors were required to perform timed tests to demonstrate their skill at making spreadsheets. Rebecca was presented with her \$5,000 prize at a ceremony in San Diego, California.

"I heard my name read out in first place and I just couldn't believe it. I'm ecstatic, I just can't believe I won and now I'm world champion. It's a day I'll never forget," she said. Rebecca is a pupil at Sawtry Community College, a specialist maths and computing secondary school in Cambridgeshire. Her instructor Pam Kitchen was ecstatic to hear of her success, "Her father phoned me to tell me the news. I don't know who was more excited, him or me!"

Sawtry Community College runs extra-curricular classes for students in Microsoft software. Rebecca initially entered an online competition for Microsoft Excel 2007. "She scored 1,000 out of 1,000," Mrs. Kitchen said. The girl was then invited to enter the global competition. "She got a hundred percent in the World Championship too."

The annual contest involves regional heats across the globe, with winners progressing to a shortlist of ten finalists. Rebecca won out in a list dominated by pupils from Asia. Rebecca honed her skills by studying at lunch-time and in the evenings at the school.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies