

PHOTO OF THE DAY



National Defence Day marked in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Defence minister on Zrínyi 2026 military development scheme

EP election campaign events

Groundbreaking ceremony of new correctional health-care centre in E Hungary

Indian auto industry supplier SMG inaugurates new plant in SE Hungary

TOP STORY

OECD FORECASTS 3.9% GROWTH IN 2019

The OECD has stuck to its forecast of Hungarian economic growth of 3.9% this year. The biannual forecast put next year's growth at 3%.

The projection in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's biannual forecast released on Tuesday is below the government's 4% target.

Private consumption remains strong, helped by rising real incomes and high consumer confidence coupled with supportive macroeconomic policies, the report said. Investment growth is "buoyant", supported by EU funding, housing subsidy schemes and expanding production capacity, it added. Hungary's "strong recovery is an opportunity to introduce measures to improve fiscal sustainability, reduce old-age poverty and address access challenges in the pension and health system", the OECD said. "Bolstering domestic SMEs should focus on improving business regulation, facilitating their integration into regional and national supply chains, and upgrading skills," the report added.

Commenting on the report, Gábor Gion, state secretary for financial policy affairs, said the OECD's forecast of 3.9% is close to the government target and Hungary's growth will exceed the average growth of OECD members, as well as the EU average.

NÉZŐPONT: FIDESZ ON COURSE FOR BIG WIN

Fidesz's ruling alliance with the Christian Democrats is on course for a bigger win than five years ago in Sunday's European Parliament (EP) election, according to a survey by the Nézőpont Institute. The Democratic Coalition (DK), Jobbik and Socialist-Párbeszéd alliance are in a dead heat for second place, according to the poll commissioned by the daily Magyar Nemzet. The Fidesz-led alliance is likely to get 54% of the vote in the EP election, handing it 13 seats, one more than it already possesses. Second place is currently tied, with DK, Jobbik and Socialist-Párbeszéd expecting 10%, handing the parties 2 seats each. With a participation rate of 32%, Momentum and LMP may also end up each with an MEP, with 6% and 5% support respectively, according to the survey conducted between May 2 and 19 with 4,000 personal interviews.

ÁDER: HUNGARY MUST BE 'STRONG, INDEPENDENT AND FREE'

President János Áder, addressing Hungary's National Defence Day celebration, called for dedication to Hungary's freedom, independence and strength. Speaking at a ceremony held in the Castle District on Tuesday, Áder said Hungarians in 1848-49 declared their desire for freedom, concord and the equality of citizens. "That's why

they placed the homeland before everything else," he said. "They knew that when freedom was under threat, it was only with a common will they could protect it." Hungary organised its own defences and tens of thousands volunteered, Áder noted. "Enthusiastic volunteers became true soldiers in the midst of battle." Though in the end Hungary's freedom fight was stifled in autumn 1849, the soldiers' "heroic fight bore fruit: it became a point of reference, a measurement of patriotism and faithfulness," Áder said.

At the ceremony, the president handed over the Regimental Flag for the National Command of the military, which Commander Ferenc Korom took over.

National Defence Day marks the anniversary of May 21, 1849, when the independent Hungarian army succeeded in recapturing the castle of Buda after a three-week siege.

OFFICIAL: EU NEEDS LEADERS WHO RESPECT WILL OF MEMBER STATES

The European Union needs leaders who respect the will of the bloc's member states and understand the concerns of its citizens, the state secretary for EU affairs of the Prime Minister's Office said. At stake in the European parliamentary elections is whether the "pro-migration elite's monopoly on power" can be broken, Szabolcs Takács said after a meeting of EU affairs officials in Brussels.

Hungary is in favour of breaking away from "the policies of Brussels

which are too far removed from the will of the European people", he said. Takács said every member state should be allowed to decide for itself whether it wants to "base its future on immigration or a successful family policy". Concerning the next EU budget, he said the accomplishments of the Schengen system should be restored.

COE RIGHTS COMMISSIONER URGES STEPS FOR HUNGARY REFUGEE PROTECTION, INDEPENDENCE OF NGOS, JUDICIARY

Hungary must do more for the protection of refugees, the independence of civil society and the judiciary, gender equality and in the area of women's rights, the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner said in a report released in Strasbourg. "Human rights violations in Hungary have a negative effect on the whole protection system and the rule of law. They must be addressed as a matter of urgency," Dunja Mijatović said in the report she prepared on the basis of her visit to Hungary in February this year. Hungarian legislation on immigration and asylum "undermines" the integration of refugees who have been granted asylum, the commissioner said, calling on the government to end the "crisis situation due to mass migration". Measures implemented under the law are not justified by the number of asylum seekers currently entering Hungary and the EU, she

said, and called on the government to refrain from using anti-migrant rhetoric and campaigns. The commissioner expressed concern over the “arbitrary nature of detention” of asylum seekers, including children, in the transit zones, calling on Hungarian authorities to work out alternative solutions.

Further, Mijatović criticised recent legislation on civil society, calling some of the provisions “exceptionally vague” and “arbitrary”. She said that recent legislative measures imposing restrictions on civil society “have stigmatised and criminalised NGO activities which are fully legitimate in a democratic society,” calling for the legislation to be repealed. She called on the Hungarian government to discontinue “intimidation, stigmatisation and smear campaigns” targeting NGOs and create a legal and social environment that allows these organisations to operate in line with human rights standards.

