

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Balazs Mohai

Dog cooling off in a fountain on Budapest's Liberty Square

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office reports on May industrial output

NBH releases annual Payment Systems Report

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

FINMIN: HUNGARY LEADING EU ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Brussels has recognised that Hungary's economic relaunch is happening at a faster pace than in the other EU countries, Mihály Varga, the finance minister, said in a statement after a meeting of EU finance ministers (ECOFIN).

The European Commission has made a major revision to its Hungarian growth forecast, from 5% to 6.3% this year, according to a Ministry of Finance statement released on Tuesday. Growth of 5% is expected next year as opposed to forecasts of 4.5% for the bloc as a whole. "We're a step ahead of other EU countries," Varga said. The European Commission expects member states to return to pre-epidemic levels of growth by the end of 2022, he said, adding that this could be attained in Hungary this year. The government, he added, is striving to hit its target of 5.5% economic growth. Referring to the outcome of a G20 meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors, Varga said Hungary far from accepted the related tax proposals of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), adding that the government would continue to reject any kinds of solutions that curb fair tax competition. Meanwhile, Varga said ECOFIN ministers have given the go-ahead to the Council of Ministers to adopt the first 12 national recovery plans assessed by the European Commission.

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GOVT PLANNING GRAND CELEBRATIONS OF AUG 20 NATIONAL HOLIDAY

The government is preparing to arrange a “more monumental than ever”, four-day-long programme to celebrate Hungary’s August 20 national holiday this year, the state secretary for international communications and relations said on Facebook. “On this day we commemorate a history of over 1,000 years, which is worth celebrating with several days of festivities,” Zoltán Kovács said. The state secretary said Hungary’s defeat of the third wave of the coronavirus pandemic meant that “the old life we are accustomed to can return”, adding that the body in charge of the festivities had already started making preparations.

DEUTSCH: ‘STAND UP FOR HUNGARIAN INTERESTS IN BRUSSELS!’

The head of the Fidesz delegation in the European Parliament, Tamás Deutsch, posted a video statement on Tuesday accusing Brussels of “abusing its powers” by launching proceedings against Hungary, and calling on Hungarians to fill in National Consultation questionnaires and thereby send a message to Brussels that they “stand up for Hungarian interests”. Deutsch said the issue of migration would again dominate politics in Europe following the pandemic. “Scandalously,” Brussels

regards countries that accept migrants as following the rule of law, he said, accusing the European Union of blackmailing member states that oppose immigration by threatening to withhold funding. The Fidesz MEP also accused the EU of resorting to “the same anti-democratic tricks” in connection with Hungary’s child protection law when it attempted to “force illegal migrants on Hungary”. Because the government refused to cave in to ideological expectations and decided to protect children instead, “they have attacked Hungary yet again,” he said.

FIDESZ CALLS ON KARÁCSONY TO PROBE DANUBE BOAT PROCUREMENT TENDER

Hungary’s ruling Fidesz has called on Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony to order an investigation into the public procurement procedure of the Budapest transport company’s Danube boat service. Zsolt Wintermantel, the Fidesz-delegated member in Budapest’s transport authority BKK, said in a Facebook video on Tuesday that the public procurement tender for an operator for the Danube boat service “raises suspicions similar to the ones around” transport company BKV’s bus leasing arrangements. “Of course, BKV and the mayor are denying everything and saying the same things they said six months ago regarding the bus tender: that there’s nothing to see here,” Wintermantel said. He called on

Karácsony to order a comprehensive investigation into the tender and to prohibit BKV from signing any agreements until the investigation was concluded.

HUNGARY ‘COMMITTED TO FOOD SUSTAINABILITY GOALS’

Hungary is committed to reaching its food sustainability targets, a Ministry of Agriculture official said in a statement on Tuesday. Dávid Bencsik, the ministry’s deputy state secretary for international relations, said that in his role as national coordinator of the Food Systems Summit, work was under way to ensure healthy and sustainable food production and consumption. Addressing an informal meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Office for Europe and Central Asia, Bencsik noted that Budapest traditionally hosts the regional meeting. He noted Hungary’s commitment to FAO programmes, including its funding a scholarship scheme as well as FAO projects in the country.

