ITALIE - Le Parti démocratique de la gauche (PDS, ex-communiste) s’est imposé au premier tour des élections municipales partielles de dimanche en Italie, en arrivant en tête dans les plus grandes villes, selon des sondages à la sortie des urnes.

Le secrétaire du Mouvement social italien (MSI, néo-fasciste), Gianfranco Fini, candidat arrivé en deuxième position à Rome, a déclaré que son parti pouvait être une "droite de gouvernement" et pas seulement de "protestation".

BOSNIE - Une grande confusion régnait dimanche sur la reprise mercredi prochain, après 4 semaines d’interruption, des convois humanitaires routiers vers le centre de la Bosnie, la FPRONU affirmant qu’elle aurait lieu, tandis que le Haut Commissariat aux Réfugiés des Nations Unies déclarait n’en rien savoir.

L’aéroport de Sarajevo a été rouvert dimanche pour permettre l’arrivée des vols humanitaires après 24 heures de fermeture due à la neige et à la glace.

Les Douze vont tenter lundi d’arrêter leur position concernant l’acheminement de l’aide humanitaire et la relance du processus de paix en Bosnie, sur la base d’une initiative franco-allemande de levée progressive des sanctions contre la Serbie annoncée le 8 novembre.

ALGÉRIE - Douze islamistes armés ont été tués entre mercredi et samedi derniers en divers points du territoire algérien, ont annoncé dimanche les services de sécurité.

GATT - Le grand marchandage entre Américains et Européens pour tenter de conclure dans les 3 semaines à venir l’Uruguay Round sur une libéralisation du commerce international commence lundi à Washington. La Communauté européenne est pour l’instant dans l’expectative. Elle considère que la balle est dans le camp américain et demande à Washington d’assouplir sa position.

SYRIE-JORDANIE - Le président syrien Hafez al-Assad et le roi Hussein de Jordanie ont affirmé dimanche "la nécessité d’aboutir à une paix juste et globale" au Proche-Orient, a-t-on appris auprès de la présidence syrienne.

REUTER - WORLD NEWS SUMMARY

PARIS - French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur said a GATT world trade accord was impossible unless the United States offered better terms to the European Community.

SKOPJE - All but one of the 116 people aboard a Macedonian airliner were killed when it crashed into a hill and exploded near the tourist resort of Ohrid in what one witness described as "a picture from a nightmare".

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TRADE

F.T.: EU-US in crucial GATT talks

SEATTLE, Geneva - "European trade negotiators arrive in Washington today for a 2-day meeting with US counterparts that is likely to determine the shape and scope of the Uruguay Round package of world trade reform. 'I am confident now that there will be an agreement by December 15', the deadline set for an accord, a European Union negotiator said before departure. 'The Washington meeting will decide whether it is a big deal, or something more modest'. While warning that a 'small package' would be much harder for national governments to ratify, he signalled that outstanding differences over protection and subsidies for steel presented a stumbling block. Negotiators would be trying to 'reduce matters to an absolute
minimum' – focusing on market access, trade in services, antidumping rules, subsidies and disciplines over support for steel and aircraft."

F.T.: APEC ministers agree to tariff cuts

SEATTLE - "Ministers from the Asia-Pacific region have agreed to a package of tariff cuts intended to provide a last-minute stimulus to the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations before the December 15 deadline. In a declaration due to be issued at the conclusion of a 2-day meeting in Seattle of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation group, ministers called urgently for a successful conclusion to the long-running Uruguay Round of world trade talks. Adding bite to their words, most of the 17 APEC member countries also agreed to at least part of an annex declaration, listing specific product areas on which they agreed to cut their tariffs to zero... The APEC ministers’ annex list is built on the so-called zero-for-zero tariff reduction package agreed before the Tokyo summit in July by Japan, Canada, the US and the EU, which eliminated tariffs on pharmaceuticals, construction equipment, medical equipment, steel and beer, and with certain exemptions also on furniture, farm equipment and spirits. The Seattle agreement will also include other product areas, notably non-ferrous metals. China and Taiwan, which are not GATT members, did not sign the annex, and some other APEC countries did not accept the zero-for-zero reduction in all of the product areas."

JOBS

WALL ST.JOURNAL: Job sharing: EC paper calls for incentives

BRUSSELS - "In what is certain to be one of the most controversial aspects of its white paper on job creation, the European Community Commission is calling for government 'incentives' to encourage work-sharing arrangements, such as a 4-day workweek, to save jobs. As described by EC officials, the incentives would likely take the form of member states allowing companies that institute such programs to reduce 'non-wage costs', such as the companies’ share of social security payments to the government. The interim paper, which will be discussed by EC finance ministers today, for the first time clearly puts the Commission behind work-sharing programs - but says such a 'novel' step requires governments to institute a 'flanking and incentive operation' in order to ensure the success of these arrangements. The paper also calls for greater labor-market flexibility and a reduction in non-wage costs, particularly for lower-skilled workers, with a target for member nations to reduce such non-wage labor costs by between 1% and 2% of gross domestic product in the medium term."

OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES

WALL ST. JOURNAL: UK trade deficit narrows with non-EC

LONDON - "Britain's trade gap with countries outside of the European community narrowed much more than expected in October, providing further evidence that UK exports are continuing to grow where economies are expanding. Figures released by the Central Statistical office show a narrowing of the deficit to £293 million ($432.3 million) in October from a revised £921 million in September. Economists had forecast a fall in the deficit to £900 million from the shortfall of £1.09bn originally estimated for September. The value of exports rose 8.8% to £5.28bn from £4.85bn in September, and imports declined 3.5% to £5.57bn from £5.77bn. Economists believe the improvement is being led by burgeoning export demand from Southeast Asia and the US, where the recovery has been getting stronger."

COMPANIES

F.T.: 4-airline merger plan collapses

"One of the most ambitious European mergers ever attempted collapsed yesterday after KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Swissair, Scandinavian Airlines System and Austrian Airlines failed to agree on a common US airline partner. The 4 medium-sized carriers said in a joint statement that they had decided to abandon their 7 months’ negotiations because of 'fundamentally different views' on a US partnership. Swissair blamed KLM for the collapse of the proposed Alcazar alliance, which had been intended to create a fourth airline force in Europe to compete against the big 3 carriers: British Airways, Lufthansa and Air France. The collapse of the Alcazar plan will speed the consolidation of the European airline industry around the strongest groups, such as BA and Lufthansa, which have already set up global alliances."