

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamás Vasvári

Hungarian army Breakthrough 2021 dynamic military exercise at Hajmáskér base

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Coronavirus updates**

**Stat office publish August industrial prices**

**World Hunting Expo**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN PRAISES VISEGRAD COOPERATION

The next decade will offer central Europe “fantastic opportunities”, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in Ústi nad Labem, in the Czech Republic, following talks with his Czech counterpart Andrej Babiš on Wednesday.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Babiš, Orbán said that while central Europe had earlier been thought to be helpless without Western Europe, it was now the Western European economies that could not do without central Europe. “There is not even a successful German economy without central Europe, which is in fact the locomotive of the EU’s economy,” he said. The political and economic weight of the region will further increase, but it requires the Visegrad cooperation to continue, he said. Orbán said that in terms of reducing unemployment, the Czech Republic “is one step ahead of us”, adding that Hungary also wanted to have a debt rate as slow as its northern neighbour.

The prime minister said his visit today was aimed at strengthening the Czech-Hungarian axis of the Visegrad Four cooperation, arguing that without the Czech Republic’s commitment towards the V4 the group cannot function. “The Visegrad Group needs the strength and political influence of the Czech Republic,” Orbán said.

**ORBÁN ON MIGRATION,  
EU, RUSSIAN GAS DEAL**

In connection with migration, Orbán said a new, massive wave of migrants could not be avoided with millions of people leaving Afghanistan. Many of them will choose a route through the Balkans and Hungary, he said, adding that Hungary would continue to protect its own borders, as it will also protect Europe.

On the topic of Czech-Hungarian economic cooperation, Orbán noted that it had reached record levels. The volume of bilateral trade this year has gone up by 26%, Hungary has currently 330 Czech companies as foreign investors employing several thousands of people, he said, adding plans for Hungary to extend cooperation in the areas of telcom, agriculture, energy and defence. Hungary is ready to work in close, friendly cooperation with the government of Andrej Babiš based on mutual respect in future, Orbán said.

In reply to a question, Orbán said that the gas purchase agreement Hungary signed with Russia earlier this week is a matter of Hungary's sovereignty, and Ukraine has nothing to do with it. Hungary is a sovereign state and will purchase gas from whichever country it chooses. "It is up to us alone to decide which route we use to bring this energy to Hungary," he said, adding that in selecting the route the only criteria is that it should provide the greatest security. "We wish that the Ukrainians should cope with

their own problems and leave us out of it," Orbán said.

"We, central Europeans are destined to success and will prosper if we are allowed to. We do not ask for extra assistance but fair treatment," he said. It is unfair, however, that eight member states haven't yet got access to the post-pandemic recovery fund the EU decided to grant to each country, Orbán said. "This is not a matter of money but lack of equal terms in competition," he said.

The European Commission is making a difference between member states and those who get assistance later fall behind in the competition, Orbán said. If the EU guarantees equal treatment, abstains from abusing its powers and acts correctly, central Europe will continue its success story, he added.

"We have three major battles with Brussels," Orbán said, referring to migration, the involvement of "LGBTQ activists in the education of our children" and green policies which could bring about exorbitant energy prices.

"We should win these three battles for the central European success story to continue," he said.

Orbán said that the western countries are unable or unwilling to protect their boundaries, and let migrants in without any control. Later on, however, they complain about all migrants staying on their territory and call for distributing them. But this is a wrong approach. All countries should defend their borders and if they are

unable to, then they should ask for assistance," he said.

Orbán reiterated that Hungary rejected the compulsory migrant quotas and welcomed that the Czech Republic shared its position.

Addressing the press conference, Babiš said the Czech Republic owed it to Hungary that there are no illegal migrants in the country today. "In 2015, Hungary was the only EU member state to protect the bloc's Schengen borders. Thanks to the fence Hungary then erected at its border, the Czech Republic today does not have to struggle with the problem of illegal migration," he said.

**GULYÁS: 2021 GDP  
GROWTH 'DEFINITELY'  
ABOVE 5.5%**

The prime minister's chief of staff flagged a 5.5% GDP growth for Hungary in 2021 and discussed other economic, as well as topical political issues, on Wednesday. Hungary's economy will "definitely" grow by more than 5.5% this year, and the figure could even reach 7.5%, Gergely Gulyás told a weekly government press briefing. He said the growth figure meant the government's plan to partially reimburse the personal income tax of working parents could be realised. He said that the reimbursed amounts will be calculated based on the average wage and payments will be made early next year.

