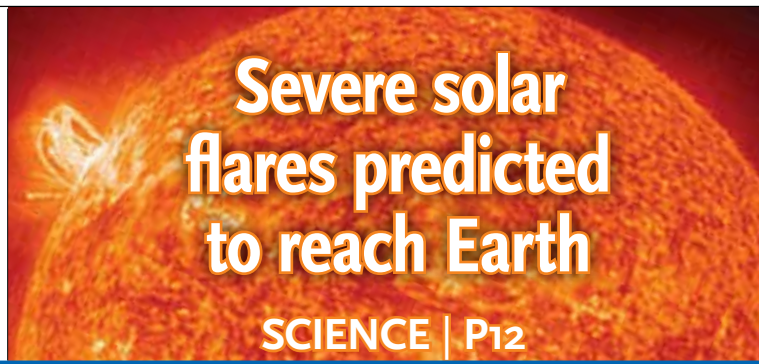




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GREG WOOD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Unions plan massive strike across Europe

By ANA CURBELO
Epoch Times Staff

MADRID—Spain's two largest unions are among several in Europe calling on workers to stage a general strike on Sept. 29.

The Spanish unions oppose measures proposed by President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and other European governments that are cutting wages and services while raising taxes and fees to deal with dangerously high national debt loads.

The Workers' Commissions and the General Union of Workers will join the strike, which is intended to be part of a coordinated day of action by unions across Europe to stand against the austerity measures.

Before the main strike date, two "warm-up" strikes were also announced at a press conference on June 15. The first will take place on June 30, in Spain's autonomous regions, and the second will be a large-scale rally in Madrid on Sept. 9.

The unions want to "work toward a massive response," they say, as opposed to the lacklustre public sector employees strike held on June 8, where the turnout was lower than organizers expected.

The Spanish unions say that the general strike is not designed to force a regime change, but rather to achieve a change in economic policy. Some of the most unpopular elements of the government's plan include relaxing rules to allow companies in economic trouble to fire employees more easily, and a 5 percent pay cut for civil servants.

Union leaders Candido Mendez, UGT, and Ignacio Fernandez Toxo, CCOO, have stated that they consider the president's reforms to be a "useless sacrifice" for Spanish society that will delay economic recovery and increase the country's 20 percent unemployment rate, the highest in the eurozone.

PLEASE SEE UNIONS ON P4

EUROPE STUCK BETWEEN DEBT AND PROTESTS



Public sector workers march during a general strike called by the public sector in Seville, Spain, June 8, 2010. Spain's unions plan to join others in what could become a large EU general strike on Sept. 29 as several labour groups protest austerity measures EU governments have taken to rein in spending and pay off dangerously high deficits. JEAN-CHRISTOPHE VERHAEGEN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

All but one EU country put on debt 'watch list'

By KREMENA KRUMOVA
Epoch Times Staff

The European Commission (EC) announced on Wednesday that three new countries—Cyprus, Denmark, and Finland—have been put on the watch list of countries with "government deficits deemed high enough to pose a threat to the wider European economy."

The watch list now includes 26 of the 27 member countries,

leaving only Luxembourg as being within the EU limit of a 3 percent budget deficit. Luxembourg finished 2009 at 2 percent.

Cyprus recorded a deficit of 6.1 percent of GDP last year. Deficits are expected to reach 5.4 percent this year in Denmark and 4.1 percent in Finland. All three countries have been given deadlines to correct the situation.

The EC, however, also announced that 12 countries have taken effective action to fight their excessive

budget deficits, by cutting government spending and introducing revenue-boosting measures as promised. Among them are Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

With the EC trying to keep its financial house from crumbling, Moody's announcement on Monday that it had downgraded Greece's credit rating to junk status was criticized as "surprising" and "unfortunate" by EU Commissioner Olli Rehn.

The four-notch drop was

justified, according to the U.S.-based credit ratings agency, because of Greece's lowered creditworthiness, despite the bailout plan approved last month giving Greece a €133.5 billion loan from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

European Parliament Socialist group leader Martin Schulz said on Wednesday that the financial institutions are making the situation worse.

PLEASE SEE EU ON P5

Group calls on Harper to raise rights with Chinese leader...

By MATTHEW LITTLE
Epoch Times Staff

PARLIAMENT HILL, Ottawa—Battered by wind and rain, Falun Gong practitioners held firm to banners Wednesday afternoon on Parliament Hill as they called on the government and Prime Minister Stephen Harper to raise their voice for human rights in China.

