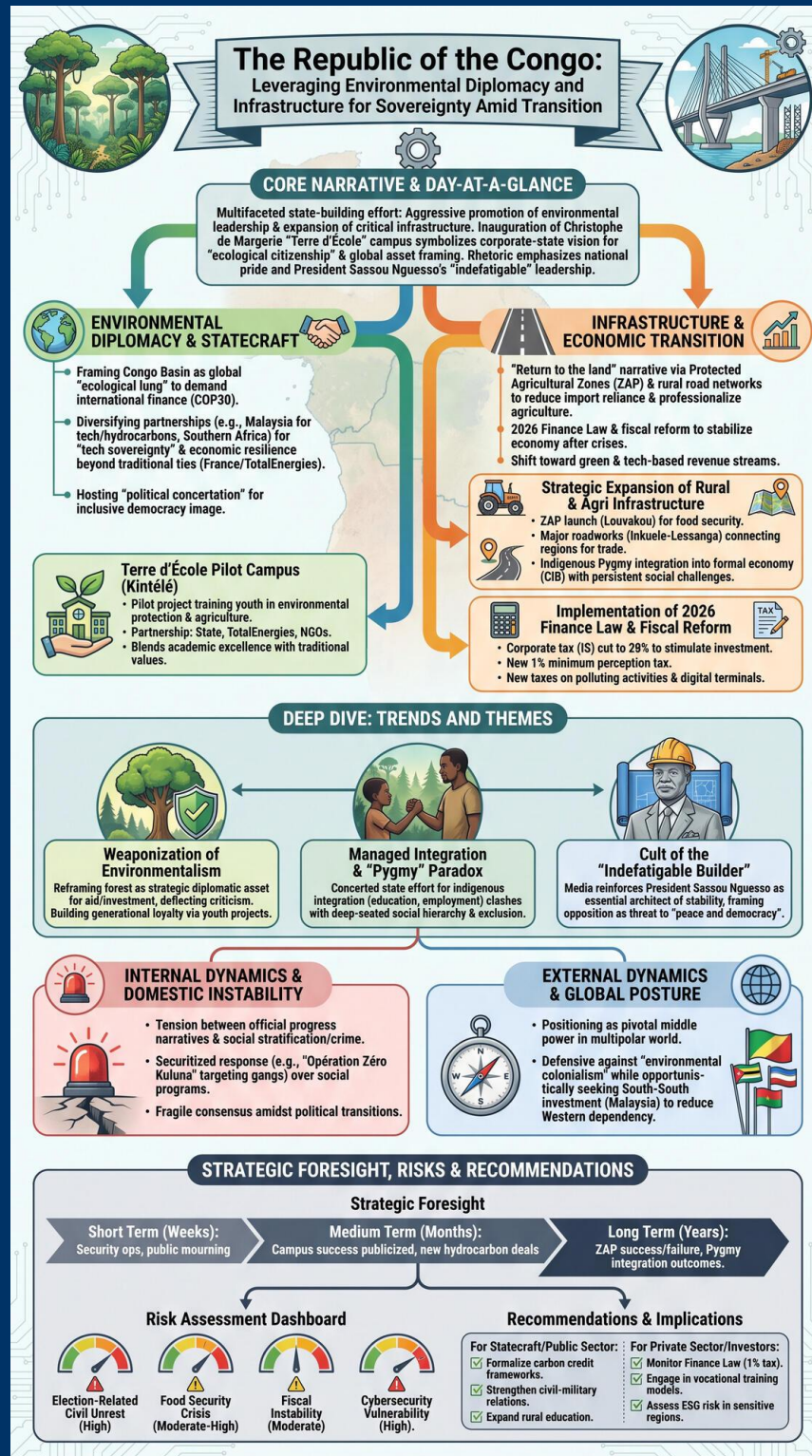


TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO IS LEVERAGING ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY AND LARGE-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TO SOLIDIFY STATE LEGITIMACY AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AMID SIGNIFICANT FISCAL AND SOCIAL TRANSITIONS.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Republic of the Congo is currently engaged in a multifaceted state-building effort, primarily characterized by the aggressive promotion of environmental leadership and the expansion of critical infrastructure. The centerpiece of the day's events was the inauguration of the Christophe de Margerie "Terre d'École" campus in Kintélé, a pilot project symbolizing the convergence of corporate interests (notably TotalEnergies) and the government's vision for "ecological citizenship." This project aims to integrate traditional knowledge with modern environmental science, framing the Congo Basin as a global asset that justifies increased international investment and political support for the current administration. The rhetoric surrounding this

