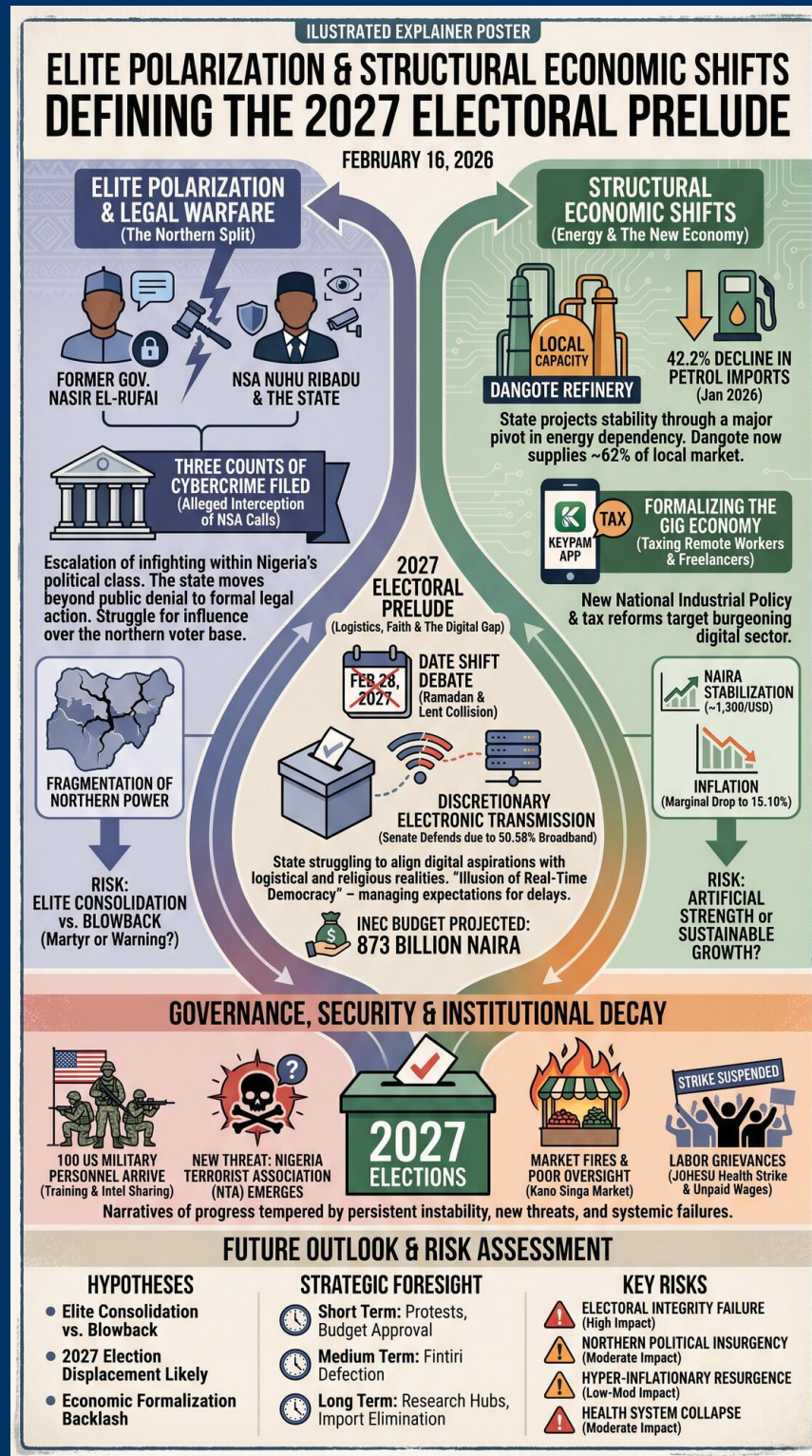


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TVCNEWS

FEBRUARY 16, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TVCNEWS

FEBRUARY 16, 2026

ELITE POLARIZATION AND STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC SHIFTS DEFINING THE 2027 ELECTORAL PRELUDE

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 16, 2026, is characterized by a significant escalation in elite infighting within Nigeria's political class, primarily manifesting in the legal and rhetorical battle between former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai and the Office of the National Security Advisor (NSA). The administration has moved beyond public denials of El-Rufai's allegations regarding [thallium sulfate procurement](#) to formal legal warfare, filing **three counts of cybercrime** against the former governor following an airport detention incident and controversial television interviews. This fragmentation among the northern political elite occurs as the ruling party (APC) attempts an ambitious **20-million-member** digital registration drive, signaling an early and aggressive pivot toward the 2027 election cycle.

