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AFP: LE MONDE EN BREF

ALGERIE - Le dr Laadi Flici, médecin, écrivain et membre du Conseil Consultatif National (CCN-organisme à caractère législatif ayant remplacé l’assemblée nationale dissoute) a été assassiné mercredi à Alger.

Il s’agit du 2ème assassinat d’une personnalité politique en 24 heures. Quatre islamistes armés ont été tués mardi et mercredi par les forces de l’ordre à Alger et dans ses environs.

GEORGIE - Au moins 107 personnes ont été tuées dans des bombardements et des combats depuis lundi à Soukhoumi, la capitale de l’Abkhazie (ouest de la Géorgie), selon un bilan communiqué mercredi par le ministère géorgien des Affaires étrangères.

EGYPTE - Dix intégristes musulmans, dont un chef de la Jamaa islamiya, et 2 policiers, ont été tués lors d’affrontements mercredi à Assiout, en Haute-Egypte, au lendemain d’un attentat à la bombe au Caire revendiqué par cette organisation clandestine.

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COMMERCE EUROPE - ETATS-UNIS

LA TRIBUNE: Delors-Clinton: une "premiere" lourde d’enjeux

"La première rencontre entre Jacques Delors et Bill Clinton ne pouvait se dérouler sous des auspices plus défavorables. Dès lundi prochain, la CEE est passible de sanctions pour ne pas s’être pliée au désir américain de voir disparaître une directive communautaire sur les marchés publics. Bruxelles a mis à l’étude ses propres mesures de représailles. Jacques Delors n’entend pas négocier avec son interlocuteur. Il attend une clarification de l’attitude américaine. Il espère en revanche parvenir à le convaincre qu’une attitude américaine trop aggressive ferait du tort aux relations bilatérales."

FINANCIAL TIME: Brittan warns of US trade curbs

BRUSSELS - "The European Community yesterday ruled out concessions in the escalating dispute with the US over government procurement practices and predicted that the Clinton administration would impose sanctions from Monday. Sir Leon Brittan, EC commissioner for external economic relations, said he was ‘certain’ the US would bar European companies from about $40m of federal contracts, in spite of today’s meeting in Washington between President Bill Clinton and Mr Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission. The long-planned White House meeting between Mr Clinton and Mr Delors has taken on sharper focus because of trade tensions between the US and EC, but Sir Leon said only ‘a big deal’ between the 2 leaders would deflect sanctions."

EX-SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

FINANCIAL TIMES: Yeltsin outlines steps to closer CIS integration

MOSCOW - "President Boris Yeltsin laid out proposals yesterday for the closer ‘integration’ of the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, claiming that the 15-month-old organisation had so far been ineffective. Mr Yeltsin, in a declaration read out by Mr Andrei Kozyrev, the foreign minister, described the association of former Soviet republics as amorphous and ‘unable to fulfil the hopes invested in it’. ‘While not aspiring to any ‘leading role’, we are conscious of our responsibility to co-operate closely with all independent states’, the declaration said... Mr Kozyrev said the initiative was designed to increase economic co-operation through the creation of ‘modern market techniques of integration’ – the setting up of multinational companies and the encouragement of investment in each other’s projects. That approach
had been foreshadowed by a gathering of CIS heads of state in Russia’s oil region of Tyumen, where they were encouraged to invest in production. The declaration follows a speech last month by Mr Yeltsin asking for ‘understanding’ from the United Nations and the international community for Russia’s intention to intervene in conflicts in the former Soviet Union, and to remain the region’s hegemonic power. That speech was denounced by the leadership of Ukraine. Ukraine is the most reluctant of the CIS members, with Moldova and Turkmenistan.

REUTER: US can help Russia, Poland at same time - Polish official

WASHINGTON - "A top Polish official put forward a plan on Wednesday that would let the United States help Russia and Poland at the same time, by buying Polish equipment and expertise to upgrade Russia’s ageing oil and gas industry. ‘Poland helped develop the (former) Soviet oil and gas industry’, Polish Finance Minister Jerzy Osiatynski told reporters. ‘Our equipment, experience and work force could be used for assistance to Russia’. President Bill Clinton is scrambling to put together a package of domestic and international support for Russia to help reinforce Russian leader Boris Yeltsin’s shaky hold on power."

