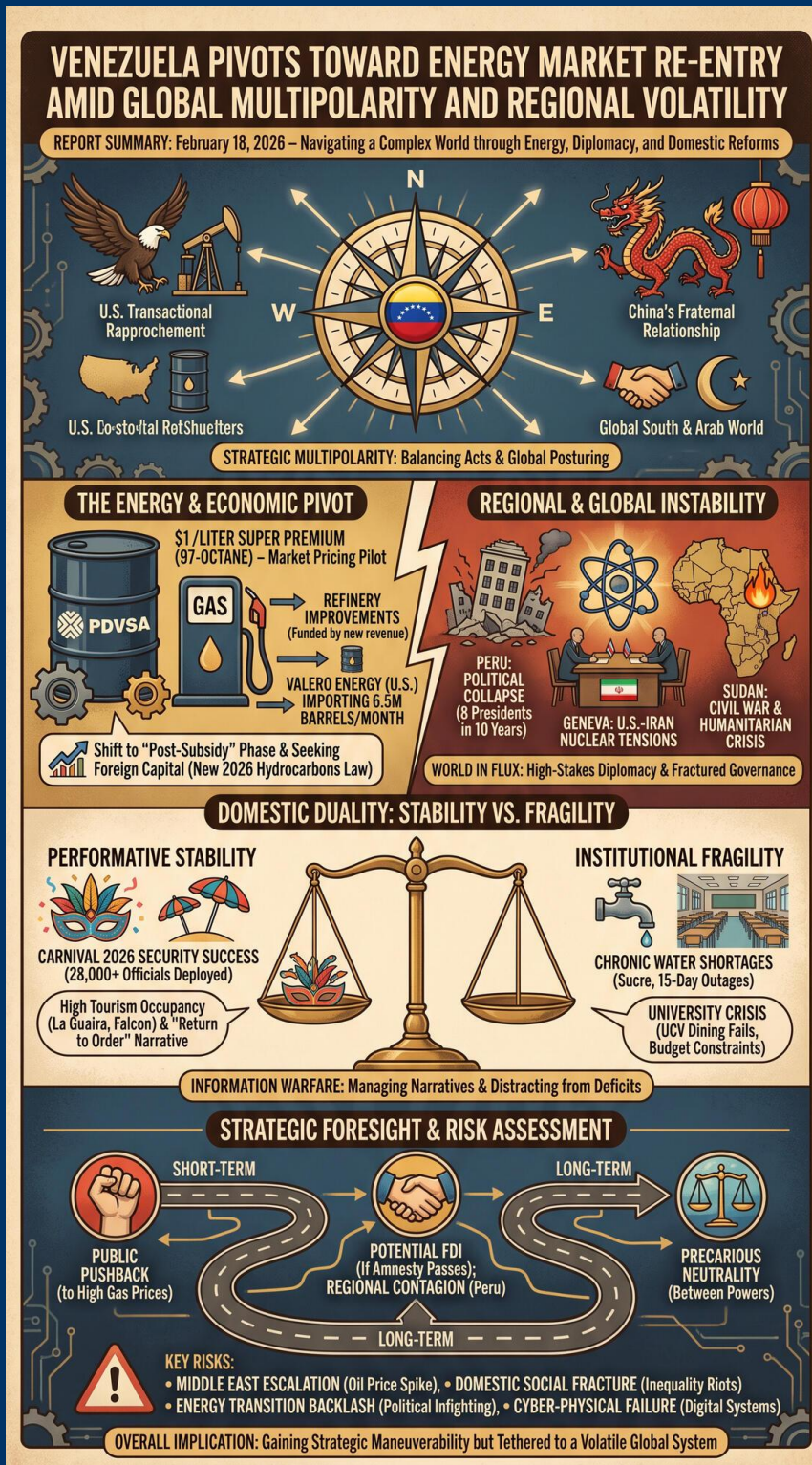


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

GLOBOVISION

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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VENEZUELA PIVOTS TOWARD ENERGY MARKET RE-ENTRY AMID GLOBAL MULTIPOLARITY AND PERSISTENT REGIONAL VOLATILITY

