



Photo: Theerasak Sakskriatavee



TAIWAN RANKS 15TH IN WEF GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS REPORT

Taiwan placed 15th in the latest Global Competitiveness Report released Sept. 26 by Geneva-based World Economic Forum, moving down one spot from last year.

The report rates 137 economies worldwide by looking at 12 pillars in three subindexes of basic requirements, efficiency enhancers as well as innovation and sophistication factors. Receiving a total score of 5.33, Taiwan improved 0.05 points from last year, finishing ahead of regional neighbors such as Malaysia at 23rd; South Korea, 26th; and mainland China, 27th. Chiou Jiunn-rong, deputy minister of the Cabinet-level National Development Council, said although Taiwan moved down one spot in the overall ranking, it still advanced two spots to 15th in the subindex of innovation and sophistication factors, a move that can be attributed to the country's improvement in the pillar of business sophistication.

The deputy minister noted Taiwan's drop of one place to 15th in the subindex of basic requirements, saying that although the country took 5th in the pillar of macroeconomic environment, it slipped two spots to 15th in the pillar of infrastructure. Chiou added that Taiwan's overall ranking demonstrates the necessity to fast-track government efforts to accelerate economic transformation such as the Forward-looking Infrastructure Development Program, a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing Taiwan's key infrastructure needs over the next 30 years.

Of the 12 pillars the WEF examined in the index, Taiwan ranked between fifth and 30th, with its strongest per-

Source: Taiwan Today



performances in macroeconomic environment, innovation and market efficiency, and weakest in institutions, labor market efficiency and technological readiness. Among the 114 factors cited by the WEF in its assessment, Taiwan made the top 10 in 17 categories.

These include inflation, No. 1; state of cluster development, No. 2; fixed telephone lines, No. 3; degree of customer orientation, No. 4; and extent of market dominance, financing through local equity market and intensity of local competition, all at No. 5.

GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIPS ATTRACT RECORD NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

The 2017 Taiwan Scholarship and Huayu Enrichment Scholarship Program kicked off Oct. 2 in Taipei City, with this academic year's application numbers hitting a record high.

Jointly organized by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education, the program encourages students from around the world, especially those from Republic of China (Taiwan) diplomatic allies, to study Mandarin or seek degrees at the nation's tertiary institutions. This year's orientation, which took place at Chang Yung-fa Foundation across the street from MOFA headquarters, was attended by over 600 scholarship recipients from more than 70 countries, as well as some 60 foreign representatives and officials. Speaking at the event, MOFA Vice Minister Jose Maria Liu said the program helps establish deeper connections between students from ROC allies and other likeminded countries and their counterparts in Taiwan. The nation greatly cherishes its relations with its diplomatic allies, Liu said, adding that over the past several decades, Taiwan has collaborated on joint projects in areas spanning trade, agriculture, health care, epidemic prevention, education and infrastruc-

ture, in addition to consumer-related industries. In line with the government's New Southbound Talent Development Program, a people-centric initiative launched in 2016 that aims to foster bilateral exchanges and mutual resources sharing, scholarships were awarded to nearly 370 recipients from New Southbound Policy target countries, an increase of almost 150 students from last year. At the orientation, several program alumni shared their personal experiences with the new students. Popular Taiwan snacks were made available, and martial arts as well as folk song performances helped provide scholarship recipients with a better understanding of the nation's culture and lifestyle. Established in 2004, the Taiwan Scholarship and Huayu Enrichment Scholarship Program has involved more than 10,000 participants from over 100 countries. This year's scholarships attracted a record-high 1,500 applications by students from more than 80 nations, according to the MOE.



THIS YEAR AGAIN: TAIWAN DOX, TAIWANESE DOCUMENTARY FILM DAYS

The Taipei Representative Office and the Palantír Film Visual and Anthropological Foundation organize together the Taiwan Dox, Taiwanese Documentary Film Days between 2-4 November 2017 in Toldi cinema for the third time. During these 3 days the award-winning documentaries of the past years will be screened in Mandarin language with Hungarian and English subtitles, for free. All films are followed by a Q&A session in Hungarian where credible experts will share their thoughts about the documentary and the connected societal questions.



Due to its history and political and economic background, Taiwan's cinema is very diverse. Generally speaking, Taiwan's documentaries tend to be richer than feature films. The documentaries touched upon many different topics such as politics, environment, and society. From our past experience, Hungarian audiences are very receptive to the true stories of real people from Taiwan. In 2017 these documentaries will provoke thoughts via introducing unique personal fates:

Kalay Ngasan: Our home (2016, 47' Director: HUANG Hao-chieh)

screening: 2017.11.02. Thursday 18:30

Wilang learned rattan weaving techniques and hunted with elders in the mountains since he was a boy. He has an old soul. His mission is to find the place where their ancestors used to live and search for the original design of Atayal houses.

