

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CTV

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CTV

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION
AND SPIRITUAL FORECASTING
DEFINE A LUNAR NEW YEAR
PERIOD MARKED BY
INFRASTRUCTURE MILESTONES
AND PERSISTENT GEOPOLITICAL
TENSIONS.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The reporting period of February 17-18, 2026, reveals a society deeply entrenched in Lunar New Year (Year of the Horse) traditions while simultaneously aggressively adopting disruptive technologies. Spiritual forecasts via traditional "Fortune Sticks" (Kau Cim) and "Spring Ox" ceremonies are being juxtaposed with reports on **AI-driven civil services**, autonomous parking systems, and the commercialization of flying cars. This convergence suggests a state trying to maintain cultural continuity while securing a position in the next generation of technological sovereignty. Domestic news is dominated by spiritual omens for the coming year, tempered by a series of high-profile fires and traffic accidents that have tested local emergency response capabilities.

On the strategic level, infrastructure remains a primary pillar of national strength and regional connectivity. Massive projects such as the **Duge Bridge** and the **South-to-North Water Diversion** are framed as engineering marvels that underpin economic resilience. However, these are shadowed by renewed geopolitical friction, particularly regarding U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and high-level communications between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping regarding regional security. The administration appears to be leveraging cultural celebrations to project a narrative of stability, even as internal reporting highlights vulnerabilities in social order and critical infrastructure safety.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Spiritual Forecasting and Political Omens:** Traditional ceremonies at major temples (e.g., Nankuan, Dajia Mazu) have yielded "Middle-High" fortune sticks for the national economy, though specific warnings about "night fires" and social disharmony were noted [temple forecasts](#).
- **AI Disruption in Civil and Commercial Sectors:** New AI systems are now capable of generating **compliant passport photos** in ten seconds, while AI-powered restaurants in Changsha have allegedly forced the closure of traditional competitors within a month [AI restaurant impact](#).
- **Infrastructure Milestones:** The completion and operation of the **Duge Bridge** (1,838 meters long) and the expansion of the South-to-North Water Diversion project are highlighted as critical to managing regional water scarcity [infrastructure projects](#).

- **Emergent Transportation Tech:** The **Model A flying car** has reportedly received 300 orders following successful testing in California, while autonomous parking robots from South Korean and Chinese firms are gaining market traction [flying car orders](#).
- **Public Health Warnings:** Authorities have issued alerts regarding the release of billions of microplastics from **plastic tea bags** when brewed at high temperatures, posing long-term bio-security risks [tea bag risks](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization: Reports indicate a intensification of the regional arms race, with the U.S. reportedly considering **major arms sales** to Taiwan following high-level diplomatic dialogues. The FPPB drone center has also marked its one-year anniversary, showcasing advancements in visual response training for military operators [drone training](#).

Civil Unrest & Social Order: The Lunar New Year has seen a spike in domestic instability, including a **stabbing incident** in Kaohsiung involving a man attacking his family following a domestic dispute, and multiple reports of residential and industrial fires caused by improper firework usage [domestic violence incident](#).

Climate & Extreme Weather: Forecasters warned of a **cold surge** affecting the northern regions, with temperatures in Shimen dropping to 12.1 degrees Celsius, while spiritual leaders linked these weather patterns to the "Spring Ox" omens for the agricultural year [weather warnings](#).

Critical Infrastructure Security: Concerns have been raised regarding the "Eshima Ohashi" bridge (the "Roller Coaster Bridge") and other steep infrastructure, with experts questioning the safety of **heavy vehicle transit** on high-gradient slopes during peak holiday travel [bridge safety](#).

Tech Sovereignty & AI: The "Information World" segments focused heavily on AI-driven efficiency, noting that **AI-generated imagery** for travel and documentation is becoming indistinguishable from reality, posing new regulatory challenges for identity verification [AI identity verification](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Automation of Spiritual and Daily Life: There is a profound trend toward integrating AI into the most personal aspects of life, from **restaurant service** to religious forecasting. This suggests a societal move toward "algorithmic governance" where traditional human roles are being systematically replaced by high-speed, AI-driven alternatives to maximize efficiency during high-stress periods like the Lunar New Year.