Simultaneously, the Nigerian state is attempting to project structural stability through a reported **42.2% decline in petrol**

imports for January 2026, a shift largely attributed to the operational ramp-up of the [Dangote Refinery](#) and local refining capacity. This economic "correction" is being paired with the launch of a new **National Industrial Policy** and tax reforms designed to formalize the burgeoning gig economy. However, these narratives of progress are tempered by persistent institutional decay and social instability, including protests by polytechnic staff over **unpaid minimum wages**, a series of devastating market fires in Kano, and the emergence of a bizarre and alarming threat from a group calling itself the [Nigeria Terrorist Association \(NTA\)](#).

The convergence of these events suggests an administration utilizing legal instruments and major infrastructure wins to consolidate power while facing a "perfect storm" of logistical and religious constraints for the 2027 elections. The debate over **discretionary electronic transmission** of results and the proposed shifting of election dates to accommodate Ramadan and Lent reflects a state struggling to align digital democratic aspirations with the stark realities of national [power and communication infrastructure](#) gaps.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Legal Warfare Against Nasir El-Rufai:**

- The Department of State Services (DSS) filed a [three-count cybercrime charge](#) against the former governor for allegedly intercepting the phone communications of NSA Nuhu Ribadu.
- The charges stem from an interview where El-Rufai admitted to knowing his actions were illegal but justified them by claiming the government "does it too."
- The controversy involves a [432 billion Naira loot](#) investigation in Kaduna and allegations of thallium sulfate procurement, which the state labels as "theatric" and diversionary.

- **Structural Shift in Energy Dependency:**

- Official figures show a [42.2% drop in petrol imports](#) in January 2026, down to 24.8 million liters per day.
- The Dangote Refinery is now supplying approximately **62% of the local market**, supplying 40.1 million liters daily in December 2025.
- This shift is touted as a primary driver for the [strengthening of the Naira](#), which is currently trading around 1,300 to the USD after peak volatility.

- **Electoral Logistics and Religious Overlap:**

- The National Assembly is holding emergency sessions to reconsider the **February 28, 2027**, election date due to a direct [collision with Ramadan](#) and Lent.
- The Senate defended a decision to make electronic transmission of results **discretionary** rather than mandatory, citing data that [only 50.58% of the country](#) has broadband penetration.
- INEC has projected a [873 billion Naira budget](#) for the 2027 general elections.

- **Security Threats and International Military Presence:**

- Defense headquarters announced the arrival of **100 US military personnel** and associated equipment at Balchi airfield for [training and intelligence sharing](#).
- A new insurgent faction, the **Nigeria Terrorist Association (NTA)**, issued threatening letters in Kwara State, while bandits in Kaduna and Kogi continue to move between local governments to [evade military containment](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization: The arrival of US military personnel signals an intensification of **external training dependencies** to combat asymmetric threats. While "Operation Hadin Kai" reports tightening the screws on terrorists, the military acknowledges that forces have shifted from defensive to [aggressive operations](#) targeting logistics lifelines.

Legal Warfare & Regulatory Risk: The use of the **Cyber Crimes Prohibition**

Prevention Amendment Act of 2024 against high-profile political opponents (El-Rufai) marks a trend where digital communication is being [weaponized for political containment](#). This creates significant regulatory risk for political actors and journalists who may "interact" with sensitive security data.

Macroeconomics & Trade: Headline inflation shows a **marginal drop to 15.10%** from 15.15% in January 2026. The government is pushing for a **\$1 trillion economy**, leveraging \$1.5 billion in Brazilian credit for agriculture and \$60 million in port upgrades in [River State](#).

