
TALLIN (URSS) - Près de 78% des votants en Estonie se sont prononcés en faveur de l’indépendance de leur république, alors que 85,7% des votants en Lettonie ont fait de même.

COLORADO SPRINGS (Etats-Unis) - Un Boeing 737 de la compagnie américaine United Airlines s’est écrasé dimanche près de l’aéroport de Colorado Springs (colorado), avec 25 personnes à bord. Il n’y a pas eu de rescapés.

OECD

REUTER: Safe nuclear waste disposal now possible

PARIS - "Western scientists say that early in the next decade they will be able to dispose of nuclear waste deep underground, where it will remain safe for centuries. A panel of senior scientists from national and international atomic agencies told reporters in Paris on Friday they had made great advances in assessing the safety of potential sites. 'Underground disposal of wastes is a way of putting them in a safe place where they will present no risk to future generations, even if those people do not know that these wastes are there’, said Ron Flowers, chief technologist at Britain’s Atomic Energy Research Establishment. He said sites 500 metres (1,500 feet) underground could be commissioned from the year 2005, after detailed studies measuring movement of ground water and rock permeability have been carried out. Flowers was presenting a report by the Nuclear Energy Agency of the OECD on progress in judging safety in disposal over the past 10 years."

THE PERSIAN GULF AFTER THE WAR

FINANCIAL TIMES: Ceasefire agreed

SAFWAN (Iraq) - "Allied commanders yesterday agreed with their Iraqi counterparts the framework for an early ceasefire against a backdrop of mounting political turmoil inside Iraq. The growing anarchy, particularly in the south of Iraq around Basra, has increased pressure on the allies to tie up as quickly as possible the loose ends left by the cessation of hostilities early last Friday. General Norman Schwarzkopf, the allied military commander, was confident after a 2-hour meeting with Lt-Gen Sultan Hashim Ahmed, the Iraqi representative, that the 2 sides were well on the way to a 'lasting peace'... Meanwhile President Saddam, in an apparent move to dispel rumours of his where-abouts, was shown attending a meeting held on Saturday with 3 ministers to discuss the restoration of public services. A 45-second videotape was made available to western media in Baghdad."

DAILY TELEGRAPH: Basra revolts against Saddam

BASRA (Iraq) - "Islamic fundamentalists in the southern Iraqi city of Basra have revolted against the rule of Saddam Hussein and are trying to set up an Islamic state... Refugees said there had been fighting between troops and armed civilians. Other witnesses, however, said that soldiers had joined in enthusiastically as people paraded in the streets shouting their hatred for Saddam's regime. Lorry loads of rebels wearing green
headbands were seen heading along the road to the city. The stream of
refugees, many of whom had been abducted to Iraq from Kuwait, told in
considerable detail of the turmoil inside Basra. They said that a crowd
broke into the central al Haritha jail on Saturday, killing the governor
and freeing 2,000 prisoners and hunting down and killing members of the
Ba’ath party, which imposes Saddam’s reign of fear, who had not already
fled."

OECD ECONOMIES

United States

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Bush seeks more fast-track

WASHINGTON - "The Bush administration, reaffirming its commitment to
free-trade policies, formally asked Congress for special authority to
negotiate liberalized world trade rules and a North American-Free Trade
pact... The administration hopes this year to conclude the so-called
Uruguay Round on international trade, which is designed to liberalize and
expand the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, as well as finish the
recently announced initiative by the US, Mexico and Canada to adopt a
North American Free Trade Agreement. To avoid congressional amendments
that might undermine the proposed accords, the administration wants
lawmakers to extend for 2 years its so-called fast-track negotiating
authority. The authority, which the White House retains until June, makes
pacts negotiated by the administration subject to a simple approval or
disapproval vote by Congress, with no possibility of amendment."

LA TRIBUNE: Mauvais indicateurs en janvier

PARIS - "Certains observateurs attendaient de la publication des
indicateurs avancés américains la confirmation de leurs espoirs d’une
récession courte nés de la révision du PNB américain à la hausse au 4ème
trimestre, de la remontée de la confiance des ménages le mois dernier. Ces
espoirs ont été largement déçus. L’indice composite des principaux
indicateurs, censé préfigurer l’activité dans les prochains mois, a chuté
de 0,4% en janvier, après un recul de 0,1% en décembre (chiffre révisé),
enregistrant sa 6ème baisse mensuelle consécutive... Cette illustration de
la récession à l’œuvre est confirmée par l’évolution des dépenses de
construction, tombées en janvier à leur plus bas niveau depuis 1986. Ces
dépenses ont chuté de 2,6% en janvier, 10ème recul mensuel consécutif, ce
qui porte à 11,1% le déclin sur un an (données corrigées des variations
saisonnières)... La crise de l’immobilier est loin de toucher à son terme,
ce qui renforce les craintes de fragilisation supplémentaire du système
bancaire, lourdement engagé sur ce secteur."

Switzerland

REUTER: Warning on EC-EFTA talks

GENEVA - "Switzerland said on Friday it might reconsider its
participation in talks to create a single market between the European
Community and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Swiss Finance
Minister Jean-Pascal Delamuraz accused the EC of raising its demands on
the 6-nation EFTA group while failing to make concessions in the talks
that began last June... The EC Commission has been trying to get
Switzerland to make exceptions to its ban on trucks of more than 28 tonnes
weight and get Austria to cancel plans to reduce transit licences.
Delamuraz said a number of conditions were required to ensure success of
the talks which should be completed by June this year and lead to the
setting up of the EEA in January 1993, to coincide with the EC’s single
market... ‘If these conditions are not met, Switzerland should seriously
reconsider its participation in the negotiations because it would be very
difficult to present such a result to (Swiss) parliament and to the
(Swiss) population’, Delamuraz said."

United Kingdom

THE INDEPENDENT: City expects deficit

LONDON - "Indications of deepening recession have heightened city
expectations of a budget deficit of up to 12bn pounds sterling, as the
government adds tax cuts to prospects of lower revenues and higher
spending to smooth out the falling economy. The sudden shift in City opinion
is attributed to a deliberate Treasury ‘whispering campaign’, designed to
soften up the markets before a large deficit is published in the Budget on
19 March. As a result of these developments and growing speculation about a general election, the City is predicting lower income taxes, or an increased threshold for basic rate taxpayers, and further cuts in interest rates."