Infrastructure as Geopolitical Power: The heavy emphasis on bridges like the **Duge Bridge** and railway projects in Tibet/Xinjiang serves as a meta-narrative for state capacity. By showcasing the ability to conquer "extreme terrain," the state communicates its **strategic maneuverability** and its ability to maintain control over remote and resource-rich peripheries [infrastructure capacity](#).

Public Health as a National Security Concern: The focus on microplastics in tea bags and the risks of sedentary "smartphone

lifestyles" (linked to strokes and blood clots) reflects a growing awareness of **lifestyle-induced vulnerabilities** that could impact national productivity and healthcare systems [health risks](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Taiwan's domestic landscape is characterized by high-profile **partisan posturing** during the holiday. Leaders like Chiang Wan-an and Li Sichuan have been active in temple visits, which serve as both religious observances and political platforms. However, this is undermined by a **loss of social order** in specific instances, such as the Kaohsiung stabbing and a significant multi-vehicle pileup on the T74 highway, suggesting that holiday stresses are exacerbating underlying social tensions [highway accident](#).

Furthermore, the "人頭帳戶" (proxy account) scandal and AI-detected **financial fraud** indicate an ongoing battle between state regulators and sophisticated criminal elements exploiting the banking system. The public's frustration with bank freezes on suspicious accounts highlights a friction point between security and personal liberty [financial fraud issues](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The international environment is framed as a **fracturing multipolar arena**. The broadcast highlights Trump-Xi communications as a centerpiece of global diplomacy, suggesting a return to personalized, top-down statecraft. Meanwhile, the U.S. is portrayed as a dual actor: a security guarantor through arms sales

but also a source of economic pressure [US-China dynamics](#).

The portrayal of **Japan and Southeast Asia** (specifically Thailand and Vietnam) as primary destinations for the Lunar New Year travel boom indicates a strategic "soft power" competition, where regional neighbors compete to capture the massive outflow of capital from Chinese-speaking tourists. The reporting on **Australian retirement cities** also reflects a trend of long-term capital and demographic shift toward the Southern Hemisphere [Australian retirement](#).

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook is cautiously optimistic based on Lunar New Year spending, though structural risks remain in the real estate and infrastructure sectors. The "Key Stories" inventory shows massive investments in regional rail and water projects, indicating a **state-led investment model** continues to drive GDP.

Key Economic Vectors:

- **Travel & Tourism Revenue:** Wudang Mountain reported annual revenues of **235 billion NTD**, four times that of Mount Tai [tourism revenue](#).
- **Emerging Markets:** The flying car sector is seeing high-value定單 (orders), with the Model A priced at significant premiums [Model A pricing](#).
- **Infrastructure Investment:** The South-to-North Water Diversion project has cumulative water transfer volumes exceeding **68.7 billion cubic meters** [water project data](#).

- **Corporate Disruption:** AI-driven automation in the service sector is leading to rapid market consolidation, particularly in the dining industry [AI industry impact](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The reporting period did not specify formal cabinet reshuffles, but significant **strategic positioning** of local leaders was evident.

- **Chiang Wan-an & Li Sichuan:** These figures are being framed as the primary **guardians of social order** in Taiwan, using the Lunar New Year temple circuit to consolidate public support and project administrative competence [political positioning](#).
- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as an **active negotiator** with the Mainland, signaling a shift in the U.S. posture toward more direct, transactional diplomacy [Trump framing](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The editorial hierarchy prioritized **spiritual and cultural safety** above all else, leading with temple forecasts and warnings about firework safety. This serves a nationalistic and reassuring function, centering the audience in traditional identity. **Buried stories** include the specific details of the U.S.-Taiwan arms sales and the environmental impact of large-scale infrastructure projects. The tone is largely **fear-inducing** regarding personal health (microplastics, strokes) but **nationalistic** regarding technological and engineering achievements.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The broadcast frames the world as an arena where technical mastery and traditional spiritual values must coexist to ensure survival.