Critical Infrastructure Security: Frequent fires in major commercial centers like the [Kano Singa Market](#), where billions were lost in two weeks, highlight systemic failures in fire safety, overcrowded marketplaces, and **poor oversight** of electrical systems.

Energy & Critical Minerals: Energy security is being recalibrated through **import substitution**. While imports are down, the state insists on maintaining some level of importation as a [fallback option](#) in case of refinery maintenance or "turnaround" failures.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Illusion of Real-Time Democracy: There is a growing chasm between the Nigerian public's desire for "real-time" electronic election results and the state's **infrastructural incapacity**. The Senate's move to make electronic transmission discretionary is being framed by supporters as "empirical realism" ([based on 2G coverage limitations](#)) but by critics as a **weakening of transparency**. This suggests that 2027 may

see a hybrid manual-electronic system prone to the same "synchronized data" delays that caused chaos in previous elections.

Formalizing the Informal Economy: The introduction of the **Keypam** app and tax law education targeting **freelancers, content creators, and remote workers** indicates a state desperate to expand its tax base. By highlighting that remote workers for UK companies are earning **2 million Naira monthly** without paying tax, the government is signaling a [mandate for mandatory filing](#). This move toward "fiscal discipline" could trigger backlash from the youthful "tech" demographic, many of whom identify with the opposition.

The Fragmentation of Northern Political Power: The El-Rufai vs. Ribadu conflict is not merely a legal case but a struggle for **influence over the northern voter base**. The APC's registration drive specifically mentions "clearing the north" before Ramadan to [respect religious sensitivities](#). The threat of "anarchy as a way of pushing the government out of power" indicates that state security agencies believe some violent conversions and insurgencies may have [political imprimaturs](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The internal stability of Nigeria is under strain from **sectoral labor grievances** and regional political volatility. While the JOHESU health strike has been suspended after **84 days** of negotiation, the underlying issue of **salary relativity** remains unresolved, with union leaders threatening to resume action if the federal agreement is not implemented by April [2026](#). In Ondo State, polytechnic staff remain on an **outdated 18,000 Naira**

minimum wage despite a national 70,000 Naira approval, reflecting a failure of subnational governments to implement federal social contracts [effectively](#).

Institutional decay is further evidenced by the "**extortion culture**" at airports and security checkpoints, where foreigners report being shaken down for cash **at least 10 times** per trip. This systemic corruption is being labeled by critics as the creation of a "Begistan," where a sense of [entitlement and greed](#) overrides legendary hospitality. Factional battles in the PDP, specifically the **Wike vs. Fubara** feud in Rivers State, continue to consume governance energy, with the president forced to intervene **four times** to prevent impeachment and state paralysis [proceedings](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Nigeria's global posture is increasingly characterized by **pragmatic military and economic partnerships**. The arrival of **100 US military specialists** serves to project a message that the administration is "seriousness" about deterring terrorist threats, though officials are quick to specify these are **non-combat forces under Nigerian authority**. This cooperation occurs alongside US sanctions against eight Nigerians for **Boko Haram links**, showcasing a "sticks and carrots" approach by Washington toward Abuja.

On the regional stage, Nigeria is positioning itself as a **mediator and leader**, with Vice President Kashim Shettima representing the country at the AU summit to stabilize South Sudan. Nigeria's demand for a **"lead mediator"** and its call to release South Sudanese opposition leaders reflect an

attempt to exert [regional hegemony](#). Meanwhile, the country is using "basketball diplomacy" and sports appeals (NFF petition to FIFA over DR Congo eligibility) to maintain its [cultural influence](#) despite losing out on the 2026 World Cup qualifying pitch.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic environment shows signs of **monetary stabilization** but remains fragile due to extreme inflation and cost-of-living pressures. The "sharp" decline in petrol imports is the day's primary economic victory, yet the state admits that the **refineries are currently operating at a loss** because a "level that profit can be guaranteed" has not yet been [reached](#). The GDP growth target remains dependent on **value addition** rather than raw material exports, a pillar of the new Nigeria industrial policy [launched this month](#).