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

February 18, 2026, presents a picture of a Venezuelan state aggressively pursuing economic normalization through the energy sector while navigating a complex multipolar landscape. The domestic headline is dominated by the state oil company, PDVSA, launching a pilot program for 97-octane "Super Premium" gasoline priced at \$1 per liter, a move signaling a definitive shift away from heavy fuel subsidies toward market-based pricing aimed at fiscal stabilization. This economic pivot is reinforced by international developments, including Valero Energy's projected import of 6.5 million barrels of Venezuelan crude in March and the reported "recognition" of Vice President Delcy Rodríguez as "president" by the U.S. administration, suggesting a transactional rapprochement between Caracas and Washington to secure global energy supplies.

Simultaneously, the broadcast highlights a "return to order" narrative through the

successful security balance of the 2026 Carnival season, where over 28,000 officials were deployed to ensure social stability. However, this domestic calm contrasts sharply with international instability. The destitution of interim Peruvian President José Jerí and the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan underscore a world in flux. In the Middle East, the specter of nuclear escalation looms as negotiations between the U.S. and Iran in Geneva reach a stalemate over "red lines," even as Caracas deepens its "millennial" friendship with China through Lunar New Year celebrations and strategic cooperation. The convergence of these events suggests that while Venezuela is gaining strategic maneuverability through its energy assets, it remains tethered to a global system defined by high-stakes nuclear diplomacy and fractured regional governance.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **PDVSA Launches High-Octane Market Pricing:** A new pilot program introduces 97-octane "Super Premium" gasoline at [five stations in Caracas](#) for \$1 per liter, effectively doubling the price of regular fuel to fund refinery improvements.
- **U.S.-Venezuela Energy Rapprochement:** Valero Energy is set to import [6.5 million barrels](#) of Venezuelan oil in March, potentially surpassing Chevron as the top U.S. buyer, following the relaxation of sanctions.
- **Peruvian Political Collapse:** The Peruvian Congress [ousted interim President José Jerí](#) following corruption allegations, marking the eighth president in ten years for the unstable Andean nation.

- **Tense Nuclear Diplomacy in Geneva:** Negotiations between the U.S. and Iran have stalled over [territorial and security "red lines,"](#) with U.S. officials warning of potential military intervention to prevent Iranian nuclear acquisition.
- **Sino-Venezuelan Strategic Alignment:** Caracas hosted high-level [Lunar New Year celebrations,](#) emphasizing "millennial" cultural ties and the intent to deepen the "model relationship" between the two nations.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Energy & Critical Minerals The state is transitioning to a hybrid energy model. While launching expensive [97-octane fuel,](#) the government is also promoting "World Energy Day" to advocate for [renewable energy](#) as a means to mitigate climate change, though oil remains the primary driver of the [national budget.](#) Experts suggest the new Hydrocarbons Law of 2026 seeks to [attract private capital](#) by offering more favorable terms for foreign investors, mirroring the "opening" of 1943.

Civil Unrest & Social Order The government emphasized its capacity to maintain order during the Carnival festivities, citing a deployment of [28,228 officials.](#) Despite this, localized violence occurred, such as a [massive brawl](#) at the Cinta Costera in La Guaira, which prompted immediate investigation by the Public Ministry to demonstrate state decisiveness.

Diplomacy & Statecraft Venezuela is positioning itself as a bridge between the "Global South" and traditional powers. This is evidenced by the [recognition of Burundi's leadership](#) in the African Union and the welcoming of the [Qatari Prime Minister](#) to

discuss multipolar cooperation. Domestically, discussions around an [Amnesty Law](#) suggest an attempt at political reconciliation to facilitate international re-legitimacy.

Macroeconomics & Trade Economic indicators show a precarious recovery. While [electronic transactions](#) grew by 41% compared to 2025 during the Carnival season, the industrial sector (Asokim) reports that [capacity utilization](#) remains low at 42.9%, constrained by a lack of raw materials and financing.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

- **Normalization through Marketization:** The introduction of \$1/liter gasoline is not merely a pricing change but a signal of "economic normalization." By allowing [Super Premium fuel](#) sales, the state is testing the public's tolerance for the withdrawal of subsidies in exchange for better service and infrastructure, a move essential for integrating with the global energy market.
- **Strategic Multipolarity:** Caracas is carefully balancing its "fraternal" relationship with [China and the Arab world](#) against a tactical rapprochement with the [U.S. through energy deals.](#) The state media promotes the "Year of the Fire Horse" and "Ramadan" alongside news of U.S. oil imports, framing Venezuela as a central, stable node in a fracturing world.