event emphasizes national pride and the "indefatigable" nature of President Denis Sassou Nguesso's leadership.

Simultaneously, the government is pushing a "return to the land" narrative through the creation of Protected Agricultural Zones (ZAP) and the modernization of rural road networks, such as the Inkuele-Lessanga axis. These initiatives are designed to reduce the nation's heavy reliance on food imports and address youth unemployment by professionalizing agriculture. However, these developments occur against a backdrop of fiscal reform, with the 2026 Finance Law introducing significant changes to corporate taxation and revenue collection aimed at stabilizing an economy recently shaken by financial crises. The state is also navigating complex social integration challenges, particularly regarding indigenous Pygmy populations, attempting to balance their integration into the formal workforce with the preservation of their cultural heritage.

On the security and diplomatic fronts, the administration is reinforcing domestic order through the Gendarmerie's "Opération Zéro Kuluna" and regional security evaluations to ensure a peaceful environment for the upcoming 2026 presidential election cycle. Internationally, the Congo is diversifying its partnerships beyond its traditional ties with France, reaching out to Malaysia for strategic cooperation in hydrocarbons and telecommunications, and engaging with Southern African neighbors like Namibia and Botswana. This diplomatic expansion is framed as a quest for "tech sovereignty" and economic resilience in a fracturing multipolar world.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Inauguration of the Terre d'École Pilot Campus in Kintélé

- The state inaugurated a [pilot campus](#) named after former Total CEO Christophe de Margerie, designed to train youth in environmental protection and agricultural techniques.
- The project, initiated during the Rio+20 conference, is supported by a [partnership](#) between the Congolese state, TotalEnergies, and international NGOs.
- The facility includes dormitories, laboratories, and a botanical garden, with a curriculum that blends [academic excellence](#) with traditional land-based values.

Implementation of the 2026 Finance Law and Fiscal Reform

- The government is rolling out [major reforms](#) to the corporate tax (IS), reducing the rate from 30% to 28% to stimulate investment.
- A new 1% minimum perception tax is being introduced to ensure revenue even from [deficit-reporting](#) companies.
- Reforms include new taxes on [polluting activities](#) and digital terminals, reflecting a shift toward green and tech-based revenue streams.

Strategic Expansion of Rural and Agricultural Infrastructure

- The launch of "Protected Agricultural Zones" (ZAP) in Louvakou aims to professionalize farming and [ensure food security](#).

- Major roadworks on the [Inkuele-Lessanga axis](#) are underway to connect the northern Sangha region to Brazzaville, facilitating trade and reducing isolation.
- Indigenous Pygmy populations are being increasingly [integrated into formal economic structures](#), such as the CIB, though social stigma remains a significant barrier.

National Security and the "Kuluna" Threat Mitigation

- The Gendarmerie conducted a [comprehensive evaluation](#) of its 2025 activities to prepare for the security challenges of 2026.
- A primary focus remains "Opération Zéro Kuluna," targeting [urban gangs](#) and narcotics networks to stabilize major cities.
- The military leadership is emphasizing [discipline and ethics](#) within the ranks to maintain public trust during election preparations.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Armed Conflict & Militarization

- The state is projecting a high level of military readiness, with the Gendarmerie focusing on [rapid reaction capabilities](#) and urban pacification.
- Official ceremonies increasingly feature [military honors](#) and the sanctification of sites by ancestral authorities, blending modern state power with traditional legitimacy.

