

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CTV

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

DOMESTIC TRAGEDIES & GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY MAR LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVITIES: Military & Technological Race Intensifies (2026 Report Summary)

A stark dichotomy between traditional celebrations and a series of violent incidents, facing significant shifts in global and technological landscapes.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE: FESTIVITY & CRISIS



High-profile temple visits project stability, but social order tested.

Surge in Arson, Domestic Violence, & Public Safety Failures amidst Holiday Celebrations.

Conflicting Omens: Legislative Gridlock & Internal Attrition (Neihao) Warning

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS & KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

DOMESTIC STABILITY & PUBLIC SAFETY



Escalation of Violence:
Brutal Kaohsiung attack & fatal Taichung arson-suicide. Over 30 Taoyuan fire incidents.



Governance Under Pressure:
Managing mental health & social stressors, especially during holidays.

GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY & MILITARY READINESS



US Arms Sale Risk:
TWD 350 Billion package facing renegotiation/cancellation under Trump, following communication with Xi Jinping.



Projected Asymmetric Readiness:
Public unveiling of Suicide Drone (Switchblade 600) training centers & Naval Damage Control drills to counter external vulnerability.

TECHNOLOGICAL RACE & ECONOMIC SHIFTS



AI Integration & 'Low-Altitude Economy': Chinese firms announce 'Flying Car' mass production (2026). AI-driven automated restaurants outperforming traditional competitors.



Banking Friction:
Anti-fraud measures causing public backlash due to frozen accounts of ordinary citizens.

LEGISLATION & POLICY FOCUS

Domestic Violence Prevention Act (Amendments): Debate on restraining order enforcement.
Anti-Fraud Banking Regulations: Scrutiny over AI-based risk-detection.
US NDAA Implications: Strategic debate on arms package survival.
Military Drone Training Public Debut.
KMT New Year Address: Calls for peace.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS, FORESIGHT, & RECOMMENDATIONS

TRENDS & THEMES



Fragility of National Fortune Narrative:
Religious omens used to signal political dissatisfaction; 'Lower-Low' lot warns of internal friction.



Technological Displacement & AI Anxiety: Fear of job loss and loss of human-centric services (e.g., AI passport photos).



Asymmetric Security as PR Tool:
Showcasing FPV drones to reassure populace despite potential heavy arms loss.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

SHORT TERM (1-4 Weeks):

Post-holiday legislative debate on 'National Fortune'; review of emergency services; pressure to 'thaw' frozen accounts.

MEDIUM TERM (1-6 Months):

Formal diplomatic response to US arms sale issue; acceleration of Indigenous Drone programs; early mayoral election positioning.

LONG TERM (1-5 Years):

2026 Tipping Point for 'Low-Altitude Economy' & regulatory overhaul; shift to more 'transactional' regional security relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- INTERNATIONAL POLICY:** Prepare for 'transactional' security shift; develop 'Plan B' for regional indigenous manufacturing & cyber-security.
- PRIVATE SECTOR:** Invest in 'low-altitude economy' supply chains; address anti-fraud banking risks for SMEs.
- SOCIAL STABILITY:** Enhance 'crisis intervention' services during holidays; balance high-tech with high-touch social services.

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DOMESTIC TRAGEDIES AND
GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY MAR
LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVITIES AS
MILITARY AND TECHNOLOGICAL
RACE INTENSIFIES

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The second day of the Lunar New Year in 2026 is characterized by a stark dichotomy between traditional celebrations and a series of violent domestic incidents, alongside significant shifts in the geopolitical and technological landscape. While high-ranking political figures like President Lai Ching-te and Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an conducted high-profile temple visits to project stability and "National Fortune," the underlying social order was tested by a surge in arson, domestic violence, and public safety failures. A brutal hammer and knife attack in Kaohsiung and a fatal arson-suicide in Taichung highlight a volatile domestic environment amidst the holiday. These localized crises are compounded by "National Fortune Lots" from major temples that offer conflicting omens, with some explicitly warning of legislative gridlock and "internal attrition" (neihao), suggesting deep-seated politi-

cal divisions will persist into the "Year of the Horse."

