

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 25, 2026

THE G D E L T P R O J E C T

PRESIDENT SASSOU NGUESSO'S 2026 RE-ELECTION STRATEGY: INFRASTRUCTURE, REFORM, & STABILITY

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE: Balancing Statecraft & Development



Honoring Ayessa

Launching Corridor 13 & Campaign

DSN26

March 2026 Election

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Inauguration of Corridor 13



China-backed 621km Highway for Regional Integration (Likouala)

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Infrastructure-Integration-Election Nexus



Unification Narrative, Likouala Focus, Regional Transit Hub

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Voter Card Distribution, Media Directives, Youth Corps (DSN26) Campaigning

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Tax Reductions Blue Fund Activation & FIGA Micro-loans (200M CFA)

Domestic Stability & Social Order



Security Seminars Infrastructure Vulnerabilities (Stadium Theft)

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Finance Law 2026, Audiovisual Pluralism, Housing Reform Electronic Billing Implementation

Climate Change as Statecraft



Green Lung Diplomacy, Blue Fund & Carbon Credit Potential, Financial Survival Asset

Strategic Foresight



Short Term: Populist Spike, Media 'Drawing of Lots'

Medium Term: Digital Tax Implementation, Blue Fund Donor Roundtable (May 2026)

Long Term: Corridor 13 Completion (2030), Agricultural Municipalization

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS (INTERNATIONAL & PRIVATE SECTOR)



For International Policy

Focus on Blue Fund for Influence, Monitor Regional Stability (CAR Road), Indigenous Rights in Likouala



For Private Sector/Investors

Opportunity: Competitive Tax Regime (CEMAC HQ), Regulatory Risk: Digital Compliance, Sector Focus: Agro-industrial Logistics

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PRESIDENT SASSOU NGUESSO
LEVERAGES MAJOR
INFRASTRUCTURE LAUNCHES AND
BUSINESS-FRIENDLY TAX REFORMS
TO ANCHOR HIS MARCH 2026 RE-
ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Republic of the Congo is currently experiencing a period of intense state-directed activity as it enters the final weeks before the March 2026 presidential election. President Denis Sassou Nguesso is skillfully blending the somber duties of statecraft—notably the funeral of veteran statesman Firmin Ayessa—with high-profile development initiatives like the groundbreaking of the China-backed "Corridor 13" highway. This project is framed not merely as infrastructure but as a geopolitical necessity for regional integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), effectively positioning the incumbent as the indispensable architect of Congolese modernity and regional connectivity [corridor 13 launch](#).

Simultaneously, the administration is executing a sophisticated dual-track economic

strategy. For the elite and private sectors, the 2026 Finance Law introduces significant tax reductions, including lowering corporate tax and the top bracket for personal income tax, aimed at improving the investment climate [tax reform measures](#). For the broader populace, the state is deploying micro-finance initiatives through the FIGA (Fund for Impulse, Guarantee, and Accompanying) and promoting "agricultural sovereignty" through a massive national fair. These moves suggest a coordinated effort to secure both elite loyalty and grassroots support while minimizing the risk of election-period instability through tight media regulation and the active mobilization of youth volunteer corps.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Inauguration of the Corridor 13 Highway Project

- President Sassou Nguesso launched the works for Corridor 13, a 621 km road connecting Ouessou, Pokola, and Infondo to the border of the Central African Republic [infrastructure development project](#).
- The project is a flagship of Sino-Congolese cooperation, with Yuan Construction Investment Group serving as the primary contractor [Chinese investment partnership](#).
- Official rhetoric emphasizes "integration" and "opening the Likouala region," the country's most isolated department [Likouala connectivity effort](#).

Election Mobilization and Regulation

- The National Independent Electoral Commission (CNEI) and local prefects have accelerated the distribution of voter cards across departments like Pointe-Noire [voter card distribution](#).

- The High Council for Freedom of Communication (CSLC) has finalized directives for media coverage, including a drawing of lots to determine candidate speaking order [media speaking order](#).
- Youth "volunteer corps" (DSN26) and the "242 Reasons" campaign have begun aggressive door-to-door campaigning for the incumbent [youth volunteer mobilization](#).

Economic Reform and the 2026 Finance Law

- The 2026 budget shifts to a medium-term framework (2026-2028), prioritizing tax incentives for the private sector [2026 budget framework](#).
- Implementation of electronic billing systems is slated to improve fiscal transparency [electronic billing implementation](#).
- The FIGA distributed over 200 million CFA francs in micro-loans to artisans and small businesses in the Bouenza region to stimulate local economies [FIGA micro-credit distribution](#).

Blue Fund for the Congo Basin Activation

- Environment and Finance ministers met to validate technical dossiers for the Blue Fund, targeting a donor roundtable in May 2026 [Blue Fund meeting](#).
- 43 "mature and bankable" projects have been identified to attract international climate finance [mature climate projects](#).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics The burial of Minister of State Firmin Ayessa in Makoua served as a significant gathering for

the Congolese political elite, signaling continuity in the inner circle following the loss of a key pillar of the administration [Ayessa funeral ceremony](#). The transition of his responsibilities to the next generation of PCT (Congolese Party of Labour) leaders is a critical internal stability factor during the election period.

Diplomatic Engagement & Strategic Alignment

Congo-Brazzaville remains firmly within the Chinese orbit for infrastructure, as evidenced by the high-profile presence of Chinese contractors at the Corridor 13 launch [Sino-Congolese infrastructure ties](#). Simultaneously, the state is pursuing "South-South" university cooperation, with Brazzaville's UDSN seeking knowledge transfer from Kinshasa's UNI-KIN [inter-university cooperation accord](#).