COUNTRIES and LEADERS

- **China:** Portrayed as a **stable but expansive infrastructure giant**. Quote: "Building a bridge across the Duge is a feat that foreign experts said was impossible" [Duge Bridge quote](#).
- **United States / Donald Trump:** Characterized as **unpredictable but competent** in high-level deal-making. The subtext suggests a pragmatic "foe-to-friend" shift depending on arms sale outcomes [Trump portrayal](#).
- **Taiwan:** Framed as **culturally vibrant but vulnerable** to domestic accidents and regional security shifts. The focus on Chiang Wan-an emphasizes local governance stability [Chiang framing](#).

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **ASKA (Model A):** Portrayed as a **pioneer in future mobility**, successfully transitioning from R&D to commercial pre-orders [ASKA framing](#).
- **Religious Institutions:** Framed as **authoritative voices on national fate**, their forecasts treated with high-level gravity by news anchors [temple authority](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The broadcast is seeding a narrative that **AI is an inevitable and beneficial force**, downplaying its role in labor displacement while highlighting its efficiency in documentation and service [AI narrative](#).
- **Psychological Operations:** The heavy emphasis on the "Devil Pools" and extreme sports risks serves to discourage uncoordinated travel and reinforce the state's role as a **provider of safety and order** [safety warnings](#).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Tech-Traditional Convergence:** Expect to see "AI Fortune Tellers" and blockchain-verified religious donations become mainstream in the next Lunar New Year cycle [temple trends](#).
- **Infrastructure Vulnerability:** The focus on the steepness and "shake" of modern bridges suggests a growing concern over **long-term structural integrity** as these projects age [bridge safety](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): High likelihood of increased **fire safety regulations** following LNY fire incidents. Continued volatility in the tech sector as AI consolidated its gains in the hospitality industry.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Diplomatic formalization of the **U.S.-Taiwan arms package** could trigger a sharp reaction from the Mainland, potentially including "gray zone" infrastructure disruptions.

Long Term (1-5 Years): Structural changes in the workforce as AI-driven automation moves from the service sector into higher-level administrative and **legal roles** (like passport processing) [AI labor shifts](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Infrastructure Failure Flashpoint:** Risk of a catastrophic failure on high-gradient bridges or dams during extreme weather events. Triggers: Seismic activity or extreme rainfall. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High. Mitigations: Immediate structural audits and real-time sensor integration [bridge risk](#).
- **AI-Driven Identity Fraud:** Rapid proliferation of deep-fake or AI-generated identity documents bypassing new verification systems. Triggers: Release of open-source high-fidelity generative models. Likelihood: High. Impact: High. Mitigations: Implementation of biometric or blockchain-based hardware keys for identity [AI fraud risk](#).
- **Public Health Crisis (Microplastics):** Long-term endocrine disruption and chronic illness linked to common household plastics. Triggers: New longitudinal study release. Likelihood: High. Impact: Moderate/Slow-burn. Mitigations: Regulatory bans on plastic-based food packaging [plastic risk](#).
- **Regional Military Escalation:** Miscalculation during a high-profile arms transfer or military exercise. Triggers: Unannounced naval transit or missile test. Likelihood: Low-Moderate. Impact: Catastrophic. Mitigations: Direct hotline communication between Trump/Xi [security risk](#).

- **Domestic Financial Instability:** Bank runs or social unrest caused by over-aggressive "anti-fraud" account freezing. Triggers: Sudden, widespread freeze of accounts with low balances. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: High. Mitigations: More transparent criteria for AI-driven account flags [financial risk](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The broadcast fails to address the **true cost of the flying car infrastructure** (take-off zones, legal air-rights) which remains a significant hurdle to widespread adoption.
- There is a lack of information regarding the **actual casualties or damage estimates** from the "Spring Festival Fires," with reporting favoring emotional narratives over data.
- Missing context on the **environmental cost of the South-to-North Water Diversion**, specifically regarding the displacement of local ecosystems in the source regions.
- The reports on AI restaurants do not account for the **secondary economic impact** of mass job losses in the service industry.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Potemkin" Infrastructure Hypothesis:** The focus on extreme infrastructure is a mask for failing regional maintenance. High-profile bridges are showcased while critical secondary roads and drainage systems crumble, leading to the reported urban floods and traffic chaos [accident trends](#).