Climate & Extreme Weather

- Congolese leadership is positioning the country as an "ecological lung" for the world, using this status to [demand international financing](#) (COP30 context).
- Health reports warn that climate change is [increasing the risk](#) of water-borne diseases and food insecurity due to shifting flood patterns.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- Congo is finalizing a [cooperation agreement](#) with Malaysia, specifically targeting oil and telecommunications sectors.
- The state is hosting "political concertation" meetings (e.g., in Djambala) to project an image of [inclusive democracy](#) and consensus ahead of elections.

Food & Water Security

- The "return to the land" initiative is a direct response to the vulnerability of the national food supply, which currently [relies heavily on imports](#).
- Humanitarian aid is being deployed to [conflict-affected populations](#) in the Pool region, including essential food staples like rice and salt.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- The transition of the CNI (National Election Commission) to a [parity-based structure](#) is being touted as a democratic victory, though it serves to legitimize the status quo.
- National economic indicators show a push for [local production](#), but the country remains susceptible to global commodity price fluctuations.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Environmentalism

The Congolese government has successfully reframed the Congo Basin forest as a strategic diplomatic asset. By hosting events like the "Three Basins Summit" and inaugurating "ecological campuses," the administration is creating a narrative where [state survival is synonymous with environmental survival](#). This trend serves to attract foreign aid and investment (like the TotalEnergies partnership) while deflecting criticism of the domestic human rights record or political longevity. The "Terre d'École" project specifically targets the youth, attempting to build a [generational loyalty](#) to the president's environmental vision.

Managed Integration and the "Pygmy" Paradox

There is a concerted effort to portray the indigenous Pygmy population as successfully integrating into the Congolese nation-state through education and [formal employment at the CIB](#). However, the transcripts also reveal a persistent undercurrent of [social mockery and exclusion](#), with Pygmy leaders expressing the need for their children to attend school specifically to avoid being cheated or ridiculed by the "Bantous." The state's narrative of integration appears to be a top-down mandate that clashes with deep-seated regional social hierarchies.

The Cult of the "Indefatigable Builder"

The media coverage relentlessly reinforces the image of President Denis Sassou Nguesso as the [essential architect of Congolese stability](#). Whether planting trees, inaugurating roads, or managing political dialogues, he is

portrayed as the only figure capable of navigating the "troubled world." This cult of personality is increasingly tied to "peace" and "democracy," framing any opposition or instability as a [threat to the nation's very foundations](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The domestic landscape is defined by a tension between official narratives of progress and the reality of social stratification and crime. The emphasis on ["Opération Zéro Kuluna"](#) suggests that urban gang violence and narcotics remain significant threats to social order, particularly in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. The government's response is heavily securitized, focusing on military-led crackdowns rather than social programs. Furthermore, while the government promotes "political concertation," the transcripts mention ["dérapages" \(slips/skids\)](#) and the potential for election-related unrest, indicating that the veneer of consensus is fragile. The loss of prominent political figures like **Émilie Manima** and **Firma de Esa** has triggered a period of official mourning that serves both as a tribute and a tool for national cohesion, distracting from internal factional anxieties [during this transition](#).

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The Republic of the Congo is positioning itself as a pivotal middle power in a multipolar environment. The framing of the "outside world" is one of [high-stakes environmental competition](#) where Congo holds the keys to carbon sequestration. The state is actively moving to diversify its alliances; while **France** remains a key corporate partner through

TotalEnergies, the administration is aggressively courting **Malaysia** for [strategic technology transfers](#). This suggests a desire to reduce Western dependency. The posture is defensive yet opportunistic: defensive in protecting its sovereignty against "environmental colonialism" (demanding payment for forest preservation) and opportunistic in seeking new [south-south investment](#) channels.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The national economy is in a state of managed reform, attempting to shift from raw resource extraction to a more diversified, domestically focused model. The [2026 Finance Law](#) is the primary instrument of this change, targeting fiscal stability after past crises. Market sentiment appears cautiously optimistic within state-aligned sectors, but the reliance on [foreign corporate partnerships](#) for major projects like "Terre d'École" highlights a continued lack of domestic capital.