The weight of life (2013, 70' Director: CHU Po-ying, LIAO Maggie)

screening: 2017.11.03. Friday 18:00

This is the story of a teenage weightlifting team with three aboriginal girls. They were either raised in an orphanage or single-parent home, or by their grandparents. Burdened with familial responsibility and personal goals, their challenge is not only to lift the heavy weight plates, but defy the odds in their arduous lives.

Now and then (2012, 9' Director: LIN Yu-sheng)

screening: 2017.11.03. Friday 19:30

These Vietnamese women workers have been in Taiwan for two months. Through letters to their faraway homes, and dreamy night talks that parallel with reality, the documentary states the nostalgia they experience at the moment.



The immortals' play (2016, 113' Director: LAI Li-chun, PENG Jia-ru)

screening: 2017.11.03. Friday 19:40

Annie, the Vietnamese singer is a member of the Taiwanese opera troupe with her husband. Beside raising her daughter who suffers developmental delay and learning the new language to inherit the tradition of the troupe, the declining number of audience portends an uncertain future. The troupe continue to do their best and dedicate the performances to God.

Looking for? (2016, 60' Director: CHOU Tung-yen)

screening: 2017.11.04. Saturday 20:20

This is the first question on all gay dating apps so the director of this documentary asked the same from 60 gay men from various cities across the world. The stories about love, disappointments, breakups and the perplexing answers will make us ask ourselves: What are we looking for?

Modeling Taiwan (2000, 78' Director: HUANG Ting-fu)

screening: 2017.11.04. Saturday 18:30

This documentary is about a group of figure models in Taiwan searching for the path towards liberation of the body. In the years from 1995 to 2000, they stood up to say why they wanted to be a model through their spoken and written words, videos, art, and work.

Flower Island (1999, 57' Director: HUANG Ting-fu)

screening: 2017.11.04. Saturday 17:00

A remote Island with a population of a hundred. A deaf but highly intelligent little boy. A couple who makes a living out of the sea. A young female teacher discontent with a plain and simple life. Shall they fight against nature? Or do they let the beautiful ocean swallow all the important questions of life?

Detailed program and more information are available [HERE](#).





ECOMOBILITY WORLD FESTIVAL KICKS OFF IN SOUTHERN TAIWAN'S KAOHSIUNG

EcoMobility World Festival got underway Oct. 1 in southern Taiwan's Kaohsiung City, gathering around 900 academics, experts and officials from home and abroad to discuss the latest trends in sustainable urban mobility and green city development.



At the opening of the festival, Premier Lai Ching-te said the event is an outstanding opportunity to showcase the government's commitment to promoting ecomobility for sustainable urban development. Concrete measures have been adopted in this regard, he added, citing approval of NT\$300 billion (US\$9.9 billion) to NT\$400 billion in funding for railway development under the Forward-looking Infrastructure Development Program.

According to Lai, two other headline initiatives are a five-year, NT\$7.2 billion project promoting e-motorcycles, and a four-year, NT\$3 billion program reducing urban traffic congestion through big data analysis and other smart technologies.

The premier also commended efforts by Kaohsiung City Government in hosting the festival and using it as a high-profile platform for sharing the metropolis's related achievements and fostering exchanges between Taiwan's cities and their overseas counterparts.

Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu said the festival is a valuable way of enabling residents and visitors to glimpse the future and see the shape of the city made possible via sustainable urban transport.

Becoming an ecomobile city constitutes a

paradigm shift and the festival is a key step to achieving this change, Chen said. It is hoped Kaohsiung's experiences will serve as a model for other major urban centers in Asia and beyond, she added.

According to KCG, the monthlong festival features a variety of activities illustrating the future of urban mobility in a real-time setting. These include concerts and performances, cultural and historic tours, exhibitions, forums and workshops.

A highlight is EcoMobility World Congress. Themed Livable, Shared and Intelligent, the Oct. 2-4 event seeks to promote creative collaboration and advance the EcoMobility agenda through panel discussions, presentations and seminars.

First held four years ago in Suwon, South Korea, the biennial festival is a major undertaking of Germany-headquartered Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)—a global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future.

In addition to Kaohsiung, ICLEI's local members include the governments of Chiayi, Hsinchu, New Taipei, Tainan and Taipei cities, as well as Hsinchu and Pingtung counties.



