

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Icicles at Lake Balaton

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**LMP presser on political strategy**

**National Election Committee session**

**Anti-govt demos in Szombathely, Pécs**

**Stats office report on industrial  
producer prices in Nov 2018**

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ: 2018 RECORD INVESTMENT YEAR

Government efforts to boost investment set new records in 2018 both in terms of the number of projects and their combined value, the foreign minister said.

The Hungarian economy saw a total of 98 major investments worth 1,380 billion forints (EUR 4.3bn) last year, Péter Szijjártó noted. The government contributed 135 billion forints in non-refundable support to the projects, helping create 17,024 jobs. The average monthly gross salary in newly created jobs was 425,700 forints, which is 40% higher than the 2017 average salary, he told journalists. Thanks to these major investments, Hungary registered the third lowest unemployment rate in the European Union last year, he said. Szijjártó also pointed out that the investments generally represented higher value-added and placed greater emphasis on research and development.

The largest number of investments -- 28 projects -- originated from Germany last year, totalling 620 billion forints in value, Szijjártó said. American and Hungarian companies carried out 15 projects each, he added. The value of Hungarian investments exceeded 100 billion forints, the minister said. The car industry accounted for the largest share of investments with 36 projects worth a total of 851 billion forints.

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## **SPECIAL PARLT SESSION LACKS QUORUM**

A special session of parliament lacked a quorum Thursday due to a boycott by ruling party lawmakers. The session was initiated by opposition parties and aimed to declare a Dec. 12 parliamentary vote on changes to the labour code invalid, as well as to discuss issues around an opposition protest at public media headquarters on Dec. 16-17.

Conservative Jobbik MP Péter Jakab said that the message the ruling parties conveyed by staying away was that they were fine with letting "people work to death" while they themselves were "work-shy". He said that the "slave law" adopted was invalid "not only because it was adopted unlawfully but also because the Hungarian people reject it". Concerning the protests, Jakab said "it is only in dictatorships that armed guards are sent to confront opposition lawmakers".

Tímea Szabó of the Párbeszéd party read out a declaration together with MPs of the Democratic Coalition and the Socialist Party, in which they pledged to "promote the demands of the Hungarian people in cooperation with all democratic opposition forces". They demanded that the public media "provide public service rather than serve one party". The MPs also demanded that parliament should ban "paid government propaganda" and annul the "slave law".

László Lóránt Keresztes, co-leader of LMP, said that ruling Fidesz had "betrayed" the people by promoting the "slave law" and argued that the government "attracts multinational companies based on Hungary's cheap labour". Following the abortive session, the opposition deputies stood on Parliament's steps outside and read out their declaration.

The Fidesz group reacted by saying that the opposition's "performance" was nothing more than "theatre" and "trouble-making". In a statement, they wrote that the opposition "organises violent protests using [George] Soros's money" and insisted that the opposition's actions were aimed at helping a "pro-migration majority" to power in the European Parliament in the upcoming EP elections.

## **HUNGARY Q1-Q3 BUDGET DEFICIT 0.4%/GDP**

Hungary's budget was 110.0 billion forints (EUR 341.5m) in the red in the first three quarters of 2018, equal to a shortfall of 0.4% of GDP, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The Q1-Q3 deficit in 2018 was down 54.5 billion forints compared with the same period in 2017. The difference in balance is equal to 0.2 percentage points of GDP, KSH said. The statistical office noted that favourable changes in the balance can be attributed to expenditures increasing at a slower pace than revenues.

## **HUNGARY POISED TO PLAY LEAD ROLE IN W BALKAN CLIMATE PROTECTION**

With a view to implementation of the Paris climate accord, an environmental non-profit will be established in the Western Balkans and Hungary is poised to take a leading role in developments related to climate protection, the innovation and technology ministry said. Green Center Nonprofit is being jointly established by the ministry and the South Korean Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) to carry out climate protection activities in six countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Thanks to the initiative, Hungarian companies will gain access to climate financing tenders in the region, while the ministry will finance hundreds of millions of forints each year from carbon credit quota income.

Péter Kaderják, state secretary for energy and climate policy, said the Hungarian government and the institute are keen to promote green policies in the Western Balkan region with the new centre, which shows Hungary's commitment to the Paris accord. Targeted measures to reduce emissions will be promoted and the region helped to adapt to climate change, the ministry said in a statement.

Ban Ki-moon, the GGGI's head and former UN secretary-general, said the Hungarian initiative played a critical

role in supporting green infrastructure investments. In the first phase of the fund, 100,000 US dollars spent on project preparation could help mobilise almost 10 million dollars in infrastructure investment, GGGI said, referring to funding support for water management, forestry and sustainable energy use.

This is the first step towards attaining more ambitious goals such as a multi-player financial fund planned to be set up 2021 with the possible involvement of regional and V4-plus countries, the ministry said.

**NUMBER OF PENSIONERS RETURNING TO WORK COULD DOUBLE**

The number of Hungarian pensioners returning to the workforce could soon double from around 70,000 at present, the finance minister’s deputy said in an interview in daily Magyar Idők. “There are about 70,000 people working while drawing on their pensions in Hungary right now. Thanks to the new, more favourable system of tax regulation, this number could as much as double in a relatively short period,” András Tállai said. From the start of 2019, pensioners who choose to return to work are exempt from payroll taxes and must pay only the 15% personal income tax. “Till now working pensioners have pocketed

71,000 forints of every gross 100,000 forints they earn ... This year, they can take home 85,000 forints,” Tállai said.

**AFGHAN REFUGEE SENTENCED TO COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR ASSAULT IN BUDAPEST**

An Afghan refugee has been sentenced in an accelerated procedure to community service for assaulting a couple near Budapest’s Keleti railway station on New Year’s Eve. The 24-year-old man was drunk and pushed a couple waiting at a bus stop. He then got into an argument with them and hit them in the face, the Budapest public prosecutor’s office said. He got on the bus with the couple and continued to act aggressively, also assaulting other passengers and damaging the windscreen of the bus when the driver stopped the vehicle and asked him to get off. The Afghan man was arrested by police on the spot and the 6th and 7th district local court sentenced him in a final ruling to 180 hours of community service, it said.

**PASSENGER DIES ON PLANE BEFORE UNSCHEDULED LANDING IN BUDAPEST**

A German passenger died on board a SunExpress flight operating between

Antalya and Berlin-Tegel before the plane made an unscheduled landing in Budapest, Mihály Hardy, the communications chief of Budapest Airport, told MTI. The 75-year-old German woman passed out, and despite frantic resuscitation efforts, died before the Boeing 737-800 touched down at Liszt Ferenc Airport at 11.30am.

**BUDAPEST ZOO: COLLECTION AMONG MOST DIVERSE IN EUROPE**

The Budapest Zoo is home to 8,807 animals of 856 species, which makes the collection one of Europe’s most diverse, the zoo said. A total of 131 species of mammal, 152 species of bird, 125 species of reptile, 32 species of amphibian and 204 species of fish are on display at the zoo. There are also 206 species of invertebrate, around half of which are insects, it said.

Adolf Lendl, who headed the zoo between 1911 and 1919, was the first director who made efforts to present a diversity of species and was thus 50 years ahead his time, the zoo said, adding that this applies when it comes to plants, of which there are more than 4,000.

Budapest Zoo occupies 17th place on the Sheridan list of top zoos in Europe, level with Copenhagen and Dublin.