- **The Spiritual Stalemate:** The reliance on "Fortune Sticks" by political elites is not tradition, but a sign of **decision-making paralysis** in a highly polarized environment where leadership fears making secular decisions [temple politics](#).
- **Black Swan:** A solar flare or significant cyber-attack disables the AI systems now running the dining and passport sectors, causing immediate and total **societal paralysis** in urban centers.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Accelerate the development of **non-AI-dependent emergency systems** to prevent societal collapse in the event of tech failure.
- Formalize "Strategic Ambiguity 2.0" in the wake of the U.S.-China-Taiwan triangle to avoid accidental escalation during holiday periods.
- Implement mandatory **material labeling** for all plastic-containing food products to address the microplastic bio-risk.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Diversify capital away from traditional service sectors into **AI-infrastructure and maintenance**.
- Invest in "analogue safety" products—non-connected home security and manual tools—as public distrust of digital systems potentially grows after cyber incidents.
- Audit supply chains for **structural safety components** in major infrastructure projects, as the "Potemkin" risk suggests potential quality control issues in high-speed builds.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity centered on **public safety and digital regulation**, with several proposals aimed at curbing holiday accidents and managing the AI transition.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- **The Firework Safety Act (Proposed):** Aimed at banning residential firework usage in high-density urban zones following recent fires [fire reports](#).
- **AI Identification & Transparency Bill:** Proposed regulation requiring all AI-generated official documents to carry a digital watermark [AI regulation](#).

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- **Chiang Wan-an Press Briefing:** Addressed holiday traffic safety and the implementation of new highway sensors [Chiang briefing](#).
- **Nankuan Temple Official Forecast:** A public reading of the "Spring Ox" omens, serving as a de facto state-of-the-union for the agricultural and economic sectors [temple event](#).

KEY STORIES

- **Wudang Mountain Tourism Boom:** Reports that Wudang Mountain generated 235 billion NTD in revenue, far outpacing other traditional religious sites [Wudang story](#).
- **AI Passport Automation:** A new system allows citizens to generate compliant passport photos in under ten seconds using AI, revolutionizing the document process [AI passport story](#).

- **Kaohsiung Stabbing Incident:** A man attacked his family with a mountain knife on the first day of the New Year; the sister and boyfriend were hospitalized [stabbing story](#).
- **Model A Flying Car Pre-orders:** The California-based ASKA flying car company has secured 300 pre-orders, signaling a breakthrough in commercial personal aviation [flying car story](#).
- **Plastic Tea Bag Health Alert:** News segments warned that plastic tea bags release billions of microplastics into tea, posing serious stroke and cancer risks [tea bag story](#).
- **Duge Bridge Engineering Milestone:** The 1,838-meter long bridge was highlighted as a pinnacle of engineering that connects previously isolated mountain regions [bridge story](#).
- **Lunar New Year Temple Forecasts:** Major temples across Taiwan and the Mainland released "Fortune Sticks" predicting a year of moderate economic growth but social tension [temple story](#).
- **AI Restaurant Consolidation:** Reports from Changsha indicate that highly automated AI restaurants are outcompeting traditional eateries, causing significant market shifts [AI restaurant story](#).
- **Highway T74 Collision:** A major multi-car pileup involving a bus and several private vehicles caused significant injuries and traffic paralysis during the holiday peak [accident story](#).
- **South-to-North Water Diversion Expansion:** The massive infrastructure project reached a new milestone in water transfer volume, addressing chronic droughts in the north [water story](#).

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>.