Key Economic Vectors:

- **Currency:** Naira stabilized at ~1,300/USD; Forex liquidity improved via Dangote-led import substitution [discovery](#).
- **Inflation:** Marginal year-on-year headline inflation drop of 0.05% to **15.10%**; food inflation in "food baskets" like Benue remains higher at **22.4% phenomenon**.
- **Labor:** 40% salary hike for university lecturers; 7,000 Naira minimum wage dispute in [polytechnics](#).
- **Insurance:** New capital rules exclude buildings from capital counts, requiring companies to have **liquid assets** for claims [re-architecture](#).
- **Markets:** Estimated **5 billion Naira loss** in the Kano market fire [devastation](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The day's leadership dynamics are dominated by **defective loyalty and factional realignments**. The ruling APC is celebrating the "political surge" of heavyweight politicians trooping into the party while simultaneously managing internal "cracks" caused by the [influx of northern governors](#).

- **Nasir El-Rufai (Former Governor):** Transformed from an administration-adjacent figure to a **charged criminal suspect** facing potential multi-year prison sentences for cyber-interception [admissions](#).
- **Siminialayi Fubara (Governor of Rivers State):** Appears to have "stooped to conquer" by dedicating a "Man of the Year" award to his rival Nyesom Wike to [secure peace](#), though analysts question if this is a genuine reconciliation or a survival tactic.
- **Ahmed Umar Fintiri (Governor of Adamawa):** Positioned as a major "potential defector" to the APC, which would significantly [reshape the northern landscape](#) ahead of 2027.
- **Christian Nakokota (Comodor):** Officially took over the **Nigerian Navy ship Suru** from Christian Akukuta, emphasizing maritime security in the central [naval command](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

Lead Stories: The network overwhelmingly focused on the **Nasir El-Rufai legal drama** and the **petrol import drop**. These were used to project an image of a state that is both "enforcing the rule of law" and "winning the battle for economic independence." The Muritala Mohammed assassination

remembrance (50 years) served as a **nationalistic anchor** to remind viewers of the dangers of military coups [instability](#).

Buried Stories: The **Lassa Fever outbreak** (15 workers infected, 2 dead) and the **US sanctions** on Nigerians for terrorist links were given minimal airtime compared to the political horse-trading. The **Kwara terror letter** was also downplayed, framed more as a "shenanigan" than a viable [insurgent threat](#).

Conspicuous Omissions: While the network discussed the "marginal drop" in inflation, it failed to reconcile this with the **backbreaking 200,000 Naira cost** of a single vial of anti-venom for farmers, as mentioned in a separate health report. There was also no mention of the specific "US law makers" who proposed the **visa bans** mentioned in passing regarding religious freedom [violations](#).

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The TVCNEWS narrative portrays Nigeria as a **resilient regional giant** being held back by "political merchants" and infrastructure gaps but finding a new path through **private-sector-led energy** independence.

- **The United States:** Portrayed as a "complicated partner"—at once a **provider of security training** ([100 personnel](#)) and a **critic of religious freedom**, utilizing sanctions to pressure the Nigerian state.
- **Qatar:** Framed as a **competent mediator** that has successfully "taken over" the peace processes that the AU failed to [manage](#).
- **South Sudan:** Framed as **fragile and stagnant**, with progress described as "remains slow" despite years of [engagement](#).

- **Nasir El-Rufai:** Implicitly characterized as **inept and corrupt** in his current legal defense, with commentators noting his "history of spreading half truths" and his "unfair embellishment of stories" [recollection](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The network is actively engaged in **narrative seeding** regarding the 2027 elections. By repeatedly highlighting the "stuck realities" of Nigeria's infrastructure, it is pre-emptively **managing public expectations** for a potentially flawed or delayed election results transmission. The term "**synchronized report**" is being used to normalize data drops that take **10 days** to appear, framing this as a "practical situation" rather than a [failure of transparency](#).