Vladimir Rakhmanin, a FAO deputy director-general and regional representative for Europe and Central Asia, said issues to be addressed included resilient and sustainable agri-food systems, the effects of climate change and epidemics, as well as the situation of women and young people living in rural areas, the statement said. Government representatives of countries of the European and Central

Asian region, as well as experts from business, academia and civil society, are attending the meeting to assess FAO's performance and future activities and priorities in the region, including work to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Family farms, digitisation, value chains, agricultural production sustainability, and school food programmes in Europe and Central Asia are also on the meeting's agenda.

HUNGARY CO-SIGNS LETTER CALLING FOR REVIEW OF EU FORESTRY STRATEGY

Hungary is among 11 European Union member states to have sent a letter to Frans Timmermans, the Vice-President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal, calling on him to review the EU's planned forestry strategy, which they said was skewed against social and economic considerations and unduly favoured "green aspects". Agriculture Minister István Nagy said the EU's forestry strategy so far had been a "model of sustainable economy", striking a balance between the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability. Shifting that balance towards "Brussels bureaucrats only considering green aspects" was "unacceptable", Nagy said. According to a recently leaked document, the new strategy would "narrow the tasks of a multifocal, sustainable forestry strategy to preserving biodiversity".

"This would marginalise the economic and social role of forests, jeopardising jobs and the sector's role in circular economy," the statement said. Hungary joined Austria's initiative with a view to protecting the interests of some 500,000 Hungarians making a living in the sector, the statement said. The letter to Timmermans was signed by the ministers of the Visegrad Group, Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia and Romania.

LMP CALLS ON AGRICULTURE MINISTER TO HALT LAKE FERTŐ INVESTMENT

The co-leader of the opposition LMP party on Tuesday called on Agriculture Minister István Nagy to halt the construction of a hotel in a protected area on Lake Fertő, in northwest Hungary, or tender his resignation. Erzsébet Schmuck told an online press conference that the construction of a hotel, partly on the water itself, has been criticised by domestic and foreign NGOs, the European Union's Directorate-General for Environment, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, and the International Centre on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The EU has already launched a procedure against Hungary for ignoring guidelines of its directive on natural habitats, Schmuck said. Schmuck slammed the minister for dismissing critiques as "politically motivated opposition" in a Facebook video. With the construction, the state "is

setting a precedent on circumventing regulations regarding constructions on our natural waters," Schmuck said. The 30 billion forint (EUR 84.3m) investment costs one-and-a-half times the annual budget of all nature parks in Hungary, she added.

HUNGARY RECORDS THREE CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES, 17 NEW INFECTIONS

Three patients died over in the past 24 hours, while 17 new Covid infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Tuesday. So far 5,543,891 people have received a first jab, while 5,202,925 have been fully vaccinated. The number of active infections has declined to 36,883, while hospitals are treating 86 Covid patients, 12 of whom need respiratory assistance. There are 1,659 people in official quarantine, while 6,214,858 tests have been officially carried out. Since the first outbreak, 808,556 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,010. Fully 741,663 people have made a recovery. So far, most infections have been registered in Budapest and Pest County, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Hajdú-Bihar.

DRONE COALITION ELECTS BOARD MEMBERS

The Hungarian Drone Coalition elected its nine board members and approved the establishment of its professional working groups

at its first plenary session on Tuesday, the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (ITM) said in a statement. Set up by ITM, Széchenyi University, the Budapest University of Technology and Economics and air traffic control company HungaroControl, the coalition aims to develop a strategy on the implementation, manufacture and research of drones, the ministry noted. The coordination tasks of the coalition will be carried out by the Institute for Transport Sciences (KTI) and the government's digital welfare programme.

András Levente Gál, a head of the digital welfare programme, noted that the programme was used to launch the Hungarian 5G Coalition in 2017 and the Artificial Intelligence Coalition in 2019. Dániel Rohács, the head of the Drone Coalition, said the body's most important task would be to develop a vision and a drone strategy to serve as guidelines for the decisions that will need to be made over the coming years. He mentioned supportive regulation, communication, safety and traffic control as areas in which the coalition would help in making progress.

Since its inception two months ago, the coalition has expanded from 60 members to 96, ITM said. "One of the most important measures of a country's ability to adapt to global trends is its performance in the introduction and application of game-changing technologies," the ministry said. "The Hungarian government

intends to make sure that Hungary becomes at least a regional

-- preferably even a European leader -- in this process." Citing estimates by the European Commission, the ministry said some 340 million people are projected to be using urban air mobility (UAM) vehicles by 2030, adding that the rise of the UAM sector could create some 100,000 jobs in Europe over the next 20 years.