- **Institutional Fragility vs. Performative Stability:** There is a sharp contrast between the performative success of the [Carnival security plan](#) and the underlying institutional decay. Reports of [15-day water shortages](#) in Sucre and the struggle of the [university sector \(UCB\)](#) to provide basic services like student dining reveal that the "recovery" has not yet reached critical infrastructure or social services.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Venezuela's internal state is characterized by a "dual reality." On the surface, the Carnival season was heralded as a triumph of [tourism and security](#), with high hotel occupancy in La Guaira (95%) and Falcon (100%). This is intended to project a image of a country that has "healed" and is ready for international tourism. However, the Public Ministry's clarification regarding the arrest of [Evanan Romero](#)—insisting his detention was for common fraud rather than petroleum-related activities—suggests a sensitivity to rumors of elite infighting or purges within the vital energy sector.

Furthermore, the university sector appears to be a brewing flashpoint. The Secretary of the UCV, Corina Aristimuño, highlighted the [failure of the student dining system](#) (operating only two days a week) and the controversy surrounding the [National System of Admission \(SNI\)](#), which allegedly produces students with lower retention rates than the university's internal merit-based system. This institutional friction, combined with public denunciations of [long-term water outages](#), indicates that the government's mandate is heavily dependent on the success of the new energy reforms to provide immediate liquidity for basic services.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The world is framed as an "unstable theater" where Venezuela's energy wealth provides it with a "protective shield." The broadcast portrays the U.S. as a nation forced by energy necessity to [negotiate with Caracas](#), with headlines even suggesting a "recognition" of the Maduro-Rodríguez administration as a fait accompli. This is contrasted with the "ineptitude" of regional peers; for instance, the [collapse of the Peruvian presidency](#) is used as a cautionary tale of what happens when a nation lacks a strong, centralized governance model.

Venezuela is also projecting power through "Solidarity Statecraft." By celebrating [Lunar New Year](#) and [Ramadan](#), and hosting the [Sudanese Ambassador](#), Caracas is signaling its membership in an alternative global bloc that challenges Western hegemony. The Sudanese interview specifically highlighted [foreign interference](#) as the cause of that nation's civil war, a narrative that resonates with the Venezuelan government's own framing of its recent history.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The Venezuelan economy is entering a "post-subsidy" phase driven by the need to recapitalize PDVSA and stabilize the exchange rate, which recently saw the dollar [premium rise by 100%](#) before ceding. The business sentiment is cautiously optimistic but hampered by structural deficits in electricity and raw materials.

Key Economic Vectors

- **Energy Pricing:** 97-octane gasoline priced at [\\$1/liter](#), double the regular price (\$0.50/liter).
- **Oil Exports:** Valero Energy projecting [6.5M barrels](#) for March; global oil prices currently at [\\$63.25/barrel](#).
- **Manufacturing:** Chemical industry utilization at [42.9%](#), showing a slight recovery from 36.3% in 2024.
- **Consumer Trends:** 41% growth in [electronic transactions](#) during Carnival; 17% increase in passenger mobilization.
- **Infrastructure Debt:** The university sector reports a "debt" to students regarding [ID cards and dining](#) due to budgetary constraints.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