Key Economic Vectors

- **Corporate Taxation:** Corporate income tax (IS) reduced from 30% to 28% to attract investment [into new sectors](#).
- **Revenue Collection:** Introduction of a 1% minimum tax on all corporate products to [ensure fiscal intake](#).
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Multi-million dollar investments in roads (Sangha/Pool regions) and agricultural zones (ZAP) to [boost local commerce](#).
- **Sanctions & Supply Chains:** The government is prioritizing "local consumption" to mitigate [international supply chain shocks](#) and food price inflation.

- **Energy Sector:** Ongoing negotiations with [Malaysian firms](#) for hydrocarbon exploration and telecommunications infrastructure.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The Congolese political elite is undergoing a period of symbolic transition, marked by the passing of the "Old Guard" and the managed rise of new administrative figures.

- **Émilie Manima (Deceased):** The death of the first female minister is being used to [reinforce national unity](#) and the state's historical commitment to gender equality.
- **Firma de Esa (Deceased):** The sudden death of the Minister of State in Istanbul has created a [vacancy in the cabinet](#), leading to a shuffle in internal administrative duties.
- **Guill Paulin Nazer Oba:** Appointed as the new [sub-prefect of Ignyé](#), representing the next generation of provincial leadership loyal to the presidency.
- **Anatole Collinet Makoso:** The Prime Minister is increasingly visible as the [chief administrator](#) of the President's vision, handling the technical details of international partnerships.
- **Maria Melin:** As President of "Terre d'École," she has emerged as a [key non-state power broker](#) bridging Congolese state interests and French corporate capital.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The editorial tone of Telecongo is overwhelmingly nationalistic and celebratory, focusing on state-led "victories" and

presidential vision. The **Lead Stories** were the inauguration of the Terre d'École campus and the homages to Émilie Manima, which occupied the majority of airtime and were framed with high emotional gravity. These stories serve to project stability and continuity. **Buried Stories** include the specific details of urban poverty, the continued displacement of people in the Pool region, and the precise nature of the "financial crisis" alluded to in reports. The broadcast adopted a **distracting and nationalistic** tone, using environmental archaeological reports (e.g., in Lopé) to provide a sense of timeless historical depth to the current regime. **Conspicuous Omissions** include any critical voices regarding the 2026 Finance Law's impact on small businesses, the actual human rights conditions of Pygmy workers, and the specific terms of the new agreements with Malaysia.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The transcripts reveal a carefully constructed geopolitical map where Congo is a benevolent environmental guardian surrounded by opportunities for technical and south-south cooperation.

COUNTRIES

- **France:** Portrayed as a stable, elder partner, primarily through corporate lenses like TotalEnergies. Framed as a [friend and historical ally](#) whose technical expertise is welcomed but whose political influence is managed.
- **Malaysia:** Framed as a [strategic and competent ally](#) in the high-tech and energy sectors, providing an alternative to traditional Western partners.

- **Democratic Republic of the Congo (RDC):** Portrayed implicitly as a [source of potential "invasion" or instability](#) (refugee/migration context), necessitating Congolese vigilance and strong border/security management.

LEADERS

- **Denis Sassou Nguesso:** Framed as the ["indefatigable builder"](#) and a principled visionary. Quotes describe him as a symbol of "peace and democracy" whose presence is requested by the people.
- **Emmanuel Macron:** Portrayed as a [cooperative peer](#) in environmental initiatives, though less prominent than corporate CEOs in the Congolese narrative.
- **Anatole Collinet Makoso:** Framed as the [efficient and loyal lieutenant](#), managing the machinery of state with technical precision.

NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **TotalEnergies (Total Energie):** Portrayed as a ["citizen enterprise"](#) that respects local laws and contributes to social progress, far beyond its role as an oil extractor.
- **Terre d'École:** Framed as a ["bridge between two worlds"](#) (nature and education), an NGO that serves as a vehicle for the President's domestic and international policy goals.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The state is aggressively seeding the narrative that the [preservation of the Congo Basin](#) forest is the nation's primary "sovereignty" shield against external interference.

