

PHOTO OF THE DAY



PM Viktor Orbán has talks with Bulgarian President Rumen Radev in Antalya, Türkiye

UPCOMING EVENTS

PM Orbán addresses diplomatic forum in Türkiye

Events related to the wars in Middle East, Ukraine

TOP STORY

HANKÓ: IMPROVING EUROPE'S COMPETITIVENESS CRUCIAL

It is crucially important to improve Europe's competitiveness, the state secretary for innovation and higher education said on Friday, noting that 15 years ago Europe accounted for 25% of global scientific output as against less than 20% today.

Balázs Hankó told a press conference after an informal meeting of EU education ministers in Brussels that 12 European countries used to be among the world's 25 best innovators compared with eight today. The Hungarian government is calling for EU financial support for research in central European countries which can then be used to the benefit of the Hungarian economy and Europe more broadly, Hankó said. He said the informal meeting focused on the mobility of university students. Brussels has excluded some 200,000 Hungarian students and nearly 20,000 Hungarian teachers and researchers from the Erasmus-plus programme "because the autonomous, competitive and flexible Hungarian model ... was disliked by certain decision-makers in Brussels," he added. The state secretary said he had briefed the education ministers about Hungary's newly launched Pannonia Programme and HU-rizon programme. The Pannonia Programme will help some 8,000 students to study abroad using a central budget of 10 billion forints.

POLL: LEFT-WING PARTIES FAIL TO CAPITALISE ON CHILD-ABUSE SCANDAL

The Hungarian left-wing opposition have failed to capitalise on the ruptures during the past month caused by the scandal related to a pardon granted in the case of a child-abuse cover-up, according to a survey carried out by the Nézőpont think-tank. Based on the telephone survey of 1,000 people in January and February published on Friday, Fidesz and its Christian Democrat ally would win the European parliament elections if the vote were held this weekend, bagging 47% of the votes as against 50% in January, translating into 13 seats -- the same number they won in 2019. The opposition's combined support was 29% as against 30% in January. In 2022 their joint list garnered 36% of the total, Nézőpont said.

The leftist Democratic Coalition was steady at 14%, not sufficient for the party to keep the 4 seats it won in 2019. Centrist-liberal Momentum's support dropped one percentage point to 7% in February, securing the party a single theoretical seat. The Socialists and the conservative Jobbik were each on 2%, according to the think-tank's poll. Meanwhile, radical right-wing party Mi Hazánk and the satirical Hungarian Two-Tailed Dog Party each notched up 8%. Among relative newcomer parties, the centrist Everyone's Hungary People's Party and Second Reform Age party each had 4% backing, just below the threshold for gaining EP mandates.

ORBÁN HAS TALKS WITH BULGARIA PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Bulgarian President Rumen Radev in Antalya, Türkiye, on Friday, with Hungary-Bulgaria economic relations and energy security high on the agenda, the PM's press chief said in a statement. The leaders expressed concern about the potential escalation of the war in Ukraine and called for a ceasefire and peace negotiations, the statement said, adding that both firmly rejected recent talk of sending troops to Ukraine. Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, and Márton Nagy, the national economy minister, attended the meeting.

HUNGARY POSTS EUR 271 M TRADE DEFICIT IN DECEMBER

Hungary posted a trade deficit of 271 million euros in December, with the balance of trade improving by 27 million euros, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data on Friday. Exports slipped by an annual 9.1% to 10.2 billion euros, while imports dropped 9.0% to 10.5 billion, KSH said. In volume terms, exports fell by an annual 8.4%, and imports by 0.8%. Adjusted for calendar year effects, export volume was down 1.6%, while import volume rose by 4.4%. Month on month, export volume was up a seasonally and working-day adjusted 1.5%, while imports were up 14%.

GOVT OFFICIAL: NUMBER OF REGISTERED JOBSEEKERS FALLS TO ALL- TIME LOW IN FEB

The number of registered jobseekers in Hungary fell by 10,000 to 235,400 last month, an all-time low for the month of February, the state secretary for employment policy said on Friday, citing data from the National Employment Service (NFSZ). The number of registered jobseekers fell by 4% from the same month a year earlier, Sándor Czomba said in a statement. Compared with 2010, the number of jobseekers has fallen by more than 420,000, he added. Anyone who is willing and able to work can find a job in Hungary, the state secretary said, adding that wages were also rising. Having reined in inflation, the government is now focused on achieving an economic growth rate of 4%, Czomba said, adding that this required restoring consumption, raising the labour market activity rate and keeping the investment rate above 25%.

MINISTRY: PROFESSIONAL NON-EU CITIZENS CAN APPLY FOR HUNGARIAN CARD

Citizens of third countries with high professional qualifications in mathematics, natural sciences, technology and IT can receive the Hungarian Card (Magyar Kártya), the

culture and innovation ministry (KIM) said on Friday. The ministry said in a statement that the measure is among others aimed at ensuring the workforce necessary for a dynamic economy.

HUNGARY PMI RISES TO 52.2 IN FEB

Hungary's seasonally adjusted Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) rose to 52.2 points in February from 50.1 in January, Halpim, the organisation that publishes the index, said on Friday. A reading above 50 points indicates an expansion in the manufacturing sector. The new orders index was above 50 points, while that of purchased inventories fell below this threshold.

HUNGARIAN DRUG DEALER ON EUROPOL TOP WANTED LIST TURNS HIMSELF IN

A 35-year-old member of a drug-trafficking ring on Europol's list of Europe's 54 most wanted criminals in

2022 has turned himself in, according to a press release on police.hu posted on Friday. The man turned up at a Debrecen police station, in eastern Hungary, on Wednesday and was taken into custody. A Debrecen court ordered his pre-trial detention the same day. The press release said István V Sándor and his associates, including the man who turned himself in, András Cs, operated sophisticated equipment to cultivate and process cannabis in Bács-Kiskun County, central-southern Hungary, in 2020 and 2021, as part of 300 million forint (EUR 763,000) operation.

On May 21, 2021 police raided the premises and seized 165kg of marijuana and cocaine, and subsequently 380 million forints-worth of assets were also seized from the members of the ring. Investigators succeeded in identifying all seven of its members. Two of them were quickly captured in Hungary, while European and international arrest warrants were issued against five members on the run. Europol

launched its Game Over media campaign in November 2023, and included data on the Hungarian ring on its website and other media outlets. Three members, István V Sándor and Roland V from Budapest, and Erik K Tibor from Algyő were captured on July 19, 2023 by the Hungarian and Spanish authorities in Alicante. A warrant is still out for Tamás Bagaméri, a man on Hungary's top wanted list, and since July 2023 he has taken the place of István V Sándor on Europol's top wanted list.

NEW HEAT RECORD IN BUDAPEST

Both dawn and daytime heat records were broken in Budapest on Thursday, HungaroMet Zrt said on its website. In the capital's Újpest district, 17.5°C was recorded, as against the previous Budapest record of 16°C measured on this day in 1992. Meanwhile, at dawn 7.9°C was recorded on János Hill in Buda, pipping the previous record measured in 2016 by 0.1°C.