

PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Katalin Novák taking a selfie with students at the Gyula Castle in Békés County

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU ministers of interior, justice meet in Brussels

European Parliament holds plenary session

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

TOP STORY

GOVT OFFICIAL: MIGRATION PROBLEM, NOT SOLUTION

Mass immigration “is the problem rather than the solution”, the state secretary for international communication and relations said on Wednesday, responding to an opinion piece in the Financial Times.

In an English-language post published on abouthungary.hu, Zoltán Kovács said that Gideon Rachman’s piece, In praise of mass immigration, argued that “even without mass immigration, there would be no ‘social peace’; and the lack of immigration would come with immense social and economic costs.” “Nobody has ever said that without immigration our societies would live in perfect harmony and peace. However, it’s important to distinguish between the types of social conflicts that we Europeans, hailing overwhelmingly from Jewish and Christian traditions, have grown used to managing in the last millennium and the current challenges posed by mass immigration,” Kovács said, adding that the rise of conservative parties in countries hit by immigration was a sign of people sharing the same views throughout Europe. “Secondly, remedying the economic drawbacks of refusing mass immigration is not all black and white,” he said, noting that under its guest worker regulations, Hungary had been able to fill in workforce gaps without sacrificing the foundations of its society and culture.

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MINISTRY: HUNGARY TO BOOST AGRICULTURE, TRADE TIES WITH CHINA

Hungary is committed to strengthening its agricultural and trade cooperation with China, the agriculture minister said on Wednesday, adding that one key milestone for this would be if China recognised regionalisation when it comes to bird flu and swine fever. Hungary has the highest number of food export permits for China among central European countries, the agriculture ministry said in a statement after a meeting between István Nagy and Ma Youxiang, his Chinese counterpart, in Budapest. At the talks, Nagy noted that Hungary and China are marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties this year, saying this provided an opportunity for them to review and advance their economic and trade relations. They can also further deepen their ties through China's Belt and Road Initiative, he said, adding that China was a key partner for Hungary. Nagy said China was one of the most important players of the global economy, which meant Hungary devoted special attention to their bilateral partnership. He said that though Hungarian farm products could not compete on the Chinese market in terms of quantity, Hungarian premium products like goose liver, Tokaj wine and mangalitsa pork were able to "hold their own". Nagy pointed out that Hungary was a leader in seed cultivation and was also prepared to

share its experience in fishing and aquaculture technologies and R&D.

The ministers also discussed animal health matters related to avian influenza and swine fever, the ministry said. It added that China's recognition of regionalisation when it came to these diseases would give a significant boost to Hungary's foreign trade. To this end, Hungary's chief veterinary officer will receive a delegation of experts from China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs next month, who will be briefed on Hungary's animal health protocols and the Hungarian authority's epidemiological measures. Nagy said Hungary and China could also boost cooperation in science, education and technology. At the meeting, Ma invited Nagy to attend two international conferences China is to host, the ministry said.

CHIEF OF STAFF BRIEFS PRESIDENT ON DEFENCE, SECURITY MATTERS

Gábor Böröndi, the chief of staff of the Hungarian Armed Forces, briefed President Katalin Novák on the state of the military and matters concerning Hungary's security, at the Gyula Castle in the south-eastern Hungarian town on Wednesday. Speaking to the media before his meeting with the president, Böröndi said he was to brief Novák, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, on the experiences gained in last November's Adaptive Hussars 23

NATO military exercise. In response to a question, he said the exercise had been conducted based on Hungary's National Armed Defence Plan. Cooperation between the army and county public administration bodies had been smooth, but the Armed Forces has amendment proposals regarding economic services, he said. Böröndi also briefed the president on the army's recruitment scheme in Hódmezővásárhely, in southern Hungary. He said the army also had legislative proposals concerning the activation or the system of reservists.

President Novák, who is on a multi-day visit to Békés County, on Wednesday afternoon visited the birth house of Ferenc Erkel, the composer of the Hungarian national anthem, where she participated in a special music class with soprano Erika Miklósa and music historian András Batta, CEO of the House of Music in Budapest. She then paid a visit to the plant of dairy company Szarvasi Mozzarella in Örménykút. The recent visit forms part of the president's programme of visiting every county to learn first-hand about local affairs.