- **Meta-Narrative:** The "return to the land" and "local consumption" campaign is being used to [pre-emptively blame global market conditions](#) for any domestic food shortages or price hikes.
- **Spin vs. Reality:** While the media highlights the "joy" of Pygmy integration, the subtext of the reports reveals a [defensive posture](#) by indigenous groups who view education as a survival tactic against systemic Bantou exploitation.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Election Securitization:** The intense focus on Gendarmerie readiness and "Opération Zéro Kuluna" suggests that the government [anticipates urban unrest](#) in the lead-up to the 2026 elections and is preparing a overwhelming military deterrent.
- **Diversification of Capital:** The outreach to Malaysia indicates a [long-term strategy](#) to pivot away from EU-centric funding, potentially seeking partners with fewer human rights or governance conditionalities.
- **Environmental Monetization:** Congo will likely increase its [demands for "carbon credits"](#) and direct payments from the international community, using the "second lung" status as geopolitical leverage.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a series of high-profile "security operations" in Brazzaville under the "Zéro Kuluna" banner to consolidate control before election season. Public mourning for Émilie Manima will serve to dampen political debate.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The first cohorts of the "Terre d'École" campus will be widely publicized to demonstrate the "success" of the President's vision. Diplomatic missions to Kuala Lumpur will likely result in the signing of new hydrocarbon exploration licenses.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The "ZAP" agricultural zones will either become models for domestic food security or, if they fail, become flashpoints for rural discontent. The success of Pygmy integration into the CIB will be a key indicator of the state's ability to manage its minority populations.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Election-Related Civil Unrest:** Rapid deterioration of social order due to perceived election irregularities or gang violence. **Triggers:** Arbitrary arrests of opposition figures or a failure of "Opération Zéro Kuluna." **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Severe disruption to urban commerce and state stability. **Mitigations:** Successful "political concertation" and balanced security deployment [in major cities](#).
- **Food Security Crisis:** Inflation and import dependencies lead to urban hunger and protest. **Triggers:** Global grain price spikes or failure of the ZAP initiative. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** High. **Mitigations:** Rapid acceleration of [domestic agricultural output](#).
- **Fiscal Instability:** The 2026 Finance Law fails to generate intended revenue, leading to public sector wage arrears. **Triggers:** Oil price collapse or massive corporate tax evasion. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Critical for regime survival. **Mitigations:** Stricter [enforcement of the 1% minimum tax](#).

- **Ethnic/Social Flashpoints:** Escalating conflict between "Bantou" and "Pygmy" populations in industrial zones like Pokola. **Triggers:** Disputes over land rights or employment quotas at the CIB. **Likelihood:** Moderate. **Impact:** Localized but damaging to [international ecological reputation](#).
- **Cybersecurity Vulnerability:** State and corporate infrastructure targeted by external or internal actors during the election cycle. **Triggers:** Lack of trained cyber-security personnel [at a licentiate level](#). **Likelihood:** High. **Impact:** Disruption of government services and potential information warfare. **Mitigations:** Rapid implementation of [cyber-security training](#) for youth.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts mention a ["financial crisis"](#) but provide no data on debt-to-GDP ratios or the extent of foreign debt arrears.
- There is a total absence of independent [opposition perspectives](#) on the 2026 Finance Law and its impact on the poor.
- The actual environmental impact of the [TotalEnergies](#) operations is never discussed, only their "social contributions."
- The details regarding the [displaced populations](#) in the Pool region and the long-term plan for their resettlement remain vague.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Ecological Facade":** The intense focus on environmental campuses and forest preservation is actually a stalling tactic to secure "green finance" while the elite continues to benefit from unregulated resource extraction in the hinterlands. In this scenario, the "Terre d'École" is a high-cost PR project for [TotalEnergies' continued presence](#).
- **The "Security Illusion":** "Opération Zéro Kuluna" is not about crime but about [pre-emptively neutralizing youth leaders](#) who could organize protests during the 2026 elections. The "criminals" targeted may be politically active youth in disenfranchised neighborhoods.
- **Black Swan Event:** A major industrial accident at a CIB site or a TotalEnergies offshore platform could trigger an [environmental catastrophe](#) that completely shatters the government's carefully built narrative as a "green lung," leading to immediate withdrawal of international support.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Formalize carbon credit frameworks to ensure the ["ecological lung"](#) narrative generates verifiable and transparent income.
- Strengthen civil-military relations beyond crackdowns like [Zéro Kuluna](#) to ensure long-term stability.