Referring to a report by the finance minister discussed during a cabinet



meeting earlier in the day, he said it was inconceivable that this year's growth rate would be below 5.5% and he welcomed "the highest growth rate in the past 31 years". By how much higher growth may be would depend on pre-Christmas consumer turnover, he said, adding that "hopefully no new developments, even amid the pandemic, will negatively impact the economy".

**GULYÁS: GAS DEAL WITH RUSSIA ENSURES LOWEST UTILITY COSTS FOR HUNGARIAN HOUSEHOLDS**

Gergely Gulyás, the prime minister's chief of staff, said on Wednesday that the government's agreement with Russian energy giant Gazprom would ensure that the achievements of government-mandated utility cuts were preserved. Thanks to the 15-year agreement signed earlier this week, Hungarian consumers will continue to pay one of the lowest gas prices in the European Union, he told a weekly government press briefing. The current deal is much better than the one it is set to replace, signed in 1995, in terms of the Hungarian state's liabilities, he added.

Gulyás noted that the annual 4.5 billion cubic metres of gas to be received under the new deal will be delivered via two routes: 3.5 billion cubic metres from the south, through a new Serbia-Hungary interconnector, and one billion cubic metres through

Austria. He said the deal was of great significance in view of unprecedented natural gas and electricity price hikes on the global market.

Gulyás highlighted government measures made in recent years which curbed the price of household utility bills by 25% since 2013 irrespective of inflation. Currently Hungarians pay 40% of the average European electricity price, he added. Concerning Hungary's gas reserves, Gulyás said that the country had the seventh largest amount stored in the EU, with 83% of all storage facilities full.

Gulyás said that should the opposition make good on their proposal to unfreeze energy prices, an average Hungarian household would have to pay 386,000 forints (EUR 1,070) more in energy bills annually.

**GULYÁS: LIBE DELEGATES COME TO HUNGARY TO HELP OPPOSITION**

In connection with a visit on Wednesday by a delegation of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), Gulyás said most of its members were expressly in Budapest to "insult Hungary" and "help the opposition". He insisted that their criticisms of Hungary were unfounded.

He added, however, that as a matter of courtesy, the government welcomed the delegation and the justice and interior ministers would meet them. The prime minister, he said, had important matters to attend

to so he would not receive the LIBE delegation.

**GULYÁS ON GERMAN ELECTION, EU FUNDS, OPPOSITION PRIMARIES**

Meanwhile, Gulyás congratulated the winner of the German election, saying that he trusted Germany would continue to be a predictable partner and adding that economic relations were highly important. Gulyás said whatever new coalition emerged was expected to have narrower differences between its parties than ever before, and these parties, he added, were not especially known for their understanding of central Europe.

Whether or not there will be a deal on the EU recovery fund was hard to say but negotiations were ongoing, Gulyás said. On certain issues progress has been made, he said, but the government refuses to adhere to the demands made by the European Commission regarding Hungary's child protection law in their current form since 'there's no basis for such a request under EU law'.

On the topic of the opposition primaries, he said 8% of those eligible to vote had taken part in the first round. He insisted the primaries were for show and the winner would inevitably be the mayor of Budapest, Gergely Karácsony.

Regarding the Covid situation, he said revealing data on fatalities of the unvaccinated would be problematic in terms of personal data protection

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and a sense of decency. But those who have been inoculated have a much lower chance of getting seriously ill and dying, he added.

Commenting on Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's visit to the Czech Republic on Wednesday in reply to a question about whether it would be possible for Hungary to purchase a 51% stake in a Czech company manufacturing military aircraft, Gulyás said: "We're glad if we're able to acquire Hungarian ownership in important foreign companies".

## **GULYÁS ON GAZPROM CONTRACT, ELECTIONS**

Answering a question about Hungary's Gazprom gas contract, he said Hungary would be paying much less to the Russian giant than before, but the price was a business secret. The energy mix, he added, would not change in the future, neither would the proportion of Russian gas as part of it.

In another development, Gulyás said that Ukraine had started taking "revenge" on ethnic Hungarians during Hungary's talks with Russia on gas supplies, and the Hungarian government would thwart association talks between Ukraine and NATO. He said, however, that "we would like to resume dialogue", adding that Hungary would continue to make humanitarian and political gestures towards Ukraine.