EU AFFAIRS OFFICIAL: 'BRUSSELS HAS NO INTENTION OF PROTECTING EU BORDERS AGAINST ILLEGAL MIGRANTS'

Brussels has no intention of protecting Europe's borders against illegal migrants, the EU affairs state

secretary said on Wednesday, calling a recent remark by the head of European border agency Frontex “disappointing”. Barna Pál Zsigmond called it “absurd” that the head of Frontex, the agency in charge of shielding Europe against mass migration, stated in a recent interview in German Sunday newspaper Welt am Sonntag that “nothing can stop people from crossing a border, no wall, no fence, no sea, no river”. “It is rather saddening that the Frontex chief considers the agency he leads overall unfit to fulfil its duty of protecting Europe’s borders,” the state secretary said on Facebook.

He said if Brussels should finally stop insisting on its pro-immigration policy, “illegal migrants would not be able to cross the borders either through the wall or fence, or on sea or river.” Zsigmond said “Brussels’ current leaders and the left wing are committed to executing the Soros plan”, adding that it became clear from their recent statements that Hungary’s immigration policy was one of the main reasons of “the political attacks” against the country. “Hungary has a consistent immigration policy which works, Hungary has not let itself be turned into an immigrant country,” he said. “We have built a fence, we keep protecting our borders ... and we reject the EU’s policy promoting migration,” the state secretary said, adding that the Hungarian government would continue to insist on its sovereignty and the protection of its borders.

INNOVATION MINISTER VISITS CERN, IOB IN SWITZERLAND

Heading a delegation, Innovation Minister János Csák paid a two-day visit to Switzerland and held talks in the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, in Geneva and at the Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology (IOB) in Basel, he told MTI on Wednesday. He said the main aim of his visit was to further promote Hungary’s higher education, scientific research and innovation sectors on the international scene. The minister noted that at his visit to CERN on Tuesday he met French Nobel laureate laser scientist Gérard Mourou and Jean-Pierre Revol, president of the scientific committee at nuclear energy developer Transmutex. Csák said research was being carried out in Hungary in close cooperation between the Extreme Light Infrastructure ELI National Laboratory and University of Szeged. “These are researches, inspired also by Mourou that are closely related to the issue of future energy,” he said. “The ELI centre in Szeged has achieved outstanding results in producing neutrons. There is now a technology at hand developed by our scientists and researchers which the Swiss partners are very interested in.”

Csák on Tuesday evening met Hungarian scientists and company leaders at the Hungarian embassy in Bern whom the minister said were glad to share their experiences gained

in Switzerland with colleagues in Hungary. Wednesday’s programme included a visit in Basel at the Institute of Molecular and Clinical Ophthalmology (IOB) which has renowned Hungarian neurobiologist Botond Roska as its founding director. Roska received in 2020 the prestigious Körber European Science Prize for his achievements in vision restoration gene therapy research.

CSÁK: AIM IS TO PUT HUNGARY AMONG EU’S TEN MOST INNOVATIVE COUNTRIES BY 2030

The government’s aim is for Hungary to be among the EU’s top ten innovative countries by 2030, by tapping the expertise of the country’s eminent scientists, teachers and organisations, the minister of culture and innovation has said. The National Science Policy Council (NKFI) has approved the programme of Hungary’s Research Development and Innovation Fund for 2024, János Csák said in a video posted on Facebook on Tuesday evening. “We are going to spend 147 billion forints (EUR 383m) on those [three] areas, 60 billion more than in the previous year,” the minister said.

Allocations will be tailored to support big companies and SMEs, spin-off companies promoting innovations and patents developed at universities, as well as startups developing new, innovative solutions, said Csák. The fund will also provide support to researchers in research institutes and universities, he said, noting the establishment of

the Research Excellence Council led by Hungarian Nobel laureate Ferenc Krausz. Financing will be also provided to support two new university programmes which include the Pannonia Programme for international student and teacher exchanges and the HU-rizont Programme for promoting international research cooperation, Csák said.

DK CALLS ON ORBÁN 'TO GET PARLT' TO RATIFY SWEDEN'S NATO ACCESSION

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) has called on Prime Minister Viktor Orbán "to get the Hungarian parliament" to ratify Sweden's NATO accession. Party spokeswoman Olga Kálmán told a press conference on Wednesday that it was clear ever since the issue emerged that Sweden's accession is as much in the interest of NATO as of Hungary. "The biggest hurdle, Türkiye's veto, has been lifted with the Turkish parliament's ratification of Sweden's membership," she said. Kálmán said that Orbán "has been left on his own on this issue as well" and "is a loner in standing in the way of Sweden's accession". "It is clear that the Hungarian prime minister, who is under Putin's influence, is not considered a sovereign player in the European political arena. Even the Swedish government said their members do not want to meet Viktor Orbán as they have nothing to discuss," Kálmán said.