Getting the Word Out

A bastion of Mandarin learning, Taiwan is using its linguistic expertise to reach out to the world.

Source: Taiwan Review



Foreign students take part in activities organized by National Taiwan Normal University's Mandarin Training Center in a historical area of Taipei. (Photo by Chen Mei-ling)

Like Corvers, 23-year-old Nguyen Quang Huy from Vietnam also has a keen interest in Taiwan's most widely spoken tongue. He grew up in central Vietnam watching Chinese-language soap operas, and found himself drawn to traditional Chinese characters. Two years ago, he began taking courses at Tamkang University's Chinese Language Center in Taipei City. "Taiwan was my first choice when I thought about learning the language because the traditional Chinese characters used here are more beautiful than the simplified versions taught in mainland China," he said.

Ludovic Corvers fell in love with Taiwan as soon as he arrived for the first time in early 2016. Today, he feels even more at home, in part due to his passion for Mandarin. "Chinese is the most spoken language in the world. It really can provide me with better career opportunities," said the 24-year-old Belgian, who has been studying Mandarin since September last year at the Chinese Language Center of National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in southern Taiwan's Tainan City.



Students from the U.S. taking Mandarin courses at National Cheng Kung University as part of their government's Critical Language Scholarship Program enjoy interactions with Taiwan peers. (Photo courtesy of NCKU's Chinese Language Center)



INSTRUCTING TEACHERS AND PUPILS

To develop Taiwan into a Mandarin learning hub, the nation had to first ensure the proficiency of its instructors. Today, 11 universities have departments devoted to educating future teachers of Chinese as a second language. Additionally, seven local tertiary institutions have set up graduate schools dedicated to the discipline since the original was founded by National Taiwan Normal University in 1995.

In 2006, the government implemented a nationwide licensing test for teachers of the subject. To date, around 21,000 people have taken the stringent exam, with 3,843 granted completion certificates.

“To learn how to become a good Mandarin teacher, it’s important to have a firm grasp

of aspects such as phonetics and philology,” said Chiang Hsi-mei (), a board director of the Association of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language based in Taipei. She added that to be effective, teachers must also have a good understanding of their students’ mother tongues. This is why Ming Chuan University’s (MCU) Department of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language, based in northern Taiwan’s Taoyuan City and chaired by Chiang, provides a wide selection of language courses including English, French, Japanese and Korean. Indonesian will join the list in the latter half of the year. “Only when teachers understand a foreign language can they know the difficulties its native speakers face when learning Mandarin,” she explained.



To encourage foreign language learners to study in Taiwan, since 2005 the MOE has offered the Huayu Enrichment Scholarship. Last year, 724 individuals from 52 countries took advantage of the program, which entitles each recipient to NT\$25,000 (US\$785) per month for up to one year. An additional NT\$5.7 million (US\$179,245) has been included in the scholarship's budget this year to cover the growing number of students from South and Southeast Asia, in line with the government's policy of strengthening ties with these regions.

Currently, 56 centers for learning Mandarin – 52 at universities and four at educational associations – are accredited by the MOE to admit foreign students, up from 13 in 1996.

In order to assess the proficiency of students, the MOE organizes the Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language (TOCFL). Since its establishment in 2003, more than 250,000 people have signed up for the TOCFL. The exam is divided into three sections – reading and listening, writing as well as speaking – and offers six difficulty levels ranging from beginner to advanced.

Taiwan's Mandarin learning sector is also making gains due to advances in technology, as is the case with Tamkang's center, which has been digitizing its self-designed learning materials since 2015. Chiang's de-

partment at MCU is also following this trend, and in September began offering a course on how to use the internet to teach Mandarin as a second language. Instructors will be professionals working in the industry, namely those from TutorMing, an on-line service founded in 2008 offering Mandarin lessons anywhere in the world.

Taiwan has the potential to keep growing as a hub of Mandarin learning. The sector is worthy of continued attention and investment because of the many benefits it brings, including its strategic impact for the nation. Evidence of this can be found in an unprecedented joint effort launched in 2016 by the governments of Taiwan and the U.S. In cooperation with the Critical Language Scholarship Program initiated by the U.S. Department of State in 2006, each year the two sides arrange and sponsor a select group of 20 American students who take courses at NCKU's Chinese Language Center, where they immerse themselves in eight weeks of intensive language training.

“Developing the Mandarin learning sector is not only about making profits,” said NCKU's Chen when asked about the importance of the joint project. “It's also about fostering cultural exchanges and a better understanding of Taiwan among foreigners of the next generation, which is crucial to the nation's long-term development.”

For more information about scholarship, please visit: studyintawian.org

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