

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Attila Balázs

Couple preparing for Christmas

UPCOMING EVENTS

Deputy PM addresses closing ceremony of King Matthias memorial year

TOP STORY

ORBÁN CONDEMNS VIOLENT PROTESTERS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has condemned violence by protesters at recent demonstrations against the amendment to the labour code.

No one can be allowed to engage in violence, Orbán said in his regular interview to public broadcaster Kossuth Radio. The prime minister said a clear line must be drawn between political expression and vandalism. The most aggressive and most active of those protesting the amendment are on the payroll of US financier George Soros, Orbán insisted. He added that the demonstrations were also in part linked to international networks. Orbán said he also saw traces of this internationally, arguing that "right-wing governments have come under fire everywhere".

Parliament last week voted to raise the upper threshold for annual overtime from 250 to 400 hours. The legislation was signed by President János Áder on Thursday.

Orbán criticised the damage caused by protesters on Kossuth Square, saying that it was "a serious thing in legal terms" to throw smoke bombs at police. He said he had asked the interior minister to make sure that police respond "firmly but patiently" to protesters' actions. "And they managed to do just that," he added, reaffirming the government's support for the police force.

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ORBÁN: NO ONE CAN BE FORCED TO WORK OVERTIME

The recent amendment to the labour code clearly prohibits forcing anybody to work overtime, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his regular interview to public Kossuth Radio. "Anyone who says otherwise is lying," he said. Orbán said it was the economic policies that demonstrate a need for workers that protected working people rather than the labour code. But the law that had been in place prior to the amendment placed "silly restrictions" on those who wanted to make more money and would have been willing to work more, the prime minister said. Just as they have in the past, workers will continue to receive both their regular and overtime pay at the end of the month in the future, too, he said. The amendments are an advantage for Hungarian-owned SMEs that do not have the resources to manage the labour shortage that foreign-owned multinationals have, Orbán said.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY MUST BE REPRESENTED IN BRUSSELS, NOT THE OTHER WAY ROUND

The country needs MEPs who represent Hungary in Brussels and not Brussels in Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said. Commenting on next year's European parliamentary elections,

Orbán told public radio Kossuth that the opposition's view is that Hungary should be doing whatever Brussels says. As a result, those who send opposition representatives to the EP will be sending people that are not going to be representing Hungary there, he added. The prime minister expressed hope that the citizens of many countries will send more representatives to the parliament in Brussels who are dedicated to the national cause and "can turn current trends around". He highlighted migration as the most important issue and added that the economic policies followed by Brussels were not to Hungary's benefit.

Commenting on the recent Africa summit, he said that by 2050, there could be 2.5 billion people living on the continent and there won't be enough room for them. It is necessary to prepare for their outflux and we must be able to protect our borders, he added. At the same time, help must be granted for them to stay at home, he said. Hungary is offering scholarships to 900 African students and once they finish their education, they can return to serve in their homes, he added.

ORBÁN: GOOD ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE TO CONTINUE NEXT YEAR

All projections show that Hungary's economy will continue to perform well in 2019 and the government is determined to make quick decisions if unfavourable global trends make it necessary, Prime Minister Viktor

Orbán said. "We are also able to handle the thunders well," Orbán said in his regular interview to public radio Kossuth. Hungarians have seen in recent years that they are able to support their families from work and "we are able to make a good living utilising our own resources," Orbán said. "We are going to continue on this path," he said.

As regards the minimum wage, Orbán said it was up to employees and employers to agree on it and that the government should act only as a mediator. The cabinet does not want to make the decision even if it has the right to do so, he added. Orbán said he had asked the finance minister to make every effort to help the sides reach an agreement.

OFFICIAL: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AMONG BASIC RIGHTS, UNLIKE VIOLATION OF LAW

The freedom of expression is a fundamental right but the violation of law is not, cabinet office state secretary Csaba Dömötör said in an interview published in daily Magyar Hírlap. Commenting on recent opposition actions, he said opposition politicians had crossed several lines. At first they wanted to prevent decision making in parliament, then "they attacked police" and later "attempted to seriously interfere in the work of an editorial office", Dömötör said.

Commenting on protests in major European cities, he said the first act of the European parliamentary election campaign was under way and the

radicalisation of left-wing forces attacking nation states was easy to see. "They are launching increasingly severe attacks against those looking out for national sovereignty, traditional communities and Christian values," he added. Migration is not an opportunity but a serious risk and in addition to security, migration will be in the focus of next year's EP elections, he said.

SOCIALISTS, PÁRBESZÉD VOW TO CONTINUE ANTI- GOVT PROTESTS

The opposition Socialist and Párbeszéd parties will continue their anti-government protest against the recent labour code amendment, party lawmakers said. Parliament passed the legislation on expanding the amount of overtime an employer can request last Wednesday and President János Áder signed it on Thursday. Speaking to reporters, Socialist lawmaker Lajos Korózs called the new law "shameful", saying that it "split society into two groups: those forced into slavery and those who are their masters".

Bence Tordai, a lawmaker for Párbeszéd, said that opposition parties, civil groups and trade unions will gather at Kossuth Square in front of Parliament at 8pm on Friday to march on to the office of President Áder in the Buda Castle district. The opposition will organise further protests not only in parliament and on the streets but

also at the premises and outlets of businesses linked to "Fidesz oligarchs" in the form of "peaceful boycotts", as well as strikes, road blocks and actions of civil disobedience, he said.

OCTOBER TRADE SURPLUS REVISED UP TO EUR 304 M

Hungary's October trade surplus was revised up to 304 million euros in a second reading of data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH). In the first reading, published on December 7, KSH had put the October surplus to 293 million euros. October imports rose by an annual 7.4% in volume terms and were up by 9.8% in value terms at 9.17 billion euros. Exports volume rose by 6.4% and the value of exports increased by 6.7% to 9.474 billion euros. The trade surplus was down by 221 million euros from the same month a year earlier. Hungary's terms of trade worsened by 2.0% in October as forint-term import prices rose by 7.0% and export prices by only 4.9% in forint terms. The forint weakened by 4.5% to the euro and 7.0% to the dollar in the period.

MINISTRY CONFIRMS 11-MONTH BUDGET DEFICIT AT 135% OF FULL- YEAR TARGET

Hungary's cash flow-based budget, excluding local councils,

ran a 1,842.4 billion forint (EUR 5.7bn) deficit at the end of November, the finance ministry confirmed in a second reading of. The deficit reached 135.4% of the 1,360.7 billion forints full-year target.

The 2.4%-of-GDP deficit target for the full year, calculated according to the EU's accrual-based accounting rules, is "achievable" alongside economic growth that is "expected to be well over 4%", the ministry said.

Repeating its statement to the first reading, the ministry noted that government pre-financing for European Union-funded projects reached 1,737.4 billion forints by the end of November, while transfers from Brussels came to 574.6 billion forints. Expenditures were also lifted by a 41.2 billion forints top-up of pensions linked to economic growth and continued funding for developments such as road renovations and projects that are part of the Modern Cities Programme, it added. Within public finances, the central budget ran a 1,856.1 billion forints deficit in January-November, the social security funds were 26.1 billion forints in the red and separate state funds had a surplus of 39.8 billion forints. Alone in the month of November, the budget ran a 164.3 billion forints deficit.