Concerning the coronavirus situation, Gulyás said he did not see "an urging demand" to lift restrictions so that by-elections could be held,

but added that it was "inconceivable" that next year's parliamentary elections should be postponed because of a coronavirus-related emergency.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: UKRAINE'S MOVE 'SERIOUS ATTACK' ON HUNGARY'S SOVEREIGNTY**

Ukraine's appealing to the European Commission concerning a recent Hungarian-Russian gas deal is a "serious attack on Hungary's sovereignty", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Prague.

Hungary's gas supplies must be secured by its government and "it is nobody else's business how we do that", the foreign ministry quoted Szijjártó as saying after a Hungarian-Czech government meeting. The minister insisted that "it is an issue of sovereignty", adding that Hungary was not the only country to sign such a contract with Russia.

Building good neighbourly relations is in the interest of the Hungarian government, that is why "it provided Ukrainian soldiers with medical treatment in Hungary, and offered thousands of Ukrainian children, whose parents were impacted by the fights, vacations in the country", the minister said. Szijjártó insisted that Russian gas was being purchased "at a good price and in a reliable way".

Concerning Ukraine's Hungarian community, Szijjártó said allegations that Ukraine's contested language law, restricting the right of ethnic minorities

to use their mother tongue, had been passed because Russia had attacked the country were "clearly nonsensical". Ethnic Hungarians have nothing to do with Ukraine's conflict with Russia, and Ukraine "had better leave them out of it", he said.

"Despite the pledges, nice words and talks that appear constructive, Hungarian minority rights are suppressed step by step," Szijjártó said.

## **ÁDER: ENERGY USE RISING TO UNSUSTAINABLE LEVELS**

Global energy consumption has grown to such an extent that, despite the increase in solar and wind power, energy demand is outpacing sustainable supply, President János Áder said in an interview to public radio in advance of his speech at the plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg on Wednesday afternoon. Green energy in proportion to global energy consumption was 13.4% in 1992 and it only rose to 15.7% by 2019, Áder said. He said capacity expansion would be futile without measures to boost energy efficiency. "The cheapest and cleanest energy is that which is not produced or used," the president said, lamenting that growing energy demand was constantly being met through capacity expansion.

One positive change, he said, is that wind and solar energy is now cheap, though, on the negative

side, 770 million people can't access electricity at all. Based on the UN's sustainable development goals, this must be cut to zero by 2030, and the population is still growing, so large capacity expansion will be needed nonetheless, he added. Given the rise in the average temperature, air conditioning, he noted, makes up an ever greater share of energy consumption. But wasteful heating is also a problem, he said, adding that setting the thermostat a single degree lower could result in a seven percent reduction in consumption.

Áder noted that in Hungary clean energy accounts for 27% of overall energy consumption, compared with the world average of 15.7%, with nuclear energy playing a role alongside renewable energy, which in Hungary accounts for 13% -- a higher ratio than in the Benelux countries. He said the capacity of solar parks in Hungary has doubled each year over the past five years. Also, under the government's bus scheme to replace the bus fleet, 20,000 buses will have gone electric by 2030, he added. The president said solving the storage and transport of green energy was also crucially important. The Planet Budapest 2021 Sustainability Expo and Summit will provide an opportunity to showcase the solutions Hungarian, Czech, Polish and Slovak engineers have come up with to boost efficiency in energy production and use, the president added.

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## **ÁDER: HUNGARY TO ACHIEVE CLIMATE NEUTRALITY BY 2050**

Hungary was among the first countries to ratify the Paris Climate Agreement and has taken measures to ensure that the country will achieve climate neutrality by 2050, President János Áder said in an environmental debate held in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg on Wednesday.

Concerning the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, Áder said that "after six years we are further away from the targets than we were at the time of their adoption ... we must complete what we agreed on". He said that countries referring to themselves as "climate champions", including a number of European countries, had even increased rather than cut their emissions, and warned that unless current tendencies are reversed, emissions of hazardous substances may not decrease but increase by 60% by 2030 compared to the amounts measured in 1990.

"Can we preserve our constructed world as we see it or will we destroy it instead?" the president asked.

Referring to the measures Hungary has taken, Áder said that the country had reduced its emissions by 32% compared to 1990, adding that coal would soon be phased out from the country's energy production. It has been decided that Hungary would double its solar energy capacities each year, and all new buses in

public transport would be electric from 2030 on.

Hungary has doubled its forest areas in the past 100 years and is planning to further increase its woodlands, Áder said. Hungary, in cooperation with neighbouring countries, has developed one million hectares of bio-reserves, the president added.

