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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. A report Newsweek has now said to be false. 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.

Report that sparked protests false, says Newsweek

Newsweek magazine apologized to the victims of last week's deadly protests in Afghanistan, which were sparked when a

supposed report stated that US Officials defiled the Koran. The magazine said they had made a mistake on reporting the accusations of the May 9th report, which led to violent anti-US protests in Afghanistan. Over 16 were killed, and more than 100 were injured. While many officials that promoted the protests vowed for non-violence, some in the streets threatened to start a religious war against the United States.

A Newsweek reporter said in a Reuters interview that his information was from a "knowledgeable government source".

Uzbeks fleeing across border to seek refuge



Thousands of Uzbeks are fleeing across Uzbekistan's borders in to seek refuge in neighboring Kyrgyzstan despite the border crossings being closed. This massive exodus is in response to the violence in Andijan. Thousands are said 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. Soldiers opened fire on the demonstrators, killing many. Eyewitness have said that they were unarmed civilians.

It is still unknown how many died as a result. Reports have given the death count as high as 500 with other as low a dozen. UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw called it "a clear abuse of human rights" Many have expressed doubts that the true figure will ever emerge.

Even with Uzbekistan's borders closed, hundreds are reported to have already crossed into Kyrgyzstan. In Korasuv, an Uzbek border town, government buildings were reported to be on fire in addition to frequent clashes between government police and civilians seeking to cross the border.

Andijan has been sealed by government troops, and troops are hunting the leaders of protests against the Uzbek government.

Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov blamed Islamic militants for the violence in the eastern city of Andijan. The unrest led to government troops firing on civilian protesters and rebels, killing at least fifty according to local hospital sources. Independent sources count the number of dead over 100.

Today, President Karimov denied directing his troops to open fire, blaming the outlawed Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir for the deaths following their insurrection.

"I know you want to know who gave the order to fire at them ... No one ordered (troops) to fire at them," Karimov told the news conference in Tashkent today.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing crowds of unarmed protestors being fired upon by soldiers. Human rights groups have lamented Uzbekistan's poor human rights record of torture arbitrary arrest and torture. The White House has called for restraint to avoid further bloodshed. The Russian Foreign Ministry has expressed support for Kamirov in the face of what it terms extremism.

The White House's muted response may reflect the political sensitivity of its air base in southern Uzbekistan which supports its operations in neighbouring Afghanistan. It's widely feared that,

should the unrest spread, Uzbekistan may see the popular overthrow of the government as occurred in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan.

Local elections held in Croatia



Elections for local governments were held in Croatia today. The polls were closed at 19:00 local time (UTC+2). The results are not in yet, but exit polls and preliminary results were published by GONG and State Election Committee.

According to GONG, an NGO observing the elections, Milan Bandić will be able to form a government in the city of Zagreb, since his list has won around 46%. This would give them 27 of 51 seats in the capital city. Bandić is a head of the coalition list formed by Social Democrat Party of Croatia (SDP), Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), and Croatian Pensioner Party (HUS). The preliminary results from the State Election Committee show 40.90% for Bandić at 23:30 local time.

Branimir Glavaš's, who was recently expelled from Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), list seems to be in lead in Osijek according to the exit polls, with 27.24% (which would equal 9 seats in the local parliament), Liberal Party has 18.47% (6 seats) and Croatian Party of Justice is third with 14.5% (4 seats).

According to GONG, Social Democrat Party has a lead in Split with 29.02% of votes (10 seats), while Croatian Democratic Union is following with 18.54% (6 seats).

In Sisačko-Moslavačka county parliament, preliminary results show the lead of a list led by SDP with 34.71%, while HDZ, once led by Franjo Tuđman, is second with 30.64%.

Zagreb county parliament is led by coalition of HSS and SDP with 34.35%.

HDZ is second with 27.10%, according to preliminary results.

Pilot gets six months for smuggling Chinese immigrants

Christian Delgado Gomez, a San Antonio pilot, was sentenced to six months and forced to pay a \$500 fine for smuggling four undocumented Chinese immigrants. The incident occurred on January 24, 2005, when Delgado was arrested at Stinson Municipal Airport in San Antonio where he landed a small aircraft he used to transport the illegal immigrants from Eagle Pass, Texas. The officers who arrested him were acting on a tip that two planes, one from Laredo and another from Eagle Pass, would be carrying illicit cargo. This coincided with a false tip that the cargo would be in coordination with a terrorist act in Boston. The Chinese immigrants were deported.

Jansa reelected President of Slovenian Democratic Party

Janez Janša, the Prime Minister of Slovenia will again serve as the President of Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) after he was reelected on a party congress held in Portorož yesterday. Janša has been the leader of SDS since 1993.