Investment Climate & Financial Resilience

The 2026 Finance Law specifically targets the "cost of doing business" by reducing corporate tax from 30% to 28% and slashing the top income tax bracket for high earners [fiscal incentive policy](#). These measures are designed to retain capital and appease the merchant class during a potentially volatile political cycle.

Food Security & Rural Development

The National Agricultural Fair is being used to promote a "return to the land" narrative, with technical displays of solar-powered dryers and disease-resistant cassava varieties [agricultural innovation display](#). The rhetoric links food production to "liberation" and "national dignity," aiming to reduce the multi-billion CFA import bill for staples [reduction of imports](#).

Domestic Stability & Social Order While the election period is largely peaceful, localized crime, such as the theft of electrical

cables at the Concorde Stadium in Kintele, highlights persistent vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure security [stadium infrastructure theft](#). The Gendarmerie has responded by increasing "pre-electoral" security seminars to ensure a "neutral and professional" posture during the upcoming vote [Gendarmerie security seminar](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity centered on the finalization of the 2026 Finance Law and the regulatory framework for the upcoming March elections. The focus remains on fiscal decentralization and the modernization of tax collection through digital platforms.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **2026 Finance Law:** Establishes a medium-term budget framework; introduces a 2% reduction in corporate tax (to 28%) and lowers the top income tax bracket from 40% to 30% for high earners [2026 tax legislation](#).
- **Law 15 on Audiovisual Pluralism:** Invoked by the CSLC to ensure equitable media access for all seven presidential candidates [media pluralism law](#).
- **State Housing Acquisition Reform:** Introduces a flat fee of 150,000 CFA for the acquisition of state-owned housing to facilitate private ownership [housing reform fee](#).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **CSLC Press Briefing:** President M'edard Milandou Tsonga detailed the deployment of 15 departmental regulation teams to monitor election coverage [election media monitoring](#).

- **Gendarmerie Regional Command Seminar:** A two-day session in Brazzaville focused on "anticipatory security" and "professionalism" during the electoral cycle [security command seminar](#).
- **Corridor 13 Technical Briefing:** Minister of State Jean-Jacques Bouya detailed the technical challenges of the "vasière" (marshlands) and the 4-year execution timeline for the road project [infrastructure technical briefing](#).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Infrastructure-Integration-Election Nexus The launch of Corridor 13 is the centerpiece of a strategic narrative that links the incumbent's presidency to the literal "unification" of the country. By focusing on the Likouala department—historically neglected and isolated—the administration is making a powerful symbolic gesture of inclusion [Likouala integration narrative](#). This is not just domestic; it is framed as a continental contribution, positioning Congo as a "transit hub" for the CAR and Chad, thereby insulating the project from criticism by labeling it a "regional priority" [regional integration strategy](#).

Populist Micro-Finance vs. Elite Tax Reform There is a visible "pincer movement" in economic policy. The "Muasi Telema" program (targeting women entrepreneurs) and FIGA credits (targeting Bouenza artisans) represent a retail politics approach to the election [women's credit program](#). Conversely, the 2026 Finance Law's tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations suggest an effort to prevent capital flight and ensure the financial backing of the business elite during the campaign season [elite fiscal policy](#).

Climate Change as Statecraft Congo-Brazzaville is increasingly using its "Green Lung" status as a diplomatic lever. The focus on the Blue Fund and "Carbon Credit" potential—specifically in the "Diele" (Alima) region—indicates a shift toward "environmental sovereignty" [credit carbon capital](#). The state is moving beyond mere conservation to treating biodiversity as a "financial survival" asset, looking toward the May 2026 donor roundtable to monetize its forest cover [biodiversity financialization](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect a spike in populist rhetoric as the official campaign kicks off on February 28. Increased military and gendarmerie visibility in urban centers like Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire will be framed as "protection of the vote" [campaign launch preparation](#). The media "drawing of lots" will occur, likely resulting in a highly choreographed airtime schedule that favors the incumbent's visibility [candidate speak order draw](#).

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Post-election, the government will likely move toward immediate implementation of the 2026 Finance Law's digital reforms, including the electronic billing mandate [digital tax implementation](#). The May 2026 donor roundtable for the Blue Fund will be the first major post-election foreign policy test, determining if the "mature" projects can attract the billions in pledged climate finance [May 2026 donor roundtable](#).

Long Term (1-5 Years): The completion of Corridor 13 (target 2030) will structurally alter the trade dynamics of Central Africa, potentially reducing the CAR's dependence on Cameroonian ports in favor of Pointe-Noire

[long-term trade shift](#). Continued "agricultural municipalization" may slowly reduce food import dependency, but only if the FIGA micro-credits transition into sustainable medium-scale industrial farming [agricultural sustainability goals](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- The reliance on Chinese firms for critical infrastructure remains total, despite rhetoric about diversifying partnerships; Western interests should focus on the "Blue Fund" as the primary entry point for influence [Western climate financing](#).
- Regional stability is tied to the successful completion of the road to the CAR border; any disruption in this project could stall ZLECAF integration for the entire CEMAC zone [regional trade risk](#).
- Monitor the "indigenous rights" situation in Pokola and Likouala, where the transition from forest to urban life for Pygmy populations is creating social friction [indigenous social transition](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Opportunity:** The reduction in corporate tax (to 28%) and income tax (to 30%) makes Congo-Brazzaville a more attractive regional headquarters for CEMAC operations [competitive tax regime](#).
- **Regulatory Risk:** The shift to electronic billing and "systematic" tax audits means companies must accelerate digital compliance to avoid heavy "spontaneous" penalties [tax compliance risk](#).

- **Sector Focus:** Agricultural logistics and processing (solar drying, cold chain) are the primary growth sectors under current state subsidies [agro-industrial opportunity](#).

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. You can also learn more about the GDEL Project at <https://blog.gdelproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.