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1. ROK on Six Party Talks

The Korea Times ("PRESIDENTIAL AIDE EXPECTS NUKE TALKS TO RESUME AFTER FEB.", 2006-02-01) reported that a top aide to RO Korean President Roh Moo-hyun said the six party talks are unlikely to resume during February. Song Min-soon, chief secretary to the president for unification, foreign and security policy, said Seoul will make efforts to restart the six-party talks next month.

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2. US-ROK Military Cooperation on DPRK

The Chosun Ilbo ("N.K. ARMS INTERCEPT PACT STAYS OUT OF KOREA-U.S. DRILLS ", 2006-0--01) reported that ROK Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-ung denied reports that Seoul agreed to make training for a US-led initiative aimed at intercepting alleged DPRK shipments of weapons of mass destruction part of regular joint Korea-US military exercises this year. Yoon said there was “no such plan” to include training for the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which would involve aerial or marine operations to intercept ships suspected of carrying such weapons or weapons parts for export.

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3. Bush State of the Union Address

The Korea Times ("BUSH CALLS FOR FREEDOM IN NK", 2006-02-01) reported that US President George W. Bush made reference to the DPRK in his State of the Union address. While stating that half the world's people live in democratic nations, Bush said that the United States ``does not forget the other half in places like Syria, Burma, Zimbabwe, North Korea and Iran, because the demands of justice and the peace of this world require their freedom as well.''

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4. Inter-Korean Railroad Chief's Visit to DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("RAILROAD CHIEF POSTPONES N.KOREA VISIT", 2006-02-01) reported that Korea Railroad says its president has postponed a planned trip to the DPRK this Saturday. Lee Chul delayed the trip after former President Kim Dae-jung expressed hopes of traveling to the DPRK capital on the inter-Korean railway that was recently reconnected.

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5. ROK on PSI

Chosun Ilbo ("N.K. ARMS INTERCEPT PACT STAYS OUT OF KOREA-U.S. DRILLS", 2006-02-01) reported that Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-ung on Wednesday denied reports that Seoul agreed to make training for a US-led initiative aimed at intercepting alleged DPRK shipments of weapons of mass destruction part of regular joint Korea-US military exercises this year. Yoon said there was “no such plan” to include training for the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which would involve aerial or marine operations to intercept ships suspected of carrying such weapons or weapons parts for export.

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6. Japan on UNSC Reform

Kyodo ("JAPAN PLAYS DOWN U.S.'S NEGATIVE VIEW ABOUT NEW UNSC REFORM IDEA", 2006-02-01) reported that Japan on Wednesday sought to play down US Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton's remark expressing a negative view of its new idea to reform the UN Security Council. Yoshinori Katori, the Japanese Foreign Ministry's press secretary, said Japan is continuing its close discussions with the US over the matter and intends to continue such discussions, while maintaining its cooperation with three other countries which, like Japan, are aspiring to become permanent Security Council members.

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7. Japan SDF Role

Kyodo ("SDP TO RETURN TO ARGUING JAPAN DEFENSE FORCES ARE UNCONSTITUTIONAL", 2006-02-01) reported that Japan's Social Democratic Party, a small opposition party, plans to return to its previous contention that the Self-Defense Forces violate Japan's pacifist Constitution, party sources said Wednesday. The defense forces' "current status is obviously against Article 9 of the Constitution," says the final draft of a declaration expected to be adopted at a party convention Feb. 11-12.

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8. Japan Succession Issue

Reuters ("JAPANESE RALLY AGAINST FEMALE IMPERIAL SUCCESSION ", 2006-02-01) reported that more than 1,000 people met in Tokyo on Wednesday to protest at a proposed law change that would allow women and their children to inherit Japan's Chrysanthemum throne. Among those present at Wednesday's rally were 29 lawmakers from Koizumi's own Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Kyodo said.

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9. Sino-Pakistani Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("REPORT: PAKISTAN, CHINA TO HOLD TRADE TALKS", 2006-02-01) reported that Pakistan and the PRC plan to hold a third round of talks next month for a free trade agreement that the longtime allies hope to sign by the end of this year, the Pakistani state news agency reported Wednesday. The nations want to speed up the process so that the pact would be finished in 2006, an unidentified PRC Ministry of Commerce source was quoted as saying by the Associated Press of Pakistan.

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10. PRC Bird Flu

The New York Times ("BIRD FLU CASE IN HONG KONG RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT CHINA", 2006-02-01) reported that a chicken illegally smuggled across the border from mainland China has died here of bird flu, Hong Kong officials announced late today in a case that raises new questions about whether PRC provincial officials are concealing the true extent of the disease.

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11. PRC Rural Unrest

Reuters ("VIOLENCE WORKS WHERE PEACE FAILED FOR CHINA VILLAGES", 2006-02-01) reported that for years, the villagers of Huashui gave peace a chance, but in the end it was violence that won results. After chemical plants set up shop in a nearby industrial park, residents of this farming town in the PRC's wealthy coastal province of Zhejiang pressed authorities to shut them down, complaining that waste was polluting their crops and river. Yet, after years of fruitless petitioning, rioting worked.

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12. PRC Leadership

Reuters ("CHINA'S LEADERS REACH OUT TO PEOPLE, BUT UNDER GUARD ", 2006-02-01) reported that first came thousands of police and troops to guard the roads, then hundreds of officials to monitor residents, and finally PRC Premier Wen Jiabao to share Lunar New Year celebrations with ordinary citizens. But even as Wen promoted his commitment to improve the lives of rural residents, the massive security and controlled encounters with locals during his tour were a reminder of the divide many PRC say separates them from their rulers.

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13. Japan on Abductees

Associated Press ("JAPAN PRESSES N. KOREA ON ABDUCTIONS", 2006-02-01) reported that Japan demanded that the DPRK hand over any individuals involved in past abductions of Japanese citizens, as the two countries prepared to resume bilateral talks in Beijing. "We consider resolution of the abduction issue to be the most important one," Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, the government's top spokesman, told reporters in Tokyo. "We will firmly demand that North Korea return any survivors, disclose the truth about the abductions and hand over any suspects."

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