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Parliament to vote on Polish privatization

WARSAW - "Poland’s Parliament is scheduled to vote today on its proposed mass privatization program, 2 years after it was initially announced as post-communist Europe’s first large-scale enterprise ownership transfer plan. Despite months of adjustment and wrangling, the bill’s passage - as presented by Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka’s coalition - remains far from assured. The plan’s ambitious goal is to put 600 state enterprises in the hands of 20 National Investment Funds and it holds great significance for Poland’s fast-changing economy. But observers agree that the privatization fight has become one of politics rather than an argument over the plan’s fundamentals."

OECD ECONOMIES

Japan

REUTER: Tokyo plans to buy aircraft to cut trade surplus

TOKYO - "Japan plans to buy 2 more aircraft for use by government officials to dent its huge trade surplus, KYODO news agency said on Thursday. KYODO said the government had started considering the purchase of a US Boeing 747-400 jumbo airliner and a small French jet, a Falcon 900B. Together, the planes will cost about 21bn yen ($179 million), it said. That will be a tiny nibble out of Japan’s trade surplus which with the United States alone grew 14.3% in 1992 to $43.67bn."

United States

WALL STREET JOURNAL: Direct foreign investment slumped in 1992

WASHINGTON - "No-US investors, who poured billions of dollars into US factories, real estate and companies in the late 1980s, began pulling out some of that money last year, the latest government estimates show. Reflecting a world-wide slump in foreign direct investment, non-US investors took out $3.95bn more than they put into the US last year, the US commerce Department said. It was the first such reversal in decades. Foreign direct investment, which also includes the purchase of stakes of 10% or more in US companies, ‘went up pretty sharply and quickly’ in the second half of the 1980s and ’came down just as quickly after 1989’, said Commerce Department economist Christopher Bach."

Germany

FINANCIAL TIMES: Heavier pensions burden looms over taxpayers

BONN - "German taxpayers are likely to face a new increase of at least 8% in their pensions contributions next year, putting them top of the league of big industrialised states for direct payments to the public purse. The warning on a probable pensions increase came as the Bundesbank published a new survey, showing that France and Germany are now equally the highest-taxed countries in the G7 industrialised states. The latest agreement on a solidarity pact to pay for German unification, with the reintroduction of a 7.5% surcharge on income tax from January 1, 1995, will push the country further out in front."
LIBERATION: Thomson se convertit à son tour au partage du travail

"Une majorité des 2 056 salariés du groupe Thomson-Tubes électroniques (TTE) a approuvé par référendum, à 65%, un projet d’accord-cadre sur le partage du travail pour éviter 412 suppressions d’emploi sur la période 1993-1995. Cet appel direct au personnel s’est déroulé dans les 4 établissements de TTE concernés par l’accord... Au total, l’idée du partage du travail a convaincu 1 146 salariés. Sur les 1 750 participants, 568 salariés (soit 33%) ont voté contre. Face à la baisse du marché des tubes destinés aux activités militaires ou aux équipements de télécommunications civils, la direction de TTE a informé en décembre les syndicats du projet de licenciement... La direction accepte la proposition des syndicats. L’accord élaboré depuis permettra, à partir du 25 mars (date de la signature), une diminution du temps de travail de 45 minutes par semaine qui se traduira par 5 jours de congé supplémentaires sur l’ensemble de l’année 1993."

FINANCIAL TIMES: Greece forecasts growth of 2%

ATHENS - "The Greek economy ministry forecasts that growth this year will be stimulated by a sharp rise in investment, with gross domestic product increasing by 2%. According to the ministry’s economic overview for 1993, overall investment will increase by 7.2%, led by a 10.9% rise in the public sector, which will benefit from generous European Community transfers for infrastructure spending."