

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Graduation ceremony at Debrecen University, E Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

KSH releases retail figures for May

TOP STORY

PM ORBÁN MARKS INDEPENDENCE DAY IN LETTER TO PRESIDENT TRUMP

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán greeted US President Donald Trump on the occasion of America's Independence Day.

Hungarians and Americans are committed to values shared by their countries, such as freedom, sovereignty, and independence, the prime minister wrote in his letter. Efforts to preserve a Christian identity, supporting families, and providing joint assistance to Israel are dominant factors in the policies of both countries, Orbán's press office quoted him as saying. The prime minister highlighted the United States' sheltering many Hungarians that had to flee their homeland, and said that Hungarian-Americans are a strong link between the two nations. He said his government was committed to protecting freedom and sovereignty even in hard times, adding that Hungary was ready to make a fair contribution to NATO's expenses. Orbán also assured Trump that the Hungarian government would go on working to protect Hungary's borders and fight illegal migration. The Hungarian government wants to strengthen bilateral ties and stay a committed ally of the US, Orbán said, adding that he was looking forward to continuing in joint efforts.

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ORBÁN: VISEGRAD GROUP CONCLUDES 'GOOD YEAR'

The Visegrad Group is concluding a "good year", and has handled the coronavirus epidemic successfully in comparison with other European countries, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in Warsaw on Friday. Speaking at a joint press conference after a summit marking Poland's assuming the grouping's rotating presidency on July 1, Orbán said the next task was to preserve jobs and restart economic growth.

The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have their budget deficits under control, Orbán said. Other countries, however, have amassed debts and "the question is whether we can help them", he said. Although Hungary generally opposes to EU member states taking out loans jointly, it has accepted the EU's approach to help those states, he said. The matter, however, is far from settled, he said: the member states need a "smart financial agreement" to be able to proceed. As president of the Visegrad Group, Poland will play a key role in those negotiations, he said. Orbán pledged Hungary's full support to Poland in a period which he said would be defined by defeating the epidemic, restarting the economy and handling the migration crisis. Orbán said he hoped that "economically minded" leaders will be elected everywhere to help their countries recover after the pandemic. He roots

for US President Donald Trump, he said, "because he is the only one capable of getting the American economy in order after the pandemic". Hungary has "great trust" in the Polish presidency, as its leadership involves a "seasoned finance minister", Orbán said.

Next to overcoming the pandemic and restarting the economy, the coming period will also be characterised by more intensive migration, he said. Hungary is already detecting growing numbers of illegal entry attempts, while the number of people smugglers arrested has grown, and the number of Covid-19 cases has grown along migration routes, he said.

Regarding the EU's recovery package, Orbán said the group is "standing united". The recovery plan is covered from a loan taken out jointly by EU member states, he said. Since there are no net contributors and net beneficiaries, the distribution process will go differently from the EU's normal budget, he said.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said the V4 wanted to help shape the EU's post-coronavirus future, pointing out that the four countries had "solid economic foundations" and had proven how successful they could be in overcoming the epidemic. He also said the V4 held a common position on the handling of refugees and the protection of the bloc's external borders. V4 leaders stand for a flexible EU budget that the member states could tailor to their own needs, Morawiecki said. The group will

represent a joint standpoint at the July 19 EU summit, he said. Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš said that the Visegrad countries will work for a fair 2021-2027 EU budget for all member states. It is important for the Visegrad states that Europe defeats the epidemic as soon as possible and its economy thrives again, he said. At the same time, the recovery fund set up to deal with the effects of the pandemic should cater for all nations' economic needs, he said.

The V4 countries have a "vision" on how to make Europe stronger and more agile, Babiš said. The European Commission should prioritise the EU's internal market to overcome the post-pandemic crisis, and should work on concluding trade agreements with third countries, he said. Slovak Prime Minister Igor Matovič said Poland was taking over the group's presidency at trying times. The Visegrad Group and Europe have to stand together in a crisis unprecedented since World War 2, he said.

NINE NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS IN HUNGARY

No Covid-19 patient has died in the past 24 hours but the number of registered novel coronavirus infections has risen by nine to 4,183, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Sunday.

Fully 589 people have died and 2,811 have made a recovery, while the number of active infections stands at 783. Altogether 1,348 people are in official home quarantine and 285,590

tests have been carried out. A total of 144 coronavirus patients are in hospital, 8 of whom are on ventilators.

Fully 40% of active infections, 60% of fatalities and 47% of recoveries have taken place in Budapest.

The threat of an epidemic has not disappeared and a state of medical preparedness is in effect, the website said. It is compulsory to wear a face mask in shops and on public transport.