Áder warned that the number of natural disasters had increased five-fold in the past 50 years and the total damage doubled. Such disasters occurring in succession could lead to economic and political crises, he said. "We are destroying our own life, the current way of life putting our own future and living conditions in jeopardy. We should recognise that climate protection is not about nature, which will adapt and regenerate. The question is us and our own future," he said.

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## **POPE THANKS CARDINAL ERDŐ FOR HOSTING EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS**

Pope Francis thanked Cardinal Péter Erdő, head of the Hungarian Catholic Church, for organising the 52th International Eucharistic Congress, recently held in Budapest, in a letter released to MTI.

Francis voiced his appreciation for "the hidden and quiet cooperation of many - bishops, priests and church staff - , which made it possible for participants to renew their souls in the Eucharist, which is the source of love and faith". The pontiff thanked Erdő for his "proposing good solutions to the problems and

challenges occurring through the organisation of the congress”.

The pope said that he would pray for the cardinal and his archdiocese, and sent his greetings to its priests, monks and nuns, asking for God’s blessing on their mission.

The congress was held in Budapest between September 5 and 12, with Francis celebrating the closing mass in Heroes’ Square.

## **HUNGARY RECORDS 546 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, SIX DEATHS**

Six patients died of a Covid-related illness in the past 24 hours, while 546 new coronavirus infections were registered, [koronavirus.gov.hu](https://www.koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Wednesday. So far 5,884,183 people have received a first jab, while 5,640,410 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 742,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 7,348, while hospitals are treating 529 Covid patients, 81 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 822,072 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,185. Fully 784,539 people have made a recovery. There are 5,048 people in official quarantine, while 6,914,466 tests have been officially carried out.

## **FIDESZ MAINTAINS STEADY LEAD OVER OPPOSITION ALLIANCE IN SEPT - NÉZŐPONT**

If a general election were held this Sunday, Hungary’s ruling Fidesz party

would capture 53% of the vote and the opposition alliance would garner 45%, the Nézőpont Institute said on Wednesday. Nézőpont said the opposition’s primary campaign and the ruling parties’ “Stop Gyurcsány. Stop Karácsony” signature drive “seemed to balance out each other’s effects,” with changes in support remaining within the statistical margin of error. The minuscule changes were in favour of the ruling parties, which Nézőpont said “shows the off-putting effect of [former PM and DK head] Ferenc Gyurcsány”. The united opposition parties have mobilised some 700,000 people, or about a quarter of their base, Nézőpont said. The ruling party’s response, the petition campaign, “performed better, and managed to win over participants more easily,” Nézőpont said. Nézőpont carried out its phone survey of a representative sample of 1,000 adults on Sept. 20-21.

## **TOP COURT REJECTS KLUBRÁDIÓ APPEAL OVER 92.9 MHZ**

The Kúria, Hungary’s supreme court, has ruled against the appeal of Klubrádió over the use of the 92.9 MHz frequency, saying the commercial channel lost the frequency due to a flawed application, the National Media and Communications Authority (NMHH) said on Wednesday. In its ruling on Sept. 28, the Kúria fully rejected Klubrádió’s appeal, saying that NMHH’s procedure had been fully in line with relevant legislation. It upheld earlier decision of the

media authority and the Municipal Court, saying that besides “flaws warranting disqualification” in the application papers, the station’s economic operation ran afoul of legal requirements and the conditions of the tender. The flaws disclosed in the tender warranted immediate disqualification under Hungarian law, and fell beyond the purview of NMHH, the Kúria said.

“Based on those facts, the media authority had no choice but to disqualify the tender. The Kúria also rejected Klubrádió’s argument that the disqualification harmed the principles of freedom of the press and due process,” NMHH said. Those arguments cannot be the baseline for violating the law or preferential treatment, it said. “NMHH or the Municipal Court did not strip Klubradio of the use of the 92.9 MHz frequency; rather, Klubrádió did so itself by submitting a flawed, incomplete and inconsistent tender,” the authority said.

