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1. DPRK to Request UN Food Aid

Associated Press ("U.N. AGENCY: NORTH KOREA REQUESTING FOOD", 2006-02-22) reported that the DPRK will formally ask the UN World Food Program for aid for children and pregnant women, several months after the nation demanded a halt to emergency food help, an agency spokeswoman said Wednesday. The request will be made at a Thursday meeting at the agency's Rome headquarters, spokeswoman Anthea Webb said. If the request is granted, 1.9 million children and pregnant women will receive vitamin-enriched food for two years. The program also calls for helping local factories produce their own enriched porridge and noodles, Webb said.

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2. ROK on Six Party Talks

Reuters ("S.KOREA PUSHING PACE TO RESUME NORTH NUCLEAR TALKS ", 2006-02-22) reported that the ROK's new chief nuclear envoy will soon travel to countries involved in talks on ending the DPRK's atomic programmes in an intensifying effort to restart negotiations, its foreign minister said on Wednesday. Ban Ki-moon told reporters Deputy Foreign Minister Chun Yung-woo's travel would probably help set the stage for the talks. The ROK has said there were signs the DPRK may be positioning itself to return to the talks. "It is our assessment that the United States and North Korea are gradually moving toward resuming the six-party talks," Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok told a ROK radio programme. The DPRK has shown signs of easing its condition for resuming the talks, Lee said. "But it's hard to say conclusively in what form the North will talk about it and what it will do."

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3. US on Six Party Talks

Financial Times ("US URGES CHINA ACTION ON N KOREA TALKS ", 2006-02-22) reported that the US wants DPRK neighbours – particularly the PRC – to put more pressure on Pyongyang to return to negotiations about its nuclear ambitions. But in spite of the impasse in the six-party talks, Washington remains optimistic that the negotiations will resume in Beijing imminently, perhaps as soon as this month. "As soon as the Chinese let us know that they're ready, we'll be there. The sooner the better," Christopher Hill, the US's assistant secretary of state and chief negotiator in the nuclear talks, said. "The Chinese would like to get it going as early as this month?.?.?.?As long as we feel we're making progress, we're going to continue this process."

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4. US on DPRK Counterfeiting

Reuters ("U.S. SAYS SHOWED S.KOREA FAKE NOTES MADE IN NORTH", 2006-02-22) reported that the US has provided the ROK with evidence that the DPRK has been producing high-quality counterfeit US $100 notes, a US embassy official in Seoul said on Wednesday. Seoul has yet to

comment publicly on whether it believes the US charges about the so-called "supernotes." "The US government has shared with ROK officials specimens of superior-quality counterfeit 2001 and 2003 series $100 notes (supernotes) that our investigations have concluded were manufactured in the DPRK," an embassy spokesman said.

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5. Inter-Korean Trade

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL OBLIGES N.KOREA ON FERTILIZER ", 2006-02-22) reported that the government has agreed to a request from the DPRK for 150,000 tons of fertilizer for use in spring. ROK Unification Ministry official Koh Kyung-bin told reporters Wednesday the cost would be around US$6 million including transport. The DPRK on Feb. 1 requested the amount as the first installment of 450,000 tons to be delivered by the end of the month. Koh said Seoul acted quickly because it considered the request “along with humanitarian issues.”

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6. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News ("RACING ASSOCIATION HEAD OFFERS HORSES TO N. KOREAN LEADER", 2006-02-22) reported that the head of the Korean Racing Association (KRA) said Wednesday he offered to send two horses to DPRK leader Kim Jong-il last year. Speaking with reporters, Lee Woo-jae said he made the informal offer to the DPRK through Lee Bong-soo, the association's former executive vice president who visited Pyongyang. "The proposal was made because Kim Jong-il is known to enjoy horseback riding," the chairman said. He added that there has not been any response, but the offer remains unchanged.

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7. Inter-Korean Cooperation

Yonhap News ("SOUTH, NORTH KOREA TO DISCUSS UNIFYING DIFFERENT TAEKWONDO MOVES", 2006-02-22) reported that the ROK and DPRK world governing bodies of the Olympic sport taekwondo will soon begin negotiations for unifying different technical moves practiced by the two organizations.

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8. DPRK-US Bilateral Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("N. KOREA TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE TO U.S. ", 2006-02-22) reported that the DPRK’s Foreign Ministry Director General for North America, and the country's representative at six-way talks Li Gun will reportedly travel to the US in hopes of reaching some kind of agreement on the dollar forging allegations and re-opening the stalled nuclear talks. A source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday, “Progress in the negotiations on the details of Li's visit to the U.S. is proceeding considerably well,” and added, “A U.S. visit on the 4th of March is being pushed.”