Budapest has the highest number of infections (1,988), followed by Pest County (631), and the counties of Fejér (378), Komárom-Esztergom (307) and Zala (262). Békés and Tolna counties have had the fewest infections (13 each).

GOVT LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT HUNGARIAN BUSINESSES

The government is launching a new programme to support Hungarian businesses that commit to investing at least 560 million forints (EUR 1.6m) to save jobs in view of the coronavirus pandemic, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Saturday.

In a video posted on his Facebook page, the minister said the European Commission had given approval to Hungary supporting businesses that commit to making investments in order to save jobs without an upper limit. Applications for funding can be submitted from next week, until the end of September. The investments must be implemented in the following two years. The amount of the support

can reach up to 50 percent of the investment amount, Szijjártó said, that is 280 million forints in the case of an investment of 560 million.

Szijjártó said Hungary had successfully completed the first phase of its epidemic response efforts, the one that involved health care defence, and is ready to fight the second phase, the one about economic defence, in cooperation with Hungarian businesses and people. The aim of the programme is to help companies retain jobs and create new ones, he added.

VARGA: 2021 BUDGET AIMED TO MAINTAIN MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS, BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH

The government has two key aims with next year's budget, to maintain the state of medical preparedness in view of the novel coronavirus epidemic and to support economic growth as much as possible, Finance Minister Mihály Varga told public Kossuth Rádió on Sunday morning.

Varga called the government's economic support measures essential, as in his opinion no substantial growth can be expected without them, as in the 2000s, when the Hungarian economy was almost stagnating despite the upward trend of the European economy at the time.

He noted that the 2021 budget approved on Friday envisages 4.8% growth while the general government deficit will be 3% again and the

government debt will fall below 70%. The minister said the growth will make it possible to spend more on public safety, education and health care next year while the resources necessary for the coronavirus response efforts will also be available.

Varga noted that the government remains committed to supporting families raising children as well as the elderly.

PÁRBESZÉD: BUDGET 'FIDESZ'S REVENGE'

Ruling Fidesz has "taken revenge" on opposition-led municipalities through next year's budget, a deputy group leader of opposition Párbeszéd told a press conference after the budget bill was passed by parliament. Sándor Burány insisted that towns and cities where the opposition won the local elections last autumn would have much smaller budgets next year, including Budapest, whose payments to the central budget would exceed its receivables. The Democratic Coalition (DK) indicated earlier that it would not support the budget bill in the vote. DK deputy leader László Varju said that the budget was that of "weakness and cowardice" and argued that it was "political cowardice not to face ramifications of the coronavirus epidemic". In reaction, ruling Fidesz said that the 2021 budget allocates 118 billion forints (EUR 335.1m) to local governments than in 2020. The municipalities, however, "find that is not enough" and demand more, the party's statement said.

SOCIALISTS URGE EURO ADOPTION

Adopting the European currency and thus “stabilising” the country’s position in the European Union is “clearly” in Hungary’s interest, opposition Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi said on Facebook on Sunday. Ujhelyi insisted that the government was “deliberately weakening the forint” to benefit “its own circle of friends, the oligarchs”. He added that the weak forint and “brutal” inflation were heavily weighing on wage earners.

Ujhelyi noted that while the euro-forint exchange rate was around 1:280 in 2010, the euro was now trading above 350 forints.

Ujhelyi went on to say that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán “does not really mean to adopt the euro because that would cement Hungary in the EU and he would lose his room for manoeuvre

to blackmail Brussels and woo Moscow and other Eastern dictatorships”.

HUNGARY OPENS HUMANITARIAN CORRIDOR FOR TRANSIT

Travellers are offered a humanitarian corridor to transit Hungary effective from midnight on Friday (July 3), the national police said on its website.

The measure was announced by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Thursday. He said that citizens of non-EU countries, except for Serbia, would not be allowed to enter because “that would be against the health interest of Hungarians”.

Travellers passing through the country are required to use a designated route, and are allowed to use designated filling stations and service areas only.

Travellers are required to use the following border crossing

points: Hegyeshalom, Rajka, Hont-Parassapuszta, Tornyosnémeti, Záhony, Beregsurány, Csengersima, Vállaj, Nyírábrány, Ártánd, Gyula, Battonya, Csanádpalota, Nagylak, Rőszke, Tompa, Udvar, Letenye, and Tornyiszentmiklós, the police website said.

UK LIFTS QUARANTINE REQUIREMENT FOR ENTRANTS FROM HUNGARY, AMONG OTHERS

Visitors from a number of countries, including Hungary, will not need to be isolated on entering the United Kingdom, starting next Friday, the British transport ministry announced. Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy are included in the list of several dozen countries, but citizens of Portugal, Sweden, the US, China, Bulgaria and Romania continue to be required to stay in a 14-day quarantine.