## **AZBEJ: MIGRATION TRIGGERS FURTHER CRISES**

Tristan Azbej, Hungary’s state secretary in charge of aiding persecuted Christians, has called the “western liberal” approach of promoting migration as a solution to a humanitarian crisis “mistaken and dangerous”. Speaking to Hungarian journalists on the sidelines of the autumn session of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly

(PACE), Azbej said Christianity was the most persecuted religion, with over 300 million innocent followers subjected to it. He noted that the Hungarian government had been the first to launch a programme with the aim of helping persecuted Christians around the world. The Hungary Helps programme has so far led to more than a quarter of a million people remaining in their homeland or returning there, he said. Azbej said Hungary's mission is not only to help but persuade the international community to acknowledge Christian persecution and launch an aid scheme modelled on the Hungarian programme. He welcomed the CoE prioritizing the issues of freedom of religion and the protection of persecuted Christian during the current Hungarian presidency.

## **BUDAPEST ASSEMBLY TO SET UP NEW HOMELESS SHELTER**

Budapest is setting up a new homeless shelter to house 100 homeless people overnight at a recently renovated 2,000sqm facility in the city's 9th district, the Budapest Assembly decided in a unanimous vote. The shelter will ease the burden on other facilities in the city, an especially important step in view of a potential fourth wave of the coronavirus pandemic, the assembly said.

The facility will be one of the few in Hungary offering accommodation to couples, it said.

Another 40 places will be set up in containers near a 10th district daytime shelter, the assembly said.

Ahead of the assembly's agenda, Zsolt Láng of Fidesz called on Mayor Gergely Karácsony to observe the principle of transparency, citing the mayor's decision to call for tenders for trams on the last day of the mayor's special powers which enabled him to make unilateral decisions during the coronavirus pandemic. Just before he relinquished his special powers on June 15, Karácsony made a 7.6 billion forint (EUR 21.2m) order for 35 used trams, he noted.

After the mayor's decision, the Public Procurement Authority launched an investigation on the suspicion that the tender was in violation of the principle of fair competition, Lang said.

Kata Tüttő, the deputy mayor for city operations, said the government had cut the city's funding by 80 billion forints and the Budapest transport company in the meantime had to find a way to replace the city's oldest trams, some of which are 50 years old, she said. The public procurement authority's procedure put the success of that process at risk, she insisted.

## **MURAVCHIK IN BUDAPEST: 'SOCIALISM BIGGEST MISTAKE OF MANKIND'**

Socialism has proven to be the biggest mistake of mankind ever

since "Eve took the first bite of that apple", Joshua Muravchik, US essayist, foreign policy expert and neoconservative scholar, said in Budapest on Tuesday evening. In his talk entitled "What happened to socialism?", Muravchik told an event hosted by the 21st Century Institute and the Foundation for a Civic Hungary that while Christian faith had spread to only 10% of the people in the first 300 years of its existence, some 60% of the world's population was living under a Socialist government 150 years after the birth of the concept. Socialism had always gained ground by promising an "easy, ultimate redemption", Muravchik said. He said fascist regimes had also had their roots in Socialism, pointing out that National Socialist Germany had declared May 1, International Labour Day, a national holiday. He said an erosion of Socialism had begun with China's transition to a market-based economy and with Margaret Thatcher's pro-free market policy, culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, Socialism lives on in dictatorships in China, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea, Cambodia, Cuba and Venezuela, he added. As regards the United States, Muravchik said that left-wing Socialists have gained unprecedented influence and President Joe Biden has also partially endorsed their programme.

## **KÁSLER HIGHLIGHTS RUSSIA-CENTRAL EUROPE ONCOLOGY COOPERATION**

Cooperation between the Russian Oncology Society and the Central and Eastern European Academy of Oncology (CEEEOA) is “strong and continuous”, Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler told a press conference. Kásler said that the CEEEOA, set up with Hungarian government financing in cooperation with 20 other countries, was “a significant international body that could

partner with any scientific society or academy throughout the world”.

Oncology cooperation between the CEEEOA and Russia may contribute to the treatment of some 500 million people, Kásler said, adding that its scope included such areas as epidemiology, prevention, early diagnosis, screening, therapy, research, education and clinical research.

Andrey Kaprin, the head of Russia’s national medical radiology research centre (NMRRC), who attended the press conference online, called setting up the CEEEOA a “very wise decision”, and noted the academy’s role in international cooperation concerning efforts against the coronavirus pandemic.

## **HUNGARY WAGES GROW 7.9% IN JULY**

Wages in Hungary grew by an annual 7.9% in July from 3.5% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Wednesday. The data for businesses and institutions with at least five people on payroll show the average monthly wage before tax for full-time employees stood at 433,700 forints (EUR 1,200). The average net wage was 288,400 forints. The gross median wage was 350,000 forints. Calculating with annual inflation of 4.6% in July, real wages increased by 3.2%.