Additionally, the broadcast displays elements of **domestic propaganda** regarding the Dangote Refinery. While the data on petrol imports is objective, the framing that the Naira's strength is **entirely due to this single facility** ignores broader global oil price trends and monetary policy adjustments. The "Red Team" perspective would suggest the state is using the El-Rufai case as a **psychological operation** to silence other northern critics by demonstrating that even a former "combative face" of the administration is not [immune to prosecution](#).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Elite Consolidation vs. Blowback:** If El-Rufai is successfully prosecuted, it will signal a **death knell for traditional northern dissent** within the APC. However, if the prosecution fails or is perceived as a vendetta, it could turn El-Rufai into a **political martyr**, potentially unifying a fractured opposition under the ADC [banner](#).
- **2027 Election Displacement:** Given the "outcry" from religious groups, it is **highly likely** that INEC will be forced to shift the 2027 dates. This will compress the "pre-election year drama" and likely lead to **late-hour legal amendments** that further complicate voter [registration](#).
- **Economic Formalization Backlash:** The move to tax remote workers and gig economy participants will likely trigger **capital flight** or the increased use of non-traceable crypto-assets as the youthful demographic attempts to bypass the [Keypam-monitored system](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Protests by northern youth groups over El-Rufai's detention; **clashes at AFCC headquarters** during his court appearances [appearances](#). Potential resumption of polytechnic strikes if the 70,000 Naira wage is not reflected in the next [payroll](#).
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** Finalization of the **873 billion Naira election budget**; Senate approval of new **domestic bonds** for road projects totaling hundreds of [billions](#). Formalization of the Fintiri defection to APC.

- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** Transition of the Kaltungo snake bite center into a **federal research hub institution**. Potential total elimination of the PMS import bill if BUA and other modular refineries come on stream alongside [Dangote](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

The following risks have been identified based on the day's reporting on security, infrastructure, and elite politics.

- **Electoral Integrity Failure:** A return to manual-heavy voting due to "discretionary" transmission could trigger **mass civil unrest**. Triggers: Infrastructure failure on "E-day" or delayed result synchronization. Likelihood: High. Impact: Extreme instability. Mitigations: Urgent investment in **rural broadband** and power [infrastructure](#).
- **Northern Political Insurgency:** The weaponization of "anarchy" by disgruntled elites could fuel new terror groups. Triggers: Conviction of El-Rufai or perceived "marginalization" of northern power blocks. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Regional destabilization. Mitigations: Inclusive **conflict resolution** mechanisms within the [APC](#).
- **Hyper-Inflationary Resurgence:** If the Dangote Refinery experiences a "turnaround maintenance" failure without a sufficient import fallback. Triggers: Mechanical failure or supply chain sabotage. Likelihood: Low to Moderate. Impact: Economic collapse. Mitigations: Maintaining **strategic fuel reserves** and import [buffer stocks](#).
- **Health System Collapse:** A secondary JOHESU strike combined with a Lassa Fever surge. Triggers: Non-implementation of the February 6th agreement. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High mortality. Mitigations: Immediate **budgetary release** for health worker [welfare](#).
- **Foreign Intelligence Breach:** Proof that the NSA's phone lines were genuinely compromised would signal an **existential threat** to national security. Triggers: Forensic evidence corroborating El-Rufai's claims. Likelihood: Low (state denies). Impact: Global loss of confidence. Mitigations: Overhaul of **cybersecurity protocols** for top [officials](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The broadcast failed to explain **how** a private citizen (El-Rufai) could physically or technically tap the encrypted lines of the National Security Advisor.
- There was no discussion of the **cost of the US military mission** or the specific terms of the "formal request" made by Nigeria to Washington [government](#).
- The petrol import drop data did not account for the **smuggling of subsidized local fuel** across borders, which historically offsets import-substitution [gains](#).
- The report on "NTA" (terrorist association) provided no context on the group's origin, leadership, or [ideology](#).