SBS INVESTS HUF 563 M IN PURCHASING MACHINERY

Hungary's SBS which makes frames and other welded structures for mining, construction and farm machines, is investing 563 million forints (EUR 1.6m) in purchasing machinery for use at its base in Erdőtelek, in north-eastern Hungary, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign affairs and trade minister, said. The government is providing a 282 million forint grant for the project that will help preserve 380 jobs, the minister said. Hungarian-owned businesses in the countryside are essential for the rapid relaunch of the economy, he added. "Just as it wasn't easy to vaccinate 5.5 million people, it isn't easy to achieve 5.5% economic growth," Szijjártó said. "We must fight for it every day, one investment, one legislative amendment and one operative board meeting at a time." Thanks to the record investments seen in Hungary last year, the government was able to prevent mass unemployment, the minister

said. "Hungarians need jobs, not welfare cheques, because welfare leads to vulnerability, unpredictability, insecurity, while jobs provide a predictable future and a long-term livelihood," he added.

BOSCH TESTS COLLISION AVOIDANCE SYSTEM IN DEBRECEN

German engineering company Bosch is testing out its collision avoidance system in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary, from mid-July, partnering with the Debrecen Transport Company (DKV), Zoltán Szőke, the vice president for automated driving development at Bosch said. Radars and camera systems installed on the front of trams, as well as their control units, are made at Bosch's plant in Hatvan. The system is able to detect danger from 70-80 meters and immediately transmits light and sound signals to the tram driver. DKV CEO Attila Nagy said the six months of testing will provide important information to the manufacturer, to the drivers and the public transport company.

ZSAZSA GÁBOR'S ASHES LAID TO REST IN BUDAPEST

The ashes of Zsazsa Gábor were laid to rest on Tuesday in the Fiumei Street graveyard in Budapest, almost five years after her death. Prince Frederic von Anhalt, the Hollywood celebrity's last husband, brought the Golden

Globe Award-winning actress's ashes from America, thereby fulfilling her wish to rest forever in her homeland. The National Heritage Institute and the Hungarian Hollywood Council were also involved in bringing her remains to Hungary. A mourning ceremony for Gábor (originally Sári Gábor) was first held in Los Angeles in 2016. Von Anhalt said at today's ceremony that the event marked a celebration of the life of the actress. He said she had never forgotten her homeland during her career.

Éva Vándor, the actress who dubbed Gabor's voice into Hungarian said Gabor had been the first real celebrity, "a Hungarian diva" from whom the American dream had come true. She described Gábor as "cheerful, humorous and brave".

In his farewell speech, Balázs Bokor, the president of the Hungarian Hollywood Council, noted that Gábor hadn't reached celebrity status via Facebook or Instagram. She had remained a Hungarian for her entire

life, he said, and while "Zsazsa wanted to see the world, she always thought of Hungary." Bokor also noted that plans for a Hungarian film chronicling the life of Gábor was in the pipeline.

Gábor was among the few Hungarians to have received a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. In 1936, Gábor became a Miss Hungary and moved to America with her family five years later. She married nine times, tying the knot with Von Anhalt in 1986, and died on December 18, 2016.

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PRIZE GOES TO FREESZFE

The European Parliament has awarded Hungarian civil rights group Freeszfe for its Emergency Exit programme with this year's European Citizens' Prize, according to a Tuesday announcement. Emergency Exit is a cooperation between the students of Budapest's University of Theatre and Film Arts (SZFE) and those of five other universities in Europe. The

cooperation promotes respect for European values and their practical implementation, the EP said in a statement.

Lívia Járóka, MEP of Hungary's ruling Fidesz, said in a statement that the recipient had been selected in an "unsportsmanlike" procedure. She insisted that while the Hungarian jury had nominated four candidates for the prize, the EP's jury in Brussels excluded the other three candidates citing administrative reasons. Járóka said that excluding Hungarian health professionals fighting against the coronavirus pandemic was "unfair", adding that she had proposed a special prize to honour health staff and their union.

The European Citizens' Prize has been awarded each year, since 2008, to European organisations or individuals who have given exceptional service in the service of greater European integration and understanding between citizens and member states.