MI HAZÁNK URGES RETHINK OF HUNGARY'S ECONOMIC POLICIES

The opposition Mi Hazánk party has urged a radical rethink of Hungary's economic policies. Citing data comparing Hungarian and Polish real household incomes which indicated that the former were worse off, János Lantos, the party's labour spokesman, told a press conference on Wednesday that the privatisations of the 1990s were responsible for this development, and had set the country up as a supplier of "global big capital", while the current government was "thinking in terms of battery superpower status" and dependent on importing guest workers. He called for the establishment of an independent Hungarian national economy based on domestic manufacturing and an appreciation of Hungarian workers in moral and financial terms.

POLICE UNCOVER GROUP ACCUSED OF PLOTTING TO 'TAKE OVER' HUNGARY

The National Bureau of Investigations (NNI) on Tuesday uncovered a group suspected of plotting to overthrow the constitutional order of Hungary and disarm the police and armed forces, the NNI said on the official website police.hu. The authorities launched an investigation last November when the group posted a video on a public media website announcing the establishment of a "Scythian Hungary group" and

the arming of militias. They said they would arrest "all incumbent and former members of government" and "disarm the police and turn the armed forces". NNI cooperated with the TEK counter-terrorism unit in the sweep conducted in Veszprém, Pest, Zala and Bács-Kiskun Counties, involving 150 police officers in 10 locations. Police have questioned eight people as suspects and subsequently detained three men, a 53-year-old, a 68-year-old and an 88-year-old. They also seized guns and documents which contained statements denying the legitimacy of the Republic of Hungary, as well as IDs and other papers issued in the name of Scythian Hungary.

MORE THAN 8,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON TUESDAY

Fully 3,826 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Tuesday, while 4,334 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 37 people, ORFK said on Wednesday.

HUMDA, VOLÁNBUSZ TEST HYDROGEN-POWERED BUS

Another hydrogen-powered bus has been put into service on a suburban route in Budapest in the framework of a pilot project run by the Hungarian Mobility Development Agency (HUMDA), state-owned bus company

Volánbusz said on Wednesday. The Toyota CaetanoBus H2.City Gold-type bus will stay in service for at least six months. It will be serviced by its owner, Truck-Trailer and Parts Kft, based in Székesfehérvár, and will top up at Linde Gáz Magyarország's hydrogen filling station in the capital. Hydrogen buses will also be put into service as part of the project in the cities of Debrecen, Győr, Kecskemét, Kaposvár, Miskolc and Zalaegerszeg. Volánbusz tested another hydrogen-powered bus, a Solaris Urbino 12 electric H2, with the cooperation of HUMDA in February 2022.

HUNGARIAN SET DECORATOR AMONG 2024 OSCAR CONTENDERS

Hungary's Zsuzsa Mihalek is among the nominees for the 2024

Academy Award for Production Design announced on Tuesday. Mihalek has been nominated for set decoration, along with James Price and Shona Heath for production design, for their work on director Yorgos Lanthimos's feature Poor Things. Poor Things, filmed at Origo Studios in Budapest, has been nominated in eleven Oscar categories, including Best Picture. The 96th Academy Awards will be presented in Hollywood on March 10.

LUDWIG MUSEUM TO LAUNCH YEAR WITH VERA MOLNAR EXHIBITION

The Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art is launching this year's exhibitions with a show in homage to Vera Molnar, a French-Hungarian artist, starting on

Feb 10, museum director Júlia Fabényi said on Wednesday. Molnar, who lived and worked in France from 1947 until her death in 2023, was one of the first to use computers to generate art, in 1968, and is considered one of the pioneers of computer-generated art. The show will give an overview of her life and works, and will also feature others' works reflecting on Molnar's, Fabényi said. Ludwig drew nearly 96,000 visitors last year. This year, the museum will also feature Márton Nemes's multimedia work Techno Zen, created for the Hungarian pavilion at this year's Venice Biennale. Other exhibitions during the year will include shows reflecting on Taiwan's scientific and technological progress, a photo project by jazz trumpeter Till Bronner, and an international exhibition featuring artists using traditional crafts and motifs as inspiration.