REUTER - WORLD NEWS SUMMARY

WASHINGTON - President George Bush has pulled almost even with Democrat Bill Clinton, according to a poll released on Wednesday, setting up a dramatic climax to the November 3 presidential election. Other polls, however, show the Democratic candidate still has up to a 7 point lead.

SOFIA - The government of Bulgarian Prime Minister Filip Dimitrov, the country's first non-communist cabinet in more than 4 decades, has resigned after losing a confidence vote in parliament.

UNITED STATES - Talks aimed at reunifying the partitioned island of Cyprus got under way on Wednesday after a 2-day delay, with the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities differing over the basis of negotiations.

DUSHANBE - Tajikistan's prime minister has appealed for outside help to save his country from being pulled apart, amid signs that months of bloody internal strife may begin to spill across Central Asia.

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EX-UNION SOVIETIQUE

AFP: Aide: Ouverture à Tokyo de la conférence internationale

TOKYO - "Le Premier ministre japonais Kiichi Miyazawa a ouvert jeudi à Tokyo la 3ème conférence internationale sur l'aide humanitaire et technique à 12 nouveaux Etats issus de l'ex-URSS qui devrait aboutir au lancement d'un nouveau mécanisme de coopération internationale en la matière. 'Tout le monde ici est inquiet de la situation actuelle dans les nouveaux états indépendants', a déclaré M. Miyazawa aux participants, en particulier 'l'instabilité socio-politique et les conflits dans certains Etats (...) qui menacent les efforts de réformes'."

NIHON KEIZAI SHIMBUN: OECD Secretary General’s interview

TOKYO - "Mr. Paye, Secretary-General of the OECD, who is now visiting Japan to attend the Conference on Assistance to the NIS, gave an interview to a NIHON KEIZAI journalist. During the interview, the Secretary General confirmed that as part of OECD assistance to the nations of the former USSR, the Organization will be advising them constructively, using the database which it has developed for technical support and policy formulation purposes... 'The OECD will actively supply the know-how on the technical matters and policy making which it has accumulated so far. We began collecting information one year ago, and have been improving the Data Base in order to make it available'."

REUTER: US, Japan pledge new aid for NIS

TOKYO - "Japan and the US on Thursday pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency winter aid to republics of the former Soviet empire. Hosting the 2-day conference, Japanese Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe said his government would grant $100 million to regions of the former Soviet Union, with an emphasis on the Russian Far East, to help them survive the coming winter. US Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, among delegates from 70 countries and 20 international organisations, said Washington would provide $260 million in food aid and $14 million in emergency medical supplies... Watanabe also urged delegates to make the 5 Asian republics of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan eligible for Japanese official development assistance by including them in a list compiled by the Development Assistance Committee/DAC of the OECD." (This point is also underlined by DIE WELT)
MOSCOW - "Mr. Arkady Volsky, leader of Russia’s industrialists and considered the most influential figure on the political scene after Mr Boris Yeltsin, yesterday laid down his conditions for supporting the Russian president and economic reform. In an interview, the chairman of the Union of industrialists and entrepreneurs said he believed that during November the cabinet 'must be reconstructed', probably round a new prime minister; economic policy 'corrected' along the lines of a new programme which the union has just produced; and a round table of political groups convened under the chairmanship of the Russian president. This should be done before the scheduled Congress of People’s Deputies on December 1, after Mr Yeltsin’s trip to the UK in early November."

