

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Sándor Ulvári

Dog show in World Hunting Expo

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

World Hunting Expo

Russian ambassador opens Russian music festival in Tihany

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: PENSION PREMIUMS TO COME TO HUF 80,000

The prime minister said the government will pay pensioners a 80,000 forint (EUR 222) premium in November.

In view of the Hungarian economy's performance, the government decided to pay that amount also to the 435,000 pensioners who wouldn't be eligible under the pensions act, Viktor Orbán told public broadcaster Kossuth Radio's morning programme. Meanwhile, inflation was higher than expected this year, he noted. While half of pension compensations to offset inflation had been paid by July 1, the second half is due in November, bringing the one-off supplement for certain pensioners to as much as 100,000 forints, he said.

Should the government's economy policy remain successful in the next three months, Orbán said "there is a chance" of a full month's pension premium payment in early February. "We need to work for it, we need to fight for it, but it's not impossible," he said.

GDP growth is sure to reach 5.5% this year, and the government will make good on its promise to refund personal income tax to some 1.9 million adults raising children by mid-February, Orbán said.

ORBÁN: OPPOSITION, IF BACK IN POWER, WOULD SCRAP UTILITY PRICE CUTS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in connection with the opposition's ongoing campaign that its claim that they would align utility prices to the world market in effect means scrapping the government's measures to cut utility prices. "We would be back to where we were before 2010," Orbán told public broadcaster Kossuth Radio's morning programme.

"The problem with Hungarian politics is that we keep arguing about whether the past should return, rather than looking into the future," Orbán said. The well-known players of the Gyurcsány-Bajnai governments, which were in power between 2004 and 2010, are trying to make a comeback, he said. "If they return, so will high prices," he said.

Under leftist governments, large international companies thrived while families struggled, Orbán said. "Between 2002 and 2010, I regularly slammed the Gyurcsány and Bajnai governments for multiplying gas and electricity prices," he said.

When coming to power in 2010, the Fidesz-Christian Democrat government had to scrap that practice and fight international companies and Brussels to freeze utility prices, Orbán said. "This is how we got to a point where our household gas prices are the cheapest in the European Union,

and household electricity prices the second cheapest," he said. Hungary has achieved all this without having its own energy resources, he noted. "Meanwhile, Western Europe is seeing price hikes we couldn't imagine," he said.

Regarding the gas deal signed with Russia's Gazprom earlier this week, Orbán praised the foreign ministry and the negotiating delegation for achieving lower prices than those in the previous contract of 1995.

Orbán also lauded the "fairness" of the Russian partners in "concluding an agreement worthy of reliable partners who respect each other's interests". "The truth is we need gas, and issues of energy supply and energy security should not be conflated with political criticism against Russia," he said.

Regarding Ukraine's statements that Hungary was violating the Hungarian-Ukrainian intergovernmental treaty by agreeing to delivery routes shunning Ukraine, Orbán said Hungary could "unfortunately" not take those protests into account. "I respect Ukraine and wish the Ukrainian people much success, but as regards the matter of gas, we have to consider the interests of Hungarians rather than Ukrainians," he said.

Concerning yesterday's cabinet meeting focusing on Hungary's defence industry developments at a military base in Hajmáskér, in western Hungary, Orbán said it reviewed defence industry development and the army's technological

development, as well as the situation of the recruitment, training and supplies of troops. Decisions on further military developments in 2022 were also made, he said.

"We are living in an age full of dangers, and as we face migration, we need an effective, well-functioning army because we would not be able to protect our borders without the soldiers", Orbán said, adding that Hungary had received very little money from Brussels for border protection.

In connection with the coronavirus pandemic in Hungary, the prime minister said the government had prepared for a fourth wave, noting that the country has 17 million doses of vaccines on stock.

He asked Hungarians to get inoculated, stressing that herd immunity was not an option with "this type of virus - it will seek out those who are not vaccinated". "The risk is in being unvaccinated, not in getting a jab," Orbán said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: MONOPOLISING DEMOCRACY 'ANTIDEMOCRATIC'

Representatives of liberal democracies are trying to "monopolise" the concept of democracy, a "thoroughly antidemocratic approach", Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's foreign minister, told a panel discussion at the Athens Democracy Forum. All countries are democratic as long as their people can

decide their and their nation's fate, a statement by the foreign ministry cited Szijjártó as saying. "Democracy needs no further qualification," he said.

Regarding the rule of law in Hungary, Szijjártó said "lectures and criticism rooted solely in the fact that we have a conservative, patriotic, Christian Democratic government in power."

"Viktor Orbán is the most democratic leader in Europe," he said.

Hungarian foreign policy is driven by representing national interests, with the government aiming to forge pragmatic cooperation without interfering with other countries' domestic affairs, Szijjártó said. Political stability is instrumental in that process, as it enables effective actions and representing national interests, he said.

In the discussion panel also attended by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, a Belarusian opposition leader, Szijjártó said the European Union's foreign policy toolbox has proven to have limited success in similar crises. He called for a thorough discussion on the effectivity of sanctions. Threatening with sanctions will have little effect if the sanctions themselves are ineffective, he said.