She said she had found backsliding in gender equality to the effect of a “strikingly low” representation of women in politics and the close association of women’s issues with family affairs in government policy. “The authorities should address the unequal representation of women in public life through positive measures and take determined action to eradicate gender stereotypes in educational materials,” Mijatović said. The commissioner urged Hungarian authorities to ratify the CoE’s 2011 Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women.

GOVT OFFICIAL: BRUSSELS ‘ATTEMPTS TO CUT FUNDING’ SHOULD BE REJECTED

“Brussels’ attempts to curb development policy funding” should be thwarted to ensure that the economic success of the Visegrad Group continues, a government official told a press conference in Bratislava, after attending a meeting of V4 transport ministers. The officials at the meeting signed a letter of intent on creating a high-speed train line between the four countries, Tamás Schanda, the state secretary of the innovation and technology ministry for EU development projects, said. The railway line would connect Budapest, Bratislava, Brno and Warsaw with trains that could reach 300 kilometres per hour, he said. The European Commission’s draft budget for the 2021-2027 financial cycle would cut funding for “well-working schemes” such as the cohesion programme and the common agricultural policy and redirect those monies to projects directly handled by the EC, he said. This would mean that the Visegrad countries could avail of up to 20% less cohesion funds, he said. “This is unacceptable,” Schanda said, adding that the V4 meeting called for keeping those schemes, especially the funding of infrastructure development, at its current level.

BUDGET SHORTFALL JUST 3.9% OF FY TARGET AT END-APRIL

Hungary’s budget, excluding local councils, ran a 39 billion forint deficit (EUR 12m) at the end of April, or 3.9% of the 998.4 billion full-year target, the Finance Ministry confirmed in a detailed reading of data. The central budget was 80.7 billion forints in the red at the end of April, while the separate state funds and the social insurance funds had surpluses of 33.1 billion and 8.6 billion, respectively.

EC WINS FARMLAND CONTRACTS CASE AGAINST HUNGARY

The Court of justice of the European Union (CJEU) on Tuesday ruled in favour of the European Commission in a case brought against Hungary over a law prohibiting contracts earlier used to transfer ownership of farmland to foreigners.

The EC launched an infringement procedure against Hungary for failing to comply with EU rules on the rights of cross-border investors in agricultural land in 2014, and it brought the matter to the CJEU in 2016. The legislation terminated certain usufruct contracts, or “pocket contracts” in Hungarian, that confer rights to use a property and profit from it. The contracts were terminated on May 1, 2014, although earlier it was announced that holders of the contracts would enjoy a transitional period of 20 years.

The EC also contested another provision in the same law that allows for the unilateral termination of certain land lease contracts concluded more than 20 years ago, subject to a very short notice period. The CJEU ordered Hungary to cover court costs in the case.

Hungary's farm ministry responded saying that Brussels protects the interests of "foreign speculators" through its court "attacking" Hungary's land law. The government's policy is to keep the country's farmland in Hungarian hands and protect Hungarian farmers from "foreign speculators", the ministry said in a statement. The ministry will study the court ruling and exhaust all legal possibilities to ensure a lawful use of Hungarian farmland, the statement said.

OFFICIAL CALLS FOR STRONGER POLISH-HUNGARIAN COOPERATION IN KRAKOW

Ruling Fidesz's Zsolt Németh, head of parliament's foreign affairs committee, has called for strengthening further

the institutional basis of Polish-Hungarian cooperation. Németh spoke at an event late on Monday held at the Hungarian consulate general in Krakow marking the launch of an album about a Budapest memorial commemorating the victims of the 2010 Polish Air Force crash near Smolensk. The publication of the trilingual album in Polish, Hungarian and English was financed by the Prime Minister's Office.

BUDAPEST PUBLIC TRANSPORT E-TICKETING TRIAL TO START IN A MONTH

An e-ticketing trial for Budapest public transport is set to be launched within a month and the system will be later expanded to cover the whole of Hungary, the state secretary in charge of national financial services and public utilities has said. Cash-free ticket and transport pass purchases and e-ticketing will be among the most important elements of modern public transport, which the National Mobile Payment company is supporting, Edit Juhász said at a symposium on mobile payments.

MARATHON TOURISM MORE THAN TRIPLED IN PAST DECADE

The number of tourists visiting Hungary to participate in running events such as marathons has more than tripled in the past decade, daily Világgazdaság said on Tuesday, citing figures from the government commissioner for an active Hungary and the Budapest Sport Office. Nearly 25,000 foreigners ran in three large Budapest events last year, the Telekom Vivicitta City Protection Run, the Wizz Air Budapest Half Marathon and the SPAR Budapest Marathon, as against only 8,000 in 2007, the paper said. The number of guest nights and the money spent by runners visiting Hungary has also increased significantly, the paper added. The former exceeded 80,000 last year as against 21,000 in 2007, and the latter totalled 4 billion forints (EUR 12.3m) last year as against 600 million forints in 2007. Budapest Sport Office managing director Árpád Kocsis told the paper that Hungary was competing with the Czech Republic for first place in the region when it comes to running tourism.