Simultaneously, the administration is navigating a precarious international environment as reports emerge that a TWD 350 billion U.S. arms sale may be subject to renegotiation or cancellation under a Trump presidency, following his direct communications with Chinese leadership. To counter this external vulnerability, the state is aggressively publicizing its "asymmetric warfare" capabilities, including the first public unveiling of its suicide drone training centers and naval "damage control" readiness. In the private sector, the rapid integration of AI—ranging from fully automated restaurants in Changsha to "flying car" mass production timelines for 2026—demonstrates a state-led push for technological self-reliance and economic transformation, even as banking institutions face public backlash for "anti-fraud" measures that have inadvertently frozen the accounts of ordinary citizens.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Escalation of Domestic Violence and Public Safety Failures:** A series of high-profile crimes and accidents occurred during the holiday period. In Kaohsiung, a man attacked his ex-girlfriend's family with a hammer and a cleaver, causing severe injuries ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). In Taichung, a domestic dispute led to a man setting fire to gasoline, resulting in his death and critical injuries to his wife ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). Additionally, over 30 fire incidents were reported in Taoyuan on New Year's Eve alone, many attributed to the careless use of fireworks ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Geopolitical Uncertainty Regarding U.S. Arms Sales:** Diplomatic reports indicate that the TWD 350 billion military sales package approved by the U.S. in late 2025 may be at risk. Donald Trump has reportedly communicated with Chinese President Xi Jinping regarding these sales, suggesting a "re-evaluation" that could significantly alter the regional security balance ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Projected Military "Asymmetric" Readiness:** The Army has for the first time opened its Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) training center to the public, showcasing "suicide drones" (AeroVironment Switchblade 600) and FPV drone operations aimed at precision strikes against armored vehicles ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). The Navy also demonstrated "damage control" and "casualty rescue" drills on its frigates ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Conflicting "National Fortune" Omens:** Religious institutions have issued divergent outlooks for 2026. The Nankunshen Dai Tian Temple drew a "Medium-High" lot suggesting economic improvement ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). However, New Taipei's Yonglian Temple drew a "Lower-Low" lot, specifically warning of "internal strife" and cautioning the government against "reckless policy advancement" ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **AI Integration and the "Low-Altitude Economy":** Chinese firms (notably Xpeng/AeroHT) have announced mass production of "land aircraft carriers" (flying cars) by 2026, with price points around TWD 9-10 million ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). Domestically, AI-driven restaurants in Changsha are reportedly outperforming traditional competitors by reducing labor costs and providing 24/7 service ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

- **Geopolitics and National Security:** The potential shift in U.S. foreign policy regarding arms sales is the primary strategic concern. The government is attempting to project self-sufficiency through the development of local drone technology and increased transparency in military training to maintain public confidence ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Economic Statecraft and Banking Friction:** Aggressive anti-fraud measures by banks—driven by government mandates to curb "human head accounts"—have led to significant public resentment. Legitimate users are finding their accounts frozen for routine self-transfers or low balances, with banks labeling such behavior as "mule-like" ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Domestic Stability & Social Order:** The Lunar New Year has seen a spike in localized violence. Governance is under pressure to manage the mental health and social stressors that typically peak during holiday periods, exacerbated by an aging population and economic pressures ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Critical Infrastructure and State Capacity:** China's "Super Engineering" projects, such as the Chengdu Tianfu International Airport (capable of handling 120 million passengers) and the South-to-North Water Diversion project, are being used as benchmarks for state capacity and technological prowess ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)). Locally, the high-speed rail network faces operational strain during the "Chunyun" travel rush ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Elite Politics and Succession:** The 2026 local elections are already casting a shadow over holiday events. Potential New Taipei City mayoral candidate Lee Sichuan and Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an are using temple visits to shore up their "grassroots" appeal and gauge public sentiment ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