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9. US on DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap News ("U.S. CONGRESS BERATES GOV'T LAG ON N.K. HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS", 2006-02-22) reported that the US Congress berated the Bush administration Wednesday for dragging its feet on DPRK human rights issues, sending a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urging her to do more on accepting refugees from the DPRK. Two senators and seven representatives signed the letter registering "deep concern for the lack of progress in funding and implementing" the DPRK Human Rights Act of 2004.

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10. UK Ambassador to DPRK Starts Duties

Yonhap News ("NEW BRITISH AMBASSADOR BEGINS DUTY IN PYONGYANG", 2006-02-22) reported that the UK's new ambassador to the DPRK officially started duty on Wednesday after presenting credentials to the DPRK's ceremonial head of state, according to DPRK media. John Everad, who had replaced David Slin, the UK's first ambassador to the DPRK, exchanged greetings with Kim Yong-nam, president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly after the ceremony, the Korean Central News Agency said.

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11. ROK on UNSG Post

Asahi Shimbun ("BAN WANTS JAPAN VOTE IN BID FOR TOP U.N. POST", 2006-02-22) reported that Ban Ki Moon, the ROK's foreign and trade minister, is seeking support of his candidacy for United Nations secretary-general. Ban indicated to journalists that he hoped Japan would back his candidacy even though he has said he could not support Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council.

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12. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute

The Associated Press ("JAPAN OFFICIAL PROPOSES TAKING ISLAND DISPUTE TO INTL COURT", 2006-02-22) reported that Japan should consider bringing its claim over a disputed cluster of ROK-held islands to the International Court of Justice, a local government official said Wednesday. Shimane prefecture (state) governor Nobuyoshi Sumita called on Tokyo to step up diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute.

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13. Japan Iraq Contribution

Kyodo ("U.S. HOPES JAPAN WILL EXPAND AIRLIFT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ", 2006-02-22) reported that a senior US military officer expressed hope that Japan's Air Self-Defense Force would expand and continue its airlift support in Iraq even if Japan pulls out its ground troops.

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14. Japan Space Program

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN LAUNCHES SATELLITE TO PROBE ORIGIN OF GALAXIES", 2006-02-22) reported that Japan conducted its third successful satellite launch in less than a month, deploying an infra-red camera to probe the origins of distant galaxies, officials said. The launch came as Tokyo seeks to bolster confidence in its space program after a series of setbacks.

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15. PRC-Pakistan Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA, PAKISTAN PLEDGE TO STEP UP TRADE RELATIONS ", 2006-0--22) reported that PRC Prime Minister Wen Jiabao pledged to step up economic and trade relations with Pakistan. "Both sides should explore new areas of commerce and continue to raise the level of trade cooperation," Wen was quoted by state television as telling visiting Pakistani President Perez Musharraf.

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16. PRC-Iran Oil Pact

Washington Post ("CHINA RUSHES TOWARD OIL PACT WITH IRAN", 2006-02-22) reported that the PRC is hastening to complete a deal worth as much as $100 billion that would allow a PRC state-owned energy firm to take a leading role in developing a vast oil field in Iran according to published reports. The deal would clear China Petroleum & Chemical Corp., also known as Sinopec, to develop the Yadavaran oil field in southwestern Iran.

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17. Cross Strait Relations

BBC News ("CHEN REPEATS CHINA COUNCIL THREAT", 2006-02-22) reported that Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian has repeated his suggestion that guidelines on unification with the PRC be scrapped, despite Washington's reservations. Mr Chen told a visiting US Congressman that the National Unification Council and its National Unification Guidelines were anachronistic. The National Unification Council was set up in 1990 as an attempt to convince the PRC authorities that Taiwan was committed to reunification.

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18. PRC Rural Poverty

The Associated Press ("CHINESE GOV'T TO SPEND MORE ON COUNTRYSIDE ", 2006-02-22) reported that a PRC government plan issued Tuesday promises to spend more on schools, health care and aid for farmers in the poor countryside, where communist leaders worry about potentially explosive unrest over poverty and other problems.

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19. PRC Environment

The Los Angeles Times ("CHINA TOUGHENS STANCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION", 2006-02-22) reported that turning a blind eye to environmental degradation could now cost PRC officials their jobs, state media announced Tuesday. The new rules say that officials who fail to shut down projects that cause widespread pollution, reduce or cancel fees imposed on those who illegally discharge industrial waste, or cover up environmental accidents will be disciplined. The exact nature of the punishment was unclear. The government said it would range from disciplinary warnings to dismissal.

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20. Taiwan Arms Purchase

Central News Agency ("PATRIOT PAC III MISSILES OFF SHOPPING LIST: DEFENSE MINISTER", 2006-02-22) reported that the Ministry of National Defense (MND) is willing to remove Patriot PAC III missiles from a controversial weapons package from the US "out of respect" for the opposition parties, National Defense Minister Lee Jye said. Lee was reflecting the attitude of the military on the arms purchase package while answering questions from legislators on behalf of Premier Su Tseng-chang at an interpellation session in the Legislative Yuan.

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