

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Meteor in the night sky as seen from near Salgótarján (N Hungary)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases prelim Q2 GDP report

Ecumenical Charity launches school supply drive

TOP STORY

BABY BOND NUMBERS PASS 190,000

The number of Start “baby bond” accounts with the State Treasury has risen above 190,000 by the end of July, daily Magyar Nemzet said, citing the finance ministry’s state secretary.

András Tállai said Hungarians opened close to 20,000 new accounts this year. Start accounts have around 68 billion forints (EUR 200m) of savings at the moment, finance ministry data shows. He said growth in the number of new accounts was high in the first few months of the year, but then slowed during the summer. The state secretary added, however, that the ministry expects to see another uptick in new accounts in the autumn.

He said the bond, along with the government’s home subsidy and the recently-launched family protection action plan were all designed to allow young people to make a decent living in Hungary.

A 42,500 forint start-of-life subsidy has been available to all Hungarian-born citizens who reside in the country since 2006, but the Treasury took over exclusive management of the baby bonds in the autumn of 2012. The bonds are also available for Hungarian children living abroad who were born after June 30, 2017. Parents, grandparents and other relatives can open the Start accounts to make savings for children in the family.

HUNGARY GRIPENS ALERTED OVER 40 TIMES DURING BALTIC AIRSPACE PATROL

Hungary's Gripen fighters patrolling the airspace over the Baltic states have been alerted more than 40 times since starting their mission in May, the commander of the unit in charge of the mission said. During a media day held at Lithuania's Siauliai International Airport, the Hungarian fighters were alerted twice within a span of a few hours. Since the start of the mission, the Hungarian Gripens have completed over 370 take-offs and over 400 flight hours, Brigadier General Csaba Ugrik said.

The airspace patrol mission involves, among other things, the identification of aircraft that had not submitted their flight plans, fail to stay in contact with the competent air traffic controllers or do not operate transponders. Further, they are tasked with providing support to other forces stationed in the Baltics and strengthening the locals' sense of security, Ugrik added. The Hungarian Armed Forces is leading the NATO airspace patrol mission of the Baltic states in partnership with Spain and Britain, he said. NATO has stepped up its presence in the region since Russia annexed Crimea.

During their patrols, the Hungarian Gripens intercepted multiple cargo and reconnaissance aircraft, including AN-24, AN-26, TU-214R, IL-18, IL-38

and IL-76 planes, he said. They have also encountered Russian bombers and fighters including SU-24M, SU-27P, SU-30SM and SU-35S jets. Ugrik noted that since none of the three Baltic states possess fighter jets, their airspace has been policed by NATO since they joined the alliance in 2004. NATO member states take turns policing Baltic airspace, and the current mission is Hungary's second one since 2015, he added. Hungary is carrying out the mission with 96 soldiers and four JAS-39 Gripen fighters, Ugrik said, adding that during the mission, the troops are also taking part in international exercises and training.

JOBBIK DEMANDS REMOVAL OF LOCAL POLICE CHIEF

The opposition Jobbik party has demanded that the police chief of Karcag, in eastern Hungary, should be removed over reports about Zoltán Teleki's instructing officers not to impose traffic fines on hospital staff. According to a recently leaked recording, the police chief said that officers should "differentiate" when fining offenders or else they would risk losing preferential treatment at the local hospital. László György Lukács, Jobbik's deputy group leader, told a press conference that the recording, if proves genuine, is evidence for the police chief's committing a crime, and added that the case "undermines public confidence in the police and

health care". He also demanded an investigation to reveal if the police chief has a record of instructing officers to deviate from the law, and called on the hospital's management to investigate why the facility offered opportunities for some patients to bypass the official waiting lists.

RADICAL NATIONALISTS STAGE PROTEST AGAINST COCA-COLA AT SZIGET FESTIVAL ENTRANCE

Activists of the radical nationalist Mi Hazánk Movement handed out stickers and flyers protesting US soft drink maker Coca-Cola's advertisement campaign promoting gay acceptance, at the entrance of the Sziget festival. Coca-Cola has designed rainbow-colored labels for its bottles sold at the festival grounds. At a press conference held during the protest, Dóra Dúró, Mi Hazánk's deputy leader, said her party will continue to protest the US multinational's campaign. She insisted it was not just Coca-Cola, but also the government that was to blame "for the current situation", arguing that it had chosen Coca-Cola as its first strategic partner, giving it a number of special privileges, such as the right to provisionally assess tax laws. "If the government were serious about containing homosexual propaganda, it would have the opportunity, for example, to rescind the privileges granted by the strategic partnership agreement," Dúró said. She said Coca-Cola should rather organise

campaigns focusing on health. Mi Hazánk earlier called for a boycott of Coca-Cola products for what they see as a "promotion of homosexuality".

FORMER SOVIET ARMY FACILITY TO BE CLEANED UP

The Danube-Ipoly National Park Directorate (DINPI) will launch an environmental clean-up project to remove fuel and heavy metals from four ponds used by Soviet tanks around Strázsa Hill at Esztergom, in northern Hungary. The 2.7 hectare area is located next to drinking water resources, the director of DINPI told a press conference in Esztergom. Tests in the ponds have revealed the presence of heavy metals in the sludge, András Fűri said.

The clean-up project will include removing contaminated soil and concrete structures from the spot used for a fuel depo, as well as cleansing the sludge, he said. It will also include taking fish, amphibians and reptiles to a safe habitat for the period of the clean-up, Fűri added.

The Strázsa Hill area was used by the Soviet army's tanks and chemical defence units for about three decades

after 1956. The directorate will spend 591 million forints (EUR 1.82m) on the project, the farm ministry's state secretary said. A national environmental programme identified a total of 30,000 polluted spots in 1996, András Rácz said, adding that their cleaning was estimated to take 30 years at a cost of around 1,000 billion forints.

HUNGARY INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DOWN 1.4% IN JUNE

Industrial output in Hungary dropped by an annual 1.4% in June, according to unadjusted data, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data. The sector's output was, however, up by 4.1%, according to working day-adjusted data, KSH said, noting that there were two fewer workdays than in the base period. In a month-on-month comparison, industrial output was down by 1.8%, according to both unadjusted and working day-adjusted data, KSH said. Export volume of the industrial sector increased by an annual 0.2% as exports of the automotive sector rose by 3.1% and exports of the computer,

electronics and optical equipment sector dropped by 2.5%. Domestic sales of the industrial sector were up by 2.6%. In the first six months of the year, industrial output was up by 5.4% from a year earlier.

FARM GATE PRICES UP 8.9% IN H1

Farm gate prices in Hungary were up 8.9% year-on-year in the first half of 2019, data from the Central Statistical Office (KSH) showed. The price of live animals and animal products rose by 3.9% and crop prices were up 11.8%. Grain prices were up 10.7% with wheat prices rising by 25%. Fruit prices were down 2.1% as the price of apples dropped by 65% and the price of pears fell by 12.3%

The price of vegetables rose by 28.7% with tomato prices up 8.3%, green pepper prices rising by 38.5% and cucumber prices growing by 12.3%. Potato prices jumped by 190.3%. Prices of live animals were up 5.6% and animal product prices edged up 0.6%.

Agricultural input prices rose 5.2% in H1, meaning terms of trade improved by 3.5% for producers during the period after deteriorating by 2.2% during 2018.