
NIGERIA - Le chef de l'Etat nigérian et commandant en chef des forces armées, Ernest Shonekan, a démissionné de ses fonctions, a annoncé mercredi soir la télévision nigériane.

BURUNDI - Le nombre des victimes des massacres ethniques au Burundi a été estimé à "plus ou moins 500 000 personnes" par le ministre burundais des Transports, des Postes et des Télécommunications, Schadrack Niyonkuru, lors d'une conférence de presse au siège de l'UNESCO à Paris.

TURQUIE - 14 rebelles kurdes de Turquie ont été tués par les forces de l'ordre turques dans des accrochages dans différentes localités du sud-est anatolien.

RUSSIE - Le président russe Boris Eltsine a demandé au gouvernement d'élaborer une série de mesures pour renforcer l'ordre public, dans une directive qui prévoit également l'introduction d'un régime de visas pour tous les citoyens de l'ex-URSS se rendant en Russie.

FOOTBALL - 24 pays se sont qualifiés pour la phase finale de la XVème Coupe du monde de football, qui aura lieu dans 9 villes des Etats-Unis du 17 juin au 17 juillet prochains.

LE FIGARO: Le Grand Louvre, enfin! Le président de la République inaugure aujourd'hui l'aile Richelieu du Grand Louvre, autrefois occupée par le ministère des Finances. Une caverne d'Ali Baba presque aussi grande que le Musée d'Orsay pour abriter 12 000 oeuvres et objets d'art dans 165 salles et 3 cours couvertes. 'Une indiscutable réussite', estime le ministre de la Culture, Jacques Toubon.

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NAFTA VOTE

REUTER: US House of Representatives approves NAFTA

WASHINGTON - "The House of Representatives passed the North American Free Trade Agreement by a wider-than-expected margin Wednesday, giving President Clinton an important come-from-behind victory. The vote in favour of the pact was 234-200. The Democratic white House had needed just 218 votes to pass the measure, which was negotiated under the administration of Republican President George Bush. One hundred and thirty two Republicans joined 102 Democrats to pass the measure. Just last week, it looked likely that Clinton would suffer a stinging defeat on NAFTA but intense deal-making turned the tide in the final days. The pact to link the US, Mexico and Canada in a free-trade bloc now goes to the Senate. Approval there in the next few days is considered a safe bet, paving the way for the 3 nations to join forces next year."

AFP: Le dollar en hausse à Tokyo après le oui américain à l'ALENA

TOKYO - "Après avoir cédé un peu de terrain, immédiatement après le oui de la Chambre des Représentants américains à l'ALENA, le dollar s'est réapparié à la mi-journée jeudi sur le marché des changes de Tokyo. A 0500 GMT, le dollar s'établissait à 107,14 yen, en hausse de 0,09 yen par rapport à la clôture de la veille à Tokyo et également au-dessus des 106,80 de la clôture de New-York."
REUTERS: Japan welcomes NAFTA but warns against trade bloc

TOKYO - "Japan on Thursday welcomed the passage of the NAFTA by the US House of Representatives, but warned it should not create economic barriers to countries outside the region. 'If it had been rejected there would have been fears the protectionist movement in the US would strengthen', prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa told reporters. 'Our country welcomes it too'. 'For our country, NAFTA will liberalise and vitalise the North American economy is a great opportunity', foreign ministry spokesman Terusuke Terada said in a statement. 'We expect it to help support and strengthen Asia-Pacific economic development and the system of multilateral free trade'. However he warned against NAFTA becoming an exclusive trade bloc. 'It is important that NAFTA is integrated with GATT and does not raise trade and investment barriers to countries outside its area.'

REUTERS: Canadian businessmen applaud US House NAFTA approval

OTTAWA - "Canadian business leaders Wednesday applauded the approval of the NAFTA by the US House of Representatives and urged Canada's new government to rapidly implement the pact to open up Mexico to their exports. 'We are very pleased and we strongly encourage the government to implement NAFTA on January 1', said Tim Reid, president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce."

APEC

FINANCIAL TIMES: Investment and trade links boosted

"Officials from 15 Pacific countries yesterday agreed on a new trade and investment framework which will mark a modest step towards closer co-operation without setting the stage for creation of an Asian trade bloc. A declaration expected to be approved by trade and foreign ministers of the APEC group, who began their annual meeting last night, will establish a permanent committee on trade and investment. Ms Charlene Barshefsky, deputy US trade representative, said the new framework 'will take APEC beyond its current role as a facilitation and co-operation forum to a policy-making role, to be expanded through consultation and consensus by its members'... Mr Kim Chuisu, South Korea's trade minister, said: 'This is a mandate for a more active approach to advancing regional co-operation'... Mr Tony Miller, Hong Kong’s director-general of trade, said it 'binds nobody but sets out a collective view'. One of APEC’s advantages over other bodies, he said, was its informal atmosphere. An Australian official said the new committee was ‘a step of considerable significance’ although he conceded that ‘to an outsider it might not seem to amount to much’. Differences of view over APEC’s future role were also evident in the officials’ discussions on a report by an eminent persons group headed by Mr Fred Bergsten, a US economist. The report, to be submitted to the ministerial meeting, sets out a series of steps towards creation of a Pacific economic community."