- Expand educational programs to rural areas [beyond industrial centers](#) like Pokola to reduce regional inequality.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Monitor the [2026 Finance Law](#) implementations closely, particularly the new 1% minimum tax on production.
- Engage in the "Terre d'École" model of vocational training to build [local talent pools](#) in environment and agriculture.
- Assess the reputational risk of partnerships in regions with [indigenous integration](#) challenges to ensure ESG compliance.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity is centered on the implementation of the 2026 Finance Law and the regulation of the upcoming electoral process through "political concertation."

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **2026 Finance Law:** Includes reduction of corporate tax to 28%, new environmental and digital taxes, and a [1% minimum tax](#) on company products.
- **Article 6 Constitutional Recommendation:** A proposal for [diaspora voting](#) and party funding reforms emerged from the Djambala political talks.
- **Forestry Code Compliance:** New regulations requiring [certification \(FC/FSC\)](#) for logging companies operating in the Congo Basin.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Gendarmerie 2025/2026 Evaluation:** A two-day session [assessing security strategies](#) for the national territory.

- **Cabinet Meeting on Ministerial Obsèques:** A session led by the PM to organize [official funerals](#) for Firma de Esa and Émilie Manima.
- **Ernest & Young Fiscal Seminar:** A briefing for [economic actors](#) on the 2026 Finance Law innovations.

KEY STORIES

- **Inauguration of Christophe de Margerie Campus:** President Sassou Nguesso and TotalEnergies leadership inaugurated a 15-hectare [educational site in Kintélé](#) dedicated to ecology and sustainable agriculture.
- **Integration of Pygmy Populations in Sangha:** Report on the [socio-economic integration](#) of indigenous groups at the CIB company in Pokola, highlighting educational progress and persistent social challenges.
- **Homage to Émilie Manima:** National mourning and [funeral ceremonies](#) for the Congo's first female minister, who died at age 90.
- **2026 Finance Law Rollout:** Detailed report on the fiscal reforms aiming to [stimulate investment](#) while securing government revenue through digital and green taxes.
- **Inkuele-Lessanga Road Infrastructure:** Progress update on the 99km road connecting [northern regions](#) to the capital, aimed at boosting trade in cocoa and coffee.
- **Opération Zéro Kuluna:** Security report on the [crackdown on urban gangs](#) and the gendarmerie's readiness for the 2026 election cycle.
- **Protected Agricultural Zones (ZAP):** Implementation of new farming zones in [Louvakou](#) to professionalize the sector and reduce food imports.
- **Cleft Lip Surgery Campaign:** A humanitarian effort by the [Congo Assistance Foundation](#) and Italian NGOs to provide free facial surgeries at the Blanche Gomez Hospital.
- **Congo-Malaysia Diplomatic Accord:** Negotiations for a new [cooperation agreement](#) in hydrocarbons and telecommunications.
- **Lisungi Energy Worker Mutual:** The inauguration of a new [solidarity building](#) in Pointe-Noire for the mutual insurance of energy sector employees.
- **Bisso na Bisso Community Radio:** The 15th anniversary of a [local radio station](#) in Pokola serving both Bantou and Pygmy populations.
- **Archaeology at Lopé and Endoki:** Researchers study [ancient petroglyphs](#) and tool sites dating back 40,000 years to understand early human impact on ecosystems.
- **Pikunda-Botobo-Maunda Road Appeal:** Local residents in Sangha [petition the President](#) for a 99km road connection to the national axis.
- **Hotel Exonel Opening in Oyo:** Launch of a new [luxury facility](#) to boost regional tourism and executive travel.

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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