LEGISLATION/POLICY

Governance during this period has focused on enforcing "Anti-Fraud" financial protocols and public safety regulations, particularly regarding the "Domestic Violence Prevention Act." Financial regulators are facing scrutiny over the implementation of automated risk-detection systems in banking.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Domestic Violence Prevention Act (Amendments):** Discussion surrounding the enforcement of restraining orders following the Kaohsiung cleaver attack ([Source](#)).
- **Anti-Fraud Banking Regulations:** Implementation of AI-based monitoring for "high-risk" accounts, leading to the freezing of dormant or low-balance accounts ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **U.S. National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Implications:** Strategic debate over the TWD 350 billion procurement package and its survival in the current U.S. political climate ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Military Drone Training Public Debut:** Army officials held a demonstration of UAV capabilities to prove readiness in asymmetric combat scenarios ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **KMT New Year Address:** Chairman Chu Li-luan called for "dropping prejudice" and focusing on "peace" in a Chuxi address, subtly criticizing the administration's confrontational stance ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Olympic/International Sports Briefing:** Updates on Japanese and Canadian athletes at the Winter Olympics, focusing on the economic value of athlete branding ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Fragility of the "National Fortune" Narrative: There is a discernible trend of using religious omens to signal political dissatisfaction. The "Lower-Low" lot from Yonglian Temple—a traditionally significant indicator for Northern Taiwan—serves as a coded warning to the Lai administration about the dangers of legislative deadlock. This suggests that the political "honeymoon" period has ended, and the government faces a skeptical public that associates policy "progress" with "internal friction" ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Technological Displacement and AI Anxiety: While state media promotes AI as a "money-making trend" (as seen in Changsha's unmanned restaurants), there is a latent narrative of displacement. Traditional restaurants are reportedly "collapsing" within a month of AI competitors opening. This trend toward automation is also entering the legal and administrative realms, with AI now being used to generate passport photos and perform airport security checks, raising concerns about data privacy and the loss of "human-centric" services ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

Asymmetric Security as a Public Relations Tool: Faced with the potential loss of tradi-

tional U.S. heavy military assets, the state is pivoting its narrative toward "Asymmetric Warfare." By showcasing FPV drones—the same technology currently defining the conflict in Ukraine—the military is attempting to reassure a nervous populace that it can provide a "low-cost, high-impact" defense even if large-scale arms deals falter ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a "post-holiday" surge in legislative debate regarding the "National Fortune" warnings. Police and fire departments will likely undergo a period of review following the high volume of incidents during the New Year. Financial institutions may be forced to "thaw" accounts following public outcry over over-zealous anti-fraud algorithms ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The focus will shift to the formal diplomatic response to the potential U.S. arms sale renegotiation. We may see an acceleration of "Indigenous Drone" development programs to compensate for potential losses in foreign procurement. Early positioning for the November 2026 mayoral elections will intensify ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Long Term (1-5 Years): 2026 marks the "tipping point" for the "low-altitude economy." If "flying car" production timelines hold, expect a major regulatory overhaul for urban airspace. Geopolitically, the region may move toward a more "transactional" security relationship with the U.S., necessitating a significant increase in domestic defense spending and technological self-reliance ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- **For International Policy:** Diplomatic missions should prepare for a "transactional" shift in regional security alliances. The potential withdrawal of U.S. arms sales necessitates a "Plan B" focused on regional indigenous manufacturing and cyber-security cooperation.
- **For Private Sector/Investors:** The "low-altitude economy" (flying cars/drones) is no longer speculative but entering a production phase; supply chain opportunities in light-weight carbon fibers and high-density batteries are paramount. However, the over-reaching "anti-fraud" banking protocols present a significant operational risk for cash-flow management and payroll for SMEs.
- **For Social Stability:** There is a growing need for enhanced "crisis intervention" services during holidays. The government must balance "high-tech" advancement with "high-touch" social services to mitigate the effects of an increasingly automated and alienated social environment.

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 oth-

erwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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