WALL STREET JOURNAL: China fails in bid to place MFN on agenda

SEATTLE - "China’s bid to use the APEC forum to compel the US to grant it unconditional most-favored-nation trading status has apparently failed, officials said. Delegates attending working-level meetings ahead of APEC’s annual ministerial conference, which began Wednesday, said MFN isn’t mentioned in their final report to the group’s foreign and trade ministers and is unlikely to be raised during the conference. 'The (final) document doesn’t mention it at all', said a senior Australian diplomat. 'It’s not a real APEC issue."

EUROPEAN UNION

THE GUARDIAN: Commission maps route to halving unemployment

STRASBOURG - "The EC is to propose sweeping changes to Europe’s labour markets, making increased income and job-sharing the twin props of its strategy to halve unemployment by the end of the decade. The plan, to be put to European finance ministers on Monday, also suggests limits on pay increases and a breaking down of barriers between full- and part-time working. Disincentives to overtime working and pay increases below the rate of productivity are among other controversial proposals. Contrary to the approach of the British government, the Commission insists on maintaining minimum social and welfare standards. It sets its face against wholesale deregulation and defends its proposals as ‘a new and simplified regulation’ of the labour market."
FINANCIAL TIMES: Bundesbank attacks EU over plans for spending

FRANKFURT - "A scathing attack on European Union spending plans is launched today by the Bundesbank, which says they threaten progress towards monetary and political union and will worsen Germany's budget difficulties. In its monthly report for November, published as members of the central bank's decision-making council meet today in Frankfurt to consider further interest rate cuts, the Bundesbank cautions that the financial disciplines embraced by member states under the Maastricht treaty could be undermined by the EU's spending... Adopting the tone normally reserved for its critique of domestic spending, it says the EU's budgetary behaviour must be in harmony with broader macro-economic and monetary objectives. The Bundesbank stops short of urging the German government to curb its contribution to the EU budget, but points out that Germany's transfers to the union are set to increase substantially in the context of a projected steep rise in EU spending as whole. Total EU spending on structural measures is set to be Ecu176bn ($201bn) in 1993-99, compared with Ecu67bn in 1988-92."

FINANCIAL TIMES: Plan for European security conference soon

"The European Union plans to host a European security conference in the first half of 1994, aimed at settling latent frontier and minority problems in eastern Europe, diplomats in Paris said yesterday. Plans are far advanced for the 12 members of the European Union to use their Brussels summit next month to launch the initiative for a European 'stability pact', first broached several months ago by France, the diplomats claimed... Invitations to attend the conference would probably go to members of the Conference on European Security and Co-operation, including the US, Canada and Russia, but excluding those in the Caucasus and central Asia. However, the geographical scope of the 'stability pact' would be limited to Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and the 3 Baltic republics."

OECD ECONOMIES

United Kingdom

THE TIMES: Pressure on Clarke to cut interest rates

"Kenneth Clarke was under mounting pressure last night to cut interest rates after a dramatic fall in the inflation rate gave him unexpected leeway in the run-up to the Budget. Economists, politicians and industrialists agreed that the way had been cleared for the Chancellor to cut rates to 5% on or around Budget day, November 30. The feel-good factor was enhanced by the announcement that BP was cutting petrol prices by 9p a gallon from midnight... A number of records were set. October's figures mean that inflation has been below 2% for the longest period since 1960. The 0.1% fall in the all-items retail prices index was the first in any October since 1962. The annual rate of underlying inflation equalled the lowest on record since these figures were first compiled in 1975."

Danemark

AFP: Les experts optimistes sur l’économie

COPENHAGUE - "Le 'Conseil des Sages' au Danemark, un comité d'experts économiques indépendant du gouvernement, a dressé mercredi un tableau optimiste de l'économie, prévoyant une croissance du PNB de 2,5% en 1994 et 2,2% en 1995 après un niveau zéro cette année. Dans leur rapport semestriel, ils soulignent notamment que le chômage, plai de chronique du pays, enregistrera un recul l'année prochaine, passant de 350 000 (12,5% de la population active) en 1993, à 335 000 en 1994 et à 320 000 en 1995. Cet optimisme est dû notamment au regain de la compétitivité du Danemark après les remous monétaires de l'été, à la modération salariale et à la politique économique du gouvernement de centre-gauche, axée sur des réformes fiscales et du marché du travail."