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The El-Rufai "Double Agent" Hypothesis:** El-Rufai's admission of phone tapping may not be a "Freudian slip" but a **deliberate legal trap** intended to force the state to reveal its own surveillance techniques during discovery in court. If he can prove the state also taps citizens illegally, the entire Cybercrime Act could be **challenged on constitutional grounds**.
- **The "Artificial" Naira Strength:** The strengthening of the Naira may be a **short-term outcome of suppressing demand** through restrictive tax measures and reduced imports, rather than true structural growth. A failure to increase non-oil exports could lead to a **catastrophic devaluation** once the initial "Dangote effect" [plateaus](#).
- **Black Swan Event:** A coordinated attack on the **Dangote Refinery logistics hub** by Niger Delta militants or "NTA" could instantly reverse Nigeria's energy independence, plunging the nation into a **debt-default cycle** as import bills would have to be settled in [emergency forex](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Decouple the El-Rufai legal case from political rhetoric to avoid **northern regional alienation**.
- **Economic:** Accelerate the "value chain" move by providing **20 tractors per state** to ensure the food inflation drop is [sustainable](#).

- **Diplomatic:** Leverage the South Sudan mediation role to secure **bilateral trade concessions** within the [AU framework](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Diversify energy dependencies away from a single refinery source; monitor the **Kano-Doha-China** air routes for increased cargo [scrutiny](#).
- **Compliance:** Tech firms should prepare for **mandatory tax reporting** for Nigerian remote employees via the [Keypam portal](#).
- **Safety:** Major retailers should invest in **private fire suppression** and electrical auditing for warehouse assets given state [oversight failures](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity on February 16, 2026, focused heavily on **electoral reform and fiscal formalization**, with the National Assembly balancing religious pressure against constitutional timelines.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Electoral Amendment Bill 2026 (Clause 60 sub3):** Seeks to make electronic transmission of results **discretionary** to account for power and infrastructure [limitations](#).
- **Cyber Crimes Prohibition Prevention Amendment Act 2024:** Used as the basis for charging high-profile figures with **unlawful interception** and cyber-stalking [charges](#).
- **Nigeria Religious Freedom and Accountability Act 2026:** Currently before the **US Congress**, which Nigerian associations are pre-emptively [rejecting](#).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Senate Ministry of Steel Budget Defense:** A four-hour session that ended in **heated exchange** and temporary suspension of proceedings over unresolved [budget issues](#).
- **JOHESU Conciliation Meeting:** A 3-4 hour session with four ministers resulting in a **Terms of Settlement** regarding salary [adjustments](#).

KEY STORIES

- **The El-Rufai Cybercrime Prosecution:** Former Kaduna Governor Nasir El-Rufai charged with three counts of cybercrime for allegedly intercepting NSA Nuhu Ribadu's calls. Incident involved a detention drama at Abuja airport upon his arrival from Cairo [Egypt](#).
- **Petrol Import Collapse:** Nigerian petrol imports dropped **42.2% in January 2026**, marking a shift toward local refining by Dangote Refinery, which now commands **62%** of the domestic market [market](#).
- **2027 Election Date Controversy:** National Assembly considering shifting the Feb 28, 2027, election due to it **colliding with Ramadan** and Lent. The budget is set at **873 billion Naira** [budget](#).
- **US Military Arrival: 100 US military specialists** arrived at Balchi airfield for training and intelligence sharing under a formal request by the [federal government](#).
- **Kano Market Fire:** A devastating fire at **Singa Market** destroyed **1,000 shops**, with estimated losses of **5 billion Naira** [devastated](#).
- **Health Sector Conciliation:** JOHESU suspended its **84-day strike** after signing a memorandum of understanding with the government regarding **salary parity** [settlement](#).
- **Kwara Terror Threat:** A group calling itself the **Nigeria Terrorist Association (NTA)** dropped a letter at Ira market warning of an **impending attack** [attack](#).
- **Lassa Fever Outbreak:** NCDC reported **15 healthcare worker infections** and 2 deaths in week 7 of the 2025-2026 [season](#).
- **Remote Worker Taxation:** The new tax law and **Keypam app** are being deployed to capture revenue from **remote workers and influencers** earning high foreign currency salaries [taxable](#).
- **Snake Bite Crisis in Gombe:** Kaltungo General Hospital treating **2,500 victims** annually; antivenom costs **200,000 Naira** per vial [farmers](#).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-

level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. To learn more or subscribe to our free daily newsletters, visit <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/announcing-our-new-daily-todays-trends-on-capitol-hill-todays-media-trends-newsletter-briefings/>. You can also learn more about the GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.