The 8th Congress was held under a slogan: "Slovenian Democratic Party - Slovenia on a new road." Out of 450 delegates, 368 voted for Janša and 3 ballots were void. There were no votes against.

The delegates also voted on proposed changes to SDS statute, with overwhelming consensus. New members will no longer be obliged to present proof that they had not cooperated with the secret service of the "totalitarian regime" prior to 1990, when Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia.

Delegates reached an agreement that the new political program of the party should reflect current economic conditions, as well as aim at increased growth of the country's economy.

Palestinians mark Israel's creation with protests

Sirens wailed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as Palestinians marked what they call the "Nakba" or "catastrophe" of Israel's creation in 1948.

Traffic came to a standstill and people stopped and observed two-minutes of silence, in solidarity with the 700,000 Palestinians who lost their homes and became refugees. The sirens are reminiscent of observances in Israel marking Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Thousands of Palestinians held protest marches, demanding that refugees be allowed to return to their homes in Israel.

"We are looking forward to see that the world would support the Palestinians to achieve their national rights and to have their independent state on the 1967 borders," said Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia.

In a speech to the Palestinian parliament, Mr. Qureia said, "Jerusalem is under occupation, Jewish settlements are expanding daily and the hopes for peace are faltering."

But Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said peace is faltering because of observances like the Nakba.

"The very fact that the Palestinians celebrate the 15th of May, which was the day of the proclamation of the state of Israel, as the day of disaster is very discouraging because it shows a state of mind still disposed to looking at the state of Israel as an obstacle that must be removed, rather than a reality that must be reconciled with," he said.

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North and South Korea to meet next week

Meetings are scheduled for Monday and Tuesday in Kaesong, North Korea,

between vice-ministers of South and North Korea. The talks are the result of telephone messages between the two countries on Saturday and are the first official talks between the countries in 10 months.

The initial element in the discussions is a humanitarian aid request for 500,000 tons of fertilizer. South Korea's government has indicated it will supply this; annual requests for fertilizer run from 200,000 to 300,000 tons.

South Korea has also indicated they will use the meeting to discuss nuclear issues and the resumption of multi-party talks. The U.S. has also met with North Korea's United Nations ambassador to discuss resumption of the six-party talks.

Relations between the two countries, which are technically still at war but under a cease fire, had been warming but high level meetings were cut off when it became known South Korea had airlifted 460 North Korea refugees from Vietnam in 2004. Informal connections began to resume with meetings last month to discuss how North Korea could handle an outbreak of bird flu.

Microsoft Internet Explorer market share drops below 90 percent in U.S.

A report on May 10 by web analytics company WebSideStory estimates usage in the United States of Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) web browser to have fallen to 88.9% by April 29, 2005, from 89.9% on February 18, 2005. Microsoft's strongest competitor, Mozilla Firefox, improved its market share from 5.7% to 6.8%.

All browsers based on Mozilla program code combined have a market share of 9%, while other browser alternatives combined make up a share of 2.1%.

The report also contains data from Germany and Japan. Firefox was found to have a much higher usage share in Germany (22.6%), and a lower one in Japan (2.8%), where Internet Explorer still holds 93.9% of the market.

While Firefox's market share is still increasing in the United States, its growth has slowed down compared to a very rapid increase after its widely reported 1.0 release on November 9, 2004.

Technology writer Paul Festa speculated in an editorial for Silicon.com that the decreasing growth rate "could mean that the browser has converted a substantial proportion of its natural constituency, thought to be early adopters and the technically savvy." Mozilla Firefox is an open-source web browser developed by the non-profit Mozilla Foundation in collaboration with a team of volunteers.

In most countries, Microsoft's Internet Explorer has long enjoyed a market share above 90 percent. Many have attributed this to the browser's deep integration into the Microsoft Windows operating system.

Browser usage also varies strongly for different demographics. PC World, for example, reports only 67% of their visitors use IE.

While Firefox's market share continues to increase, its growth rate has slowed and it may not reach its target of 10% overall market share by the end of 2005.

Perhaps in response to inroads in a market it has dominated so heavily for many years, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates announced plans in February for a new release of the IE browser before the release of Windows Longhorn. The focus of the new release is improved security, which is much sought by users as IE is thought to be the vector of most security flaws in the Windows environment. Two new vulnerabilities have been reported within the past two months which affect Windows NT, 2000, and XP. [1] [2]

Microsoft's new release may be late, as some corporations are taking steps towards promoting Firefox as an alternative to Internet Explorer. CNET News reported on Thursday that technology giant IBM is encouraging its employees to use Firefox. IBM is also promoting other open-source technologies such as the free Linux operating system.

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