



Protests spread in Afghanistan



Seven were killed and over 76 injured in the first three days of anti-US protests in Afghanistan. Protests were sparked by reports that US guards in Guantanamo Bay desecrated the Koran. According to the local population, four policemen and soldiers were killed in province Ghazni, south-west of Kabul.

Uzbekistan protesters under fire after prison break

Protesters in Andijan, Uzbekistan have been fired on by government troops after taking over the Mayor's office and releasing prisoners. VOA news is reporting 9 dead, 34 injured, 10 police officers held as hostages, and some 2,000 prisoners released.

Pope starts process of making John Paul II a saint



Today Pope Benedict XVI announced, in a meeting with the Roman clergy at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, that the process for beatification of Pope John Paul II can be started soon. Usually there is a five year waiting period after the death of a candidate for beatification before the procedures may begin. Pope Benedict XVI waived this period on May 9

Weather:



New York City Henry Hudson highway retaining wall collapses

Part of a stone retaining wall alongside the Henry Hudson Parkway in New York City near 181st Street collapsed today at 20:00 UTC. The parkway was closed in both directions.

According to New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, no-one was injured, and there was no vehicular or pedestrian traffic at the time of the collapse. Several parked cars were buried under rubble and debris, which spilled out across Riverside Drive where it merges with the northbound lanes of the parkway and onto the parkway itself.

The mayor said that repair work on the wall is planned to begin next week.

Pope Benedict XVI begins process for sainthood of Pope John Paul II



Today Pope Benedict XVI announced, in a meeting with the Roman clergy at the Basilica of St. John Lateran, that the process for beatification of Pope John Paul II can be started soon. The process of beatification is the first step in Catholic Church toward the proclamation of sanctification (canonization) of a person.

Usually there is a five year waiting period after the death of a candidate for

beatification before the procedures may begin. Pope Benedict XVI waived this period on May 9. The only other case where the waiting period has been waived was Mother Teresa, whose beatification was begun in 1998, a year after her death, and completed in 2003.

John Paul II may not be styled a saint until he has been both formally beatified and canonized, processes that have no timetables and may take several years.

Since the process of beatification should be started in the diocese where the person died, the process should be started by the Cardinal vicar, Camillo Ruini, who should instruct the process under the competent Court.

Protests spread in Afghanistan



Seven were killed and over 76 injured in the first three days of anti-US protests in Afghanistan. The protests are a response to a published report that states US guards in Guantanamo Bay defiled the Koran. Four policemen and soldiers were killed in the attack in the province of Ghazni, southwest of the nation's capital, Kabul. Police chief in Badakhshan, Shah Jahan Noori, reported three dead civilians, and the BBC reported nine more deaths in the fourth day of protests.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Thursday that "respect for religious freedom for all individuals is one of the founding principles of the United States" and that if allegations are proven right, the US will take "appropriate actions".

Demonstrations have been reported in at least 12 Afghan cities, but have also spread to neighbouring Pakistan.

Newsweek reported on May 9 that US guards in Guantanamo Bay placed Korans above toilets, to scare the prisoners, and even flushed one down a commode in a demonstration.

Imams in Kabul expressed their support for demonstrators, but vowed for non-violence.

Uzbekistan protesters under fire after prison break



Protesters in the city of Andijan, Uzbekistan have been fired on by government troops after taking over the Mayor's office and releasing prisoners overnight. VOA news is reporting 9 dead, 34 injured, 10 police officers held as hostages, and some 2,000 prisoners released.

Uzbekistan president Islam Karimov arrived in Andijan this morning to oversee operations, and is expected to make an announcement on national television. Security forces are being deployed, and sporadic automatic gunfire was reported in the city.

Thousands are reported to have taken to the streets of the city to protest the unfair trial of Muslim activists and draw attention to human rights abuses. A trial of 23 local businessmen on charges of religious extremism triggered the protests. Amnesty International reports the law is used by the government to crack down on activists.

The Ferghana Valley region of the Andijon province of is viewed as restive under the rule of Islam Karimov, and Russian officials have stated concerns the protests and unrest may spread in the country. Neighbouring states Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have closed their borders with Uzbekistan.

Irish inflation back on the rise



According to new figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the annual rate of inflation in Ireland has begun to rise again after a period decline. Annualised inflation is now running at 2.2%, up from 2.1% in March.

The figures are derived from the Consumer Price Index which is monitored by the CSO. Despite the increase, inflation remains significantly below the figure for recent years; annualised inflation peaked at 5.1% in February 2003.

The major contributor to the rise was the cost of heating and housing with the Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels group rising 10.6% in the past 12 months - with 2% of that rise in the last month alone.

When broken down more the section marked Energy Products showed a massive 5.3% rise in the past month alone.

This sharp rise in energy costs was offset somewhat by decreases (over the past 12 months) in the following groups: Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages (-0.5%), Clothing and Footwear (-2.8%), Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance (-1.4%), Communications (-0.2%), and Miscellaneous Goods & Services (-1.3%).

According to the CSO the Consumer Price Index is made up of Over 55,000 prices consisting of 613 headings which cover over 1,000 different items.

Bundestag approves EU Constitution



German parliament's lower house, the Bundestag, passed the European Union Constitution yesterday, with 569 yes votes, 23 against and 2 abstentions. Two thirds majority was required to pass it.

The Constitution still needs to be passed through the Bundesrat, the upper house, before it is officially ratified by Germany.

The overwhelming support did not come as a surprise, since Germany, one of the founders of the pact, is one of the biggest EU supporters amongst all members. The German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, was quoted by Der Spiegel as saying: "Whoever wants more democracy in Europe must vote for the constitution." It is expected that the Bundesrat will pass the Constitution with similar ease on May 27.

The European Constitution needs to be ratified by all 25 members of the Union before it takes effect.

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