- **Sanae Takaichi:** Confirmed as [Japan's first female Prime Minister](#). She is framed as a "strong" nationalist leader intending to reinforce the military and confront China, potentially increasing regional friction.
- **José Jerí:** Destituted by the [Peruvian Congress](#) for alleged corruption, leading to a new search for an interim leader before the April elections. He is a clear "loser" in the regional political landscape.
- **Delcy Rodríguez:** Portrayed in headline crawls as having gained [de facto recognition](#) from the U.S. administration, positioning her as a central figure in the 2026 transition/governance strategy.
- **Evariste Ndayishimiye:** The President of Burundi, recognized for his new role as [pro-tempore leader of the African Union](#), a development celebrated by Caracas as a win for Global South diplomacy.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial posture is one of "managed optimism" and "distraction." The lead stories focus on the [success of the Carnival security balance](#) and the introduction of [high-end gasoline](#), framing both as signs of a "strong and recovering" state. Serious domestic issues, such as the [chronic water shortages](#) and the [UCV dining crisis](#), are buried in later segments or framed as "problems being addressed" through upcoming meetings. The tone is reassuring but uses international chaos (Sudan, Peru, U.S.-Iran tension) as a foil to highlight Venezuela's relative stability. A conspicuous omission is the current inflation rate; while "dollar volatility" is mentioned, the specific impact on the purchasing power of the average citizen is largely avoided in favor of celebrating "increased sales" at supermarkets.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The broadcast frames the world as a transition from "American unilateralism" to a "multipolar reality" where resource-rich nations hold significant leverage.

COUNTRIES

- **The United States:** Portrayed as a "transactional" actor. On one hand, it is seen as a threat ("bombing threats" and "chantage" mentioned in [Kicosis](#)), but also as an essential energy partner through companies like [Valero and Chevron](#).
- **China:** Framed as a **principled friend**. The Lunar New Year coverage emphasizes cultural respect and a "model relationship" of [mutual cooperation](#) without interference.

- **Sudan:** Depicted as a **victim of foreign interference** and "imported combatants," serving as a geopolitical [warning to Venezuela](#) regarding the dangers of internal division.
- **Japan:** Under its new leadership, Japan is seen as **becoming more assertive** and potentially destabilizing in Asia due to its focus on [military reinforcement](#).

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a **pragmatic strategist** who "negotiates" with Caracas because "a similar operation [to the one in Venezuela] would not be necessary in Cuba" ([Page 69](#)).
- **Volodimir Zelensky:** Framed as **struggling to reach consensus** in Geneva negotiations, with the broadcast highlighting Russian claims of "unreasonable" [Ukrainian territorial demands](#).
- **Lula da Silva:** Characterized as a **global bridge-builder** seeking to unite the Global South (India, Brazil) on [Artificial Intelligence and rare earth metals](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The broadcast repeatedly seeds the idea that the [2026 Hydrocarbons Law](#) is an "evolutionary step" that protects sovereignty while inviting capital, preemptively countering leftist criticism that the government is "giving away" oil to the U.S.

- **Symbolic Distraction:** Extensive coverage of [Ash Wednesday and religious traditions](#) serves to soften the impact of the announcement of [\\$1/liter gas](#), wrapping an unpopular economic measure in a week of national spiritual reflection.
- **Delta between Media Spin and Ground Truth:** While the media reports "Carnival Success," the [La Guaira brawl](#) and the [motorcycle fatalities](#) ([Gustavo Vielma, 39](#); [Joan Sandoval, 19](#)) reveal that the security deployment was unable to prevent significant localized violence and accidents.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **The "Amnesty Pivot":** The focus on an [Amnesty Law](#) and the release of political prisoners (890 mentioned) suggests a planned "liberalization" to secure a full removal of U.S. sanctions before the next election cycle.
- **Energy Triage:** The move to [Super Premium gas](#) at market rates will likely lead to a tiered society where those with FX access have reliable fuel, while the subsidized regular gas remains scarce, potentially fueling **future social resentment**.
- **Regional Contagion:** The [collapse in Peru](#) and the [U.S.-Iran tension](#) may drive global oil prices higher, giving Venezuela an unexpected "windfall" that could stabilize the government's finances despite low industrial output.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect public pushback or protests at [high-octane gas stations](#) as consumers realize the \$1/liter price point is the "new normal." The second round of [Russia-Ukraine talks](#) in Geneva will likely end in another stalemate over territorial concessions.
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** If the [Amnesty Law](#) is passed, Venezuela could see its first major non-oil foreign direct investment (FDI) in years. Conversely, [Peru's lack of leadership](#) could lead to an Andean migrant surge if the April elections are delayed or contested.
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** The "model relationship" with [China](#) and the energy-driven detente with the [U.S.](#) will force Venezuela into a precarious neutral stance. The success of the [high-octane fuel program](#) will determine whether PDVSA can internally fund its own refinery repairs without relying solely on foreign "loans."