Sanctions may, in fact, be "hypocritical while larger member states conclude lucrative deals with countries they continue to lambast loudly," Szijjártó said, citing China as an example, where certain officials are facing restrictions while China was the EU's largest trading partner last year.

Tsikhanouskaya said EU sanctions were the bloc's only means to place

pressure on Belarus. Responding a question, she said she saw all EU member states as democracies.

DK MEP DOBREV WINS FIRST ROUND OF OPPOSITION PRIMARY ELECTION

Klára Dobrev, an MEP of the Democratic Coalition (DK), has won the first round of the opposition's primary election, the official website elovalasztas2021.hu said. The opposition DK, Jobbik, LMP, Momentum, Socialist and Párbeszéd parties held the first round of their primary between September 18 and 28, to choose the joint prime ministerial candidate for the spring general election.

The first round drew 633,811 voters, and ended with Dobrev garnering 34.76% of the vote (214,319 votes). Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony, supported by the Socialists, Párbeszéd and LMP, came second with 27.31% (168,396 votes), followed by Péter Márki-Zay, a candidate of Mindenki Magyarországa Movement with 20.02% (123,453 votes).

According to the primary rules, a second round is to be held if none of the candidates gets at least 50% of the votes among the top three candidates (with at least 15% of the vote in the first round to be eligible), elovalasztas2021.hu said. Jobbik's Péter Jakab (14.1%, 86,909 votes) and Momentum's András Fekete-Győr (3.4%, 20,944 votes) have failed to qualify for the second round.

INTL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS MARKED IN HUNGARY

The Hungarian government has worked over the past eleven years to provide security to elderly Hungarians, a human resources ministry official said at an event marking the International Day of Older Persons on Friday.

"Financial security is a key aspect, which is why this morning's announcement by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the government's decision to pay pensioners an 80,000 forint (EUR 222) premium is of great importance," Bence Rétvári told a conference focusing on families.

The coronavirus pandemic hit the elderly extremely hard, and put their security at even bigger risk, he said.

That is why they were first in line to get the vaccine, while the government banned visitors from elderly care homes and dedicated a timeframe each day for the elderly to shop for groceries, he said.

László Horváth, the spokesman of ruling Fidesz, said in a video message on Facebook that the party "has worked to make life easier also for the elderly" since 2010, noting cutting household utility prices and putting Hungary's economy on a growth track as measures benefitting the elderly.

Erzsébet Schmuck, co-leader of opposition LMP, told an online press conference that the party's main ambition would be, if elected into power in the general election next

spring, to draft a comprehensive long-term policy towards the elderly.

"The elderly do not want premiums and vouchers, but expect the government to provide them with adequate living conditions," she said. Schmuck said "the Fidesz government's policy towards the elderly is that there exists no such policy."

HUNGARY RECORDS NINE COVID DEATHS, 679 NEW INFECTIONS

Nine patients died of a Covid-related illness in the past 24 hours, while 679 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said. So far 5,891,228 people have received a first jab, while 5,651,539 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 784,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab.

The number of active infections stands at 7,539, while hospitals are treating 533 Covid patients, 84 of whom need respiratory assistance.

Since the first outbreak, 823,384 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,199. Fully 785,646 people have made a recovery.

There are 6,476 people in official quarantine, while 6,947,933 tests have been officially carried out.

KSH: GOVT SECTOR DEFICIT 4.2% OF GDP IN H1

Hungary's government sector ran a 1,112 billion forint (EUR 3.1bn) deficit in the first half of the year, equivalent to 4.2% of GDP during the period, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. KSH noted that the deficit was nearly level with the gap in the same period a year earlier; however, relative to GDP, it narrowed by 0.5 percentage point. Revenue rose by an annual 6.1% to 10,502 billion forints. Expenditures climbed 5.5% to 11,614 billion.

KSH: EXPORTS GROW BY 10.6% IN JULY

Hungary's export growth slowed to an annual 10.6% in July to 9.5 billion euros, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The pace of growth was halved from June, KSH said in a second reading of data. Automotive industry output fell

due to shutdowns because of supply chain interruptions, KSH said. Imports climbed 15.5% to 9.8 billion euros, giving Hungary a rare trade deficit of 210 million euros, KSH said.

KSH: PMI SLIPS TO 52.1 IN SEPTEMBER

Hungary's seasonally-adjusted Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) reached 52.1 points in September, edging down from 55.6 in August, the Hungarian Association of Logistics, Purchasing and Inventory Management (Halpim) said.

A PMI over 50 signals expansion in the manufacturing sector.

Among the PMI sub-indices, the new orders index fell from the previous month but remained over 50. The production volume index also dropped but stayed over the 50-point mark. The employment index showed a contraction for the second month in a row, after three consecutive months of expansion.

Delivery times were longer than in August. The gauge of purchased inventories climbed for the fifth month in a row.