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1. Six Party Talks

Reuters ("N.KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS MAY RESUME EARLY DEC.: RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR", 2006-11-13) reported that the six-party talks "are likely" to resume in early December, quoting Russian ambassador to Japan Alexander Losyukov. But he said he did not expect a breakthrough in the talks.

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2. Blix on Six-Party Talks

Reuters ("N.KOREA NUKES SHOULD COME UNDER U.N. WATCHDOG: BLIX", 2006-11-13) Reported that Hans Blix, the Swedish former head of the Vienna-based nuclear agency, said only the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) could muster the authority and neutrality to coax the DPRK toward nuclear disarmament while keeping the trust of its leaders. Blix said that as regional powers considered how to handle the DPRK, they should avoid the example of Iraq, where the activities of national intelligence agencies blurred international inspectors' neutrality before the US-led invasion. "It is vital that the inspections be seen as inspections by the international community. It must not be seen as inspection by an adversary," Blix told reporters.

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3. US-DPRK Relations

Yonhap News Agency ("REPORT: U.S., N. KOREA MAY HOLD TALKS BEFORE 6-PARTY MEETING", 2006-11-11) reported that the The U.S. and DPRK may hold talks in New York as early as next week aimed at working toward the resumption of six-country talks. Citing unnamed sources familiar with U.S.-DPRK relations, Japan's Mainichi newspaper reported that officials from the two countries will discuss, among other issues, financial sanctions. Tony Fratto, a White House spokesman, said he was not aware of any plans for a meeting. A State Department spokesman, Kurtis Cooper, said he could not comment on the report. Earlier this month, the State Department said the DPRK will get a chance to seek access to its frozen overseas bank accounts when six-nation negotiations are resumed.

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4. ROK on PSI

New York Times ("SEOUL REFUSES TO HELP U.S. INTERCEPT N. KOREAN SHIPS", 2006-11-13) reported that the ROK turned down an American request for help intercepting DPRK ships suspected of carrying supplies to build weapons of mass destruction. Seoul also said that it saw no need for any additional actions to punish the DPRK for its nuclear test beyond old trade restrictions and the recent suspension of aid. The announcement followed weeks of heated debate at the National Assembly, highlighting a fundamental rift between ROK and American assessments of how to deal with the crisis. Countries were required to submit a report to the United Nations sanctions committee explaining how they would implement the Security Council resolution. ROK officials said they were already doing enough to meet the U.N. requirements because they were carefully screening trade under various international and inter-Korean nonproliferation agreements. Seoul believes that taking actions such as intercepting vessels would not only reduce its economic leverage over the DPRK in the six-party talks but could also lead to naval clashes, or even war.

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5. DPRK Financial Sanctions

Yonhap News Agency ("U.S. SILENCE CONFUSES S. KOREA OVER PROBE OF N. KOREAN ACCOUNTS IN MACAU BANK", 2006-11-02) reported that the ROK is struggling to digest contradicting reports on when or even, whether, the United States will ease restrictions on the Macau bank accused of having served as a base for the DPRK's alleged illicit financial activities. The freezing of the DPRK accounts in the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) bank is arguably one of the biggest roadblocks to international efforts to resolve the nuclear crisis through six-way talks. In September last year, Washington blacklisted the bank, prompting Pyongyang to boycott the nuclear talks. An ROK newspaper, the JoongAng Ilbo, also quoted a US expert as saying Washington may unfreeze one third of US$24 million of DPRK accounts held in the BDA before the next round of the six-way talks. Don Oberdorfer, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, was cited as saying that the U.S. views at least US$8 million among the assets as licit. The US has given no indication that it will take immediate action on the BDA issue. The US Treasury refused Yonhap News Agency's request for comments, citing a policy not to talk publicly about the DPRK.

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6. DPRK Human Rights

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S.' N.KOREA RIGHTS ENVOY URGES 'HARD LOOK' AT KAESONG", 2006-11-13) reported that Jay Lefkowitz, the U.S. special envoy on human rights in DPRK asked Seoul to halt the joint-Korean Kaesong Industrial Complex since profits could be funneled to the DPRK leadership. Jay Lefkowitz also reiterated criticism of what he described as the low wages DPR Korean staff at the complex are paid.

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7. US-PRC Military Relations

Agence-France Presse ("CHINESE SUBMARINE STALKS US CARRIER: REPORT", 2006-11-13) reported that a PRC submarine approached a US aircraft carrier in the Pacific Ocean last month and surfaced within firing range of its torpedoes and missiles before being detected, The Washington Times has reported. Citing unnamed defense officials, the paper said the PRC Song-class diesel-powered attack submarine shadowed the Kitty Hawk undetected and surfaced within five miles of the carrier on October 26.