RISK ASSESSMENT

The following risks could significantly alter the current trajectory of stability in Venezuela and the region.

- **Middle East Escalation:** Failure of the Geneva talks triggers a military strike on [Iranian nuclear sites](#). Triggers: Breach of "red lines" in enrichment. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Global oil price spike to [\\$200-\\$300](#), potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Mitigations: Immediate Venezuelan ramp-up of exports to the U.S. market.

- **Domestic Social Fracture:** Widening gap between "Super Premium" users and the [waterless population](#) triggers spontaneous riots. Triggers: Extended water/power outages in Caracas. Likelihood: High. Impact: Temporary state of emergency. Mitigations: Accelerated deployment of "emergency" water infrastructure funds from new oil revenues.
- **Peruvian Anarchy:** Failure to elect a [new leader in Peru](#) leads to total institutional collapse. Triggers: Military refusal to support an interim government. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Regional instability and suspension of the Andean Community of Nations. Mitigations: Diplomatic mediation by Brazil and Venezuela.
- **Energy Transition Backlash:** The [2026 Hydrocarbons Law](#) triggers a "leftist" rebellion within the ruling party over "selling out" to U.S. companies. Triggers: Mass layoffs in state-owned sectors during privatization. Likelihood: Low. Impact: Cabinet reshuffle. Mitigations: Re-framing deals as "joint ventures" rather than concessions.
- **Cyber-Physical Failure:** The move to [digital banking \(Vancaribe\)](#) and smart-metering for gas is met with a massive state-actor cyberattack. Triggers: Retaliation for Venezuelan energy cooperation with the West. Likelihood: Low. Impact: Total disruption of the \$1/liter gas payment system. Mitigations: Investment in "Sovereign AI" and cybersecurity as discussed in [China-Venezuela](#) forums.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- **Real Inflation Data:** The broadcast mentions "dollar premium" but omits **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** data, leaving the actual affordability of \$1/liter gas unknown for those earning in Bolivares.
- **Details of the U.S. Recognition:** The headline "[Trump reconoce a Delsi como presidenta](#)" is presented as a news crawl without a detailed report, leaving the veracity and nature of this "recognition" highly suspect.
- **Sudan Conflict Specifics:** The interview with the [Sudanese Ambassador](#) avoids naming specific "imported combatants" or the countries backing the RSF, providing an incomplete picture of the proxy war's drivers.
- **Fuel Quality and Engine Damage:** While PDVSA promotes [97-octane gas](#), there is no independent data on the actual octane levels being delivered, nor the long-term impact of current lower-quality fuels on the national fleet.
- **The Fate of the Guayana Esequiba:** Frequent mentions of the [Geneva Agreement anniversary](#) lack any update on current military posturing or diplomatic negotiations with Guyana, masking a potential "frozen conflict."

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Energy Mirage":** While the broadcast frames [Valero's 6.5M barrel import](#) as a sign of strength, it may actually be a "fire sale." Venezuela could be selling crude at massive discounts to ensure short-term survival, sacrificing long-term national wealth for temporary fiscal liquidity.
- **Managed Instability:** The [La Guaira brawl](#) and other "security incidents" might be amplified by the state to justify the permanent deployment of [28,000+ officials](#) long after Carnival ends, effectively maintaining a "soft" state of exception.
- **Black Swan: The Petro-Strike:** A failure of the [U.S.-Iran negotiations](#) leads to a total blockade of Iranian tankers. If Caracas has already over-committed its domestic refining capacity to high-octane exports for the U.S., it could face a **domestic fuel collapse** overnight despite high production.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Maintain the high visibility of security forces beyond the holiday season to counteract the "instability" narrative from the La Guaira incident ([Page 4](#)).
- **Economic:** Transparently audit the [investment fund](#) being managed by the U.S. Secretary of Energy to ensure funds are actually used for electrical grid repairs.