EUROPE

STRASBOURG - "Le parlement européen a approuvé, mercredi, le Traité instaurant l'Espace économique européen (EEE), un grand marché entre les 12 pays de la CE et les 7 Etats de l'Association européenne de libre-échange (AELE). Cet avis conforme du Parlement européen constitue la lère étape du processus de ratification dans la CEE de cet accord signé, le 19 mai à Porto, par les pays de la CE et ceux de l’AELE. L’EEE doit également être ratifié par les 19 pays pour entrer en application, en principe, à partir de 1993... Cet accord 'est une lère étape vers l'adhésion pleine et complète à la CE des pays de l’AELE qui le souhaiteraient', a déclaré Marie Jepsen (Danemark), rapporteur du texte sur l’EEE. Quatre des sept pays de l’AELE, la Suisse, l’Autriche, la Suède et la Finlande, ont déjà déposé leur candidature à l’entrée dans la CE. 'Ce traité est le plus important que la Communauté ait jamais conclu avec des pays tiers', a estimé Frans Andriessen, commissaire chargé des relations extérieures. Il créera une vaste zone de libre-échange de 380 millions de consommateurs."

SOMALIA

UNITED NATIONS - The World Bank announced on Wednesday it is donating $20 million in grants to support United Nations efforts to feed thousands of Somalis dying of starvation. Francis Colaco, a World Bank director, told a news conference the bank did not usually get into relief aid or peacekeeping activities. But he said they were motivated by the situation in Somalia which had no functioning government that would allow the bank to institute loans or credits for development projects... The grants include $10 million to the World Food Programme, $7 million to the U.N. Children's FUND (UNICEF) and $3 million to the World Health Organisation. The bank’s contribution is for a 100-day stepped-up U.N. emergency relief programme, now underway."

ECONOMIES OCDE

France

"Trop lourde, complexe et hétérogène, la fiscalité française pesant sur l’immobilier, contraire à la logique économique, devrait être allégée et simplifiée. Tel est le jugement sans appel du Conseil des impôts dans son 12ème rapport sur ‘la fiscalité de l’immobilier urbain’, qui vient d’être remis au président de la République. En plein marasme immobilier, ce rapport risque de faire grand bruit puisqu’il rejoint le diagnostic des professionnels d'un secteur fortement ébranlé par la conjoncture, et met en cause la politique des pouvoirs publics... En 5 ans, entre 1984 et 1989, la pression fiscale sur le patrimoine immobilier urbain bâti a augmenté de 20%... 'La France est un des rares pays de l’OCDE à maintenir un prélèvement fiscal important à la fois sur la détention et sur la transmission des biens immobiliers et où, de surcroit, les droits de mutation à titre onéreux sont aussi élevés’: 18,2% en France contre 1% au Royaume-Uni et en Allemagne."

Germany

HERALD TRIBUNE: Kohl rules out tax rise until 1995

DUSSELDORF - "Chancellor Helmut Kohl said Wednesday that he did not"
support any increase in taxes before 1995 to help pay the bill for German unification. Mr. Kohl told a congress of his Christian Democratic Union that a passage in his main speech on Monday warning about an increase had not been ‘a back door for early tax increases’. He said taxes were needed in 1995, when repayment of 499bn Deutsche marks ($260bn) of old East German debts had to begin."

Sweden

FINANCIAL TIMES: Towards reforming welfare system

STOCKHOLM - "Sweden’s centre-right coalition government is preparing a far-reaching programme to transform the country’s famous cradle-to-grave welfare state by exposing it to market forces and reducing the financial burden on the taxpayer. Mr Carl Bildt, the country’s conservative prime minister, said he wanted to create a ‘welfare market’. Full details of the wide-ranging plans are expected later next month as part of a government ‘convergence’ strategy designed to bring Sweden in line with the standards of the European Community, which it hopes to join at the start of 1995."

Australia

FINANCIAL TIMES: Aust. dollar falls to 5-year low

SYDNEY - "The Australian dollar fell more than half a US cent to a 5-year low of 69.78 US cents yesterday, reflecting renewed international concern about Australia’s economic prospect. The decline in the currency followed a fall in the annual rate of inflation to a 29-year-low of 0.8%, the lowest in the OECD. Mr John Dawkins, the Labor treasurer (finance minister) said lower inflation would not lead to a further cut in official interest rates, which have been reduced 12 times since January 1990. However, there was speculation that the government may cut interest rates from the present rate of 5.75% in an attempt to boost economic activity before the next election, due by June."