(return to top) Reuters ("U.S. EYES CHINA'S NAVAL POWER ON HIGH-LEVEL VISIT", 2006-11-13) reported that the commander of the US Pacific Fleet said he was seeking to understand the intent of the PRC's naval build-up as he began a week-long trip aimed at deepening military ties. "When asked if the PLA navy is a threat, I've been on the record as saying no," Admiral Gary Roughead told reporters. "But I really would like to know what the intent is in some of the developments that I see in the PLA navy," he added. (return to top)

8. US-PRC Trade Relations

Agence-France Presse ("US AND CHINA CALL FOR MORE TRADE, NOT PROTECTIONISM", 2006-11-13) reported that the PRC's huge trade surplus with the US should be addressed through increased US exports to the PRC and not protectionist moves by the US, commerce chiefs from the

two sides agreed. US Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez and his counterpart Bo Xilai offered an upbeat assessment of bilateral trade ties after meeting on Monday, despite continued growth in the political sensitive trade imbalance.

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9. Russia-PRC Relations

Interfax ("PUTIN CALLS FOR BROADER CIVILIAN COOPERATION WITH CHINA", 2006-11-13) reported that President Vladimir Putin has ordered the government to step up civilian economic projects with the PRC. "Our military-technical cooperation is very large. The prime minister has set the task of broadening our civilian contacts. This is absolutely right, and I instruct the government to give this issue very close attention," Putin told Cabinet members.

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10. PRC Unrest

Reuters ("THOUSANDS RIOT OVER CHINA LAND SEIZURE: PAPER", 2006-11-13) reported that thousands of PRC villagers clashed with riot police after barricading officials and foreign businessmen in a warehouse they said had been built on illegally seized land, a newspaper reported. The clash erupted on Wednesday near Shunde, in the southern province of Guangdong, during the opening of the warehouse, which villagers said had been built on land grabbed by officials and sold off to developers, Hong Kong's Apple Daily said.

(return to top) The New York Times ("BOY'S DEATH AT CHINA HOSPITAL SPURS RIOT OVER CARE AND FEES", 2006-11-13) reported that some 2,000 people mobbed and ransacked a hospital in southwestern PRC in a dispute over medical fees and shoddy health care practices, a human rights group said Sunday. At least 10 people were injured when the police broke up the demonstration at Guang'an City No. 2 People's Hospital, said the Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy. The human rights group said in a faxed statement that essential medical care had been denied the boy until his grandfather, who was taking care of him, could pay. The boy died after the grandfather left to raise money, the group said. (return to top)

11. PRC Environment

Agence-France Presse ("CHINA'S ENVIRONMENT DEGRADED TO DANGEROUS POINT: OFFICIAL ", 2006-11-13) reported that the degradation of the PRC's environment is reaching a critical point where health and social stability are under threat, the PRC's top government official on the environment has said. Zhou Shengxian, the head of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), noted half the country's rivers were severely polluted and a third of its territory was damaged by acid rain in an address to the annual meeting of the PRC's top environmental thinktank.

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12. PRC AIDS Issue

Southern Weekend, translated by CDT ("SURVEY: GOV'T OFFICIALS IGNORANT OF, SUSCEPTIBLE TO, HIV/AIDS - LI HUJUN", 2006-11-13) reported that nearly two-thirds of PRC officials don't know that no AIDS vaccine exists and nearly a third are in favor of isolating HIV-infected patients from the

rest of the population, according a recent survey. The survey, run by AIDS policy expert Jin Wei from the Central Party School, was completed in October.

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13. Taiwan Leadership

Agence-France Presse ("TAIWANESE LAWMAKERS QUIT OVER CHEN SCANDAL ", 2006-11-13) reported that two heavyweight lawmakers from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have quit parliament in a surprise protest at the way their party handled corruption allegations against President Chen Shui-bian. "The Taiwanese people have given the DPP trust and support because of our long-time devotion to pushing for democracy and reforms, and fighting against corruption... But such trust is now fading," said Lin Cho-shui.

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14. Japan Postal Reform

Kyodo ("LDP TO DECIDE TO READMIT SOME ANTI-POSTAL REFORM MEMBERS BY DEC. 15 ", 2006-11-13) reported that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party is set to decide by Dec. 15 to readmit some of the lawmakers it effectively expelled last year after they opposed then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's pet project of privatizing Japan's postal services, party members said.

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