- **Diplomatic:** Leverage the [Peruvian crisis](#) to position Venezuela as the "stable mediator" of the Andes, improving its standing in the OAS and Mercosur ([Page 2](#)).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain:** Investors in the chemical sector should monitor the [Asokim utilization rates](#); the 42.9% figure suggests a significant "slack" that could be a prime entry point if financing becomes available.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Monitor the [Amnesty Law](#) discussions closely; its passage would be the signal that "political risk" is sufficiently minimized for capital allocation in non-petroleum sectors.
- **Safety Standards:** The [destruction of motorcycle resonators](#) in Barinas suggests a new, aggressive enforcement of "sonic pollution" laws that could impact logistics and transport companies nationwide.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity is focused on restructuring the economy for foreign re-entry and attempting social pacification through legal reform.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Organic Law of Hydrocarbons (2026):** Proposed to allow [private partners to hold >50%](#) stake in joint ventures, a strategic move to secure foreign investment capital that the state currently lacks.
- **Amnesty Law (2026):** Under debate to [pardon 890+ political prisoners](#) as a condition for international legitimacy and the full lifting of sanctions.

- **Anti-Espionage Law (Japan):** Discussed in international news as a means for [Takaichi's government](#) to create a new intelligence agency to counter Chinese influence.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **PDVSA "Super Premium" Launch:** Personnel at Caracas stations provided technical briefings on the [97-octane fuel requirement](#) for modern high-compression engines.
- **Asokim Q4 2025 Survey:** Reinaldo Cabaldón held a press event detailing the [utilization growth](#) in the chemical industry and the impact of new OFAC licenses.
- **Sudan Embassy Interview:** Ambassador Abduahí held a lengthy session discussing the [civil war's roots](#) and the "resource curse" of gold and oil.

KEY STORIES

- **Introduction of 97-Octane Gasoline:** PDVSA begins pilot program at [five stations](#) (Terraza del Club Hipico, El Hatillo, Tamanaco, Blandín, La Floresta, and Altamira) priced at \$1 per liter.
- **Valero Energy Import Projection:** The U.S. refinery plans to import [6.5M barrels](#) of Venezuelan crude in March 2026.
- **Peruvian Presidential Ouster:** Interim President José Jerí [destituted by 75 votes](#) in Congress over corruption charges.
- **Carnival Security Balance 2026:** 28,228 officials deployed [nationwide](#), 1,200 officials in Caracas; reports of 17% increase in mobility.
- **Geneva Tensions:** U.S.-Iran nuclear talks and Russia-Ukraine talks both [conclude Day 1](#) without consensus on territorial or security guarantees.

- **Ash Wednesday and Lent Begin:** Religious ceremonies held at [Basílica de Santa Teresa](#) and other parishes in Caracas.
- **Sudan Civil War Interview:** Amb. Abduahí claims [80 tons of gold](#) production and foreign combatants are central to the conflict.
- **Japan's First Female PM:** Sanae Takaichi [confirmed](#), promises military reinforcement and potential intervention in Taiwan conflict.
- **UCV Infrastructure Crisis:** University Secretary Corina Aristimuño reports dining halls serving only [1,200 trays twice a week](#) due to budget constraints.
- **La Guaira Brawl Investigation:** Public Ministry opens case into a [massive fight](#) at the Macuto Cinta Costera over the Carnival weekend.
- **Sino-Venezuelan Lunar New Year:** High-level events at the [National Art Gallery](#) celebrate the "Year of the Fire Horse."
- **World Energy Day:** Discussions on [World Energy Day \(Feb 14\)](#) emphasize the 20% global shift to renewables.
- **Banking Innovation:** Vancaribe launches a new [digital agency in Guaparo](#), Valencia, focused on corporate and PYME banking.
- **Hospital Rehabilitation:** Hospital Central de Barquisimeto receives [ophthalmological equipment](#) to address a backlog of 19,500 cataract surgeries.
- **Barinas Motorcycle Enforcement:** 391 resonators [destroyed](#) by the SODI to combat "noise pollution."
- **U.S. Snow Avalanche:** At least [10 skiers missing](#) in Pico Castle, California, following a severe storm.

- **Vinicius Jr. Racism Incident:** Real Madrid star [targets of racial slurs](#) by a Benfica player (Number 25) during a Champions League match.

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.

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