With details emerging of a planned visit to Canada by Chinese communist leader Hu Jintao in the days prior to the G20 in Toronto later this month, groups concerned about human rights in China have begun planning events to push the government to speak out.

On Wednesday, about 100 Falun Gong practitioners and their supporters gathered outside while the Parliamentary Friends of Falun Gong, a group

comprised of MPs and senators that includes members from all four parties, held a press conference inside.

The coordinated events are part of an ongoing request to Harper to make human rights, and the persecution of Falun Gong, a central part of the agenda when meeting with Chinese leaders.

"People must not be jailed or killed for their religious beliefs or spiritual practices," said NDP MP Bill Siksay, chair of the parliamentary group. He said they were calling on the prime minister to raise the issue of persecuted Falun Gong practitioners—specifically the 12 who have family in Canada.

Liberal Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Paul Martin responded to a similar call when they held office.

PLEASE SEE HARPER ON P3

... as new wave of harrassment targets performance company

By WEI YONG
Epoch Times Staff

Forged e-mails containing threats from someone claiming to be a Falun Gong practitioner are being sent to theatre management in the United States in an effort to sabotage the shows of a New York-based performing arts company.

In an e-mail sent to the Providence Performing Arts Center at Rhode Island, the impersonator highly recommended the Shen Yun Performing Arts show, but also strongly urged theatre management to "promote" and "practice" Falun Gong or else "punishment" and "bad luck" would follow.

As the State Theatre in New Brunswick, New Jersey, prepares to welcome the return of Shen Yun next week, the theatre's chairman and CEO also received e-mails from someone claiming

to be a Falun Gong practitioner.

Similar e-mails have been received by a theatre in San Francisco.

Since Shen Yun first began bringing performances of classical Chinese dance and music to audiences around the world, the Chinese communist regime has sought to stop the group from performing.

Tom Liang of the New Jersey Falun Dafa Association said he believes the e-mails were sent by someone working for the Chinese regime.

"The e-mail took on a very odd tone, threatening and demanding the theatre's full support for the show. It tried to portray its author as a 'mentally disordered' person and wanted others to believe that it's from a Falun Gong practitioner," said Mr. Liang.

PLEASE SEE COMPANY ON P5

Ban energy drink sales to minors, say health officials

By JOAN DELANEY
Epoch Times Staff

A father who believes his 15-year-old son died as a result of consuming a popular energy drink wants Ottawa to ban the sale of the caffeinated, sugar-laced beverages to minors.

James Shepherd told the House of Commons health committee recently that his healthy son died of arrhythmia, an irregular heartbeat, after consuming an energy drink just hours prior to his sudden death in 2008.

Shepherd and the deputy chief health officer of Prince Edward Island also urged the committee to place restrictions on the advertising and marketing of such products. The drinks, which include the brand names Red Bull, Full Throttle, and Rockstar, are classified as natural health products in Canada.

Dr. Lamont Sweet told the committee that after the P.E.I. government lifted a ban on the sale of canned soft drinks in May 2008, energy drinks soon appeared across the province.

"Almost immediately, teachers in schools noted students becoming hyperactive, agitated, and unable to concentrate," he said.

Dr. Sweet said the drinks' classification as natural health products seems inappropriate given that their concentration of caffeine is "enormous" compared to cola drinks, leading to possible toxic amounts not expected in a natural food.

Energy drinks are banned in P.E.I. schools, but kids can still buy them in stores—something home and school associations across Canada are hoping to change. They are urging Ottawa to implement a nationwide ban on selling the drinks to anyone under 18.

"We just see that it's a problem and it's going to become even more of a problem in the future, says Owen Parkhouse, president of the P.E.I. Home and School Federation.

Parkhouse says that in some cases, children have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder when in fact they were "not getting enough sleep for a combination of reasons, and one of these reasons is consumption of energy drinks with caffeine, and that's a real issue."

Dr. Billy Scantlebury, president of the Medical Society of P.E.I., has said that the drinks are targeted at youth and students through clever marketing campaigns. The family physician from Charlottetown has also said the drinks can cause behavioural problems and anxiety in youth, as well as serious conditions such as heart arrhythmias and palpitations.

As far as Red Bull is concerned, Dr. Andreas Kadi, chief science officer for the company, told the health committee that health authorities around the world have concluded that the drink is safe.

PLEASE SEE DRINK ON P2

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