

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán with employer and union representatives at the signing ceremony of next year's minimum wage agreement

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Cbank Monetary Council holds rate-setting meeting**

**President Áder meets head of association of cities with county rights**

**EU defence ministers meet in Brussels**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

### ORBÁN: GROWTH 'SHOULD BENEFIT ALL'

Hungary's economic growth is a "shared success" from which everybody, including pensioners, should benefit, Viktor Orbán declared.

At the signing ceremony of next year's minimum wage agreement, the prime minister said that creating a work-based economy was among his government's top priorities. "If we have jobs, we have everything; that is the baseline," he said, adding that the government was continually working to cut taxes on labour, and those taxes had been reduced by 25% since 2010. He said ensuring higher wages and maintaining competitiveness at the same time required "careful consideration", adding that his government had "realised that the representation of people must be the government's focus, and this has yielded a common basis for unions and employers to strike an agreement".

The minimum wage will be worth 200,000 forints (EUR 548) before tax and the minimum wage for skilled workers 260,000 forints. Also, the wages of people in fostered job schemes would also be "significantly" raised, he said.

Between 2002 and 2010, during the previous governments, the real value of the minimum wage decreased by 2%, while in other countries of the region it increased by 30%, Orbán added.

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## **ORBÁN: FIDESZ GOVT OFFERS JOBS, NOT BENEFITS**

The government has made it its priority to “break with the practice of low minimum wages, to offer jobs rather than benefits, ensure that all those able to work have jobs and that labour is financially rewarding...”, Viktor Orbán said.

In the past 12 years the minimum wage in Hungary has been increased by 172%, the prime minister added. Reducing taxes on employers “will create more jobs and higher wages”, he said. The “focal point” of a work-based economy is a “tax system which can improve competitiveness”, Orbán said. “Tax cuts have made it possible to negotiate higher wages each year,” he added.

László Palkovics, the innovation and technology minister, said the Hungarian economy had performed well even during the coronavirus epidemic, adding that “the government’s measures are working” and the national economy was “again among the best performers” of Europe. He also noted that Hungary’s unemployment rate was among the lowest in the EU.

Imre Palkovics, the head of trade union federation MOSZ, welcomed the negotiations leading to the agreement as a “model predictable both for employees and employers”. He added that 300,000

Hungarians currently earned the basic minimum wage and 800,000 received the minimum for skilled labour.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: V4 READY TO SUPPORT POLAND**

Foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group have agreed to provide immediate assistance to Poland to combat the “pressure of migration”, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook. The foreign ministers of the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia held an extraordinary meeting in Brussels on the sidelines of a meeting of the EU council of foreign ministers earlier today, Szijjártó wrote. “We expressed our gratitude and appreciation to Poland for heroically protecting the EU’s external borders, and thus ourselves,” the minister said. He noted that Hungary had faced similar pressure in 2015, and “we could rely on assistance from the V4, and it is natural that the same now applies to Poland.”

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## **MÁRKI-ZAY ‘LESS POPULAR’ THAN LEFT WING - NÉZŐPONT SURVEY**

Péter Márki-Zay, the opposition alliance’s prime ministerial candidate, is less popular than the left wing, according to a Nézőpont poll. Of the 42% of left-wing decided voters, only 24% back the mayor of Hódmezővásárhely, Nézőpont said. Neither has Márki-Zay managed to add

prospective voters to the opposition camp’s base, the think-tank added. Nézőpont insisted that a month after Márki-Zay won the opposition primary, he has not made a national breakthrough in popularity. Fully 56% of committed voters back the ruling Fidesz party, while 42% support the left wing, Nézőpont said. Far from everyone in the camp of voters critical of the government accepts Márki-Zay, the pollster added, with only 24% of active voters finding him prime ministerial material, and only 58% of left-wing voters backing Márki-Zay as a potential prime minister.

Nézőpont’s representative poll of 1,000 adults was conducted by phone from Nov. 8 to 10.

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## **CEE COUNTRIES REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO JOINT FARMING INNOVATION SCHEME**

Eleven central and eastern European countries reaffirmed their commitment to a joint farming innovation initiative on the fifth anniversary of the BIOEAST scheme, Hungary’s agriculture minister said in Brussels on Monday. The BIOEAST scheme aims to boost the region’s share of EU funding for innovation and research in agriculture and help participating countries narrow the gap with the rest of the EU in this area, István Nagy told Hungarian reporters after a meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council. Another aim is to ensure that CEE member states receive more than

the current 5.7% of the bloc's 9 billion euro agriculture research budget, the minister said. "The initiative's signatory central and eastern European countries joined forces ... for a show of strength and to secure as much funding ... for themselves as possible," Nagy said.

Innovation and research are important for competitiveness, as producers have to compete on a single market, he said, adding that all EU citizens needed to have a fair shot at applying for EU funds. The initiative can help generate resources to resolve problems arising from climate change and animal health, and can make it easier for the participating countries to meet animal welfare standards, as they will have a larger knowledge base to work with, he said.

The BIOEAST initiative was launched in 2016 and involves Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

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## **HUNGARY RECORDS 304 COVID DEATHS, 21,060 NEW INFECTIONS**

Altogether 304 patients died of a Covid-related illness over the weekend, while 21,060 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Monday. So far 5,999,516 people have received a first jab, while 5,774,158 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 1,594,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 102,898, while hospitals are treating 5,286

Covid-19 patients, 519 of whom need respiratory assistance.

Since the first outbreak, 960,844 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 32,171. Fully 825,775 people have made a recovery. There are 42,931 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 7,854,966.

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## **ÁDER OPENS INTERNATIONAL PHARMA CONFERENCE DORS 2021**

President János Áder opened an event dubbed International Conference on Advances in Pharmaceutical Drug Development, Quality Control and Regulatory Sciences (DORS 2021) in Budapest on Monday. Áder, who is the chief patron of the event, said that Hungary had considerable traditions in drug development and manufacturing and the country's pharmaceutical industry was among the strongest in Europe. He cited the company Richter Gedeon which celebrated its 120th anniversary this year and currently produces some 200 types of drugs sold in 80 countries.

Béla Merkely, the rector of Semmelweis University, told the event that it attracted representatives from 45 countries, offering a good opportunity for expert meetings, the exchange of international knowledge and establishing new ties. One of the university's main research targets is early diagnostics and therapy, which is closely related to the conference's theme, he added.

Imre Klebovich, the chairman of the event, said that the conference had been postponed twice because of Covid but the current event attracted some 250 experts from five continents.

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## **LMP DEMANDS TIGHTENING COVID RULES**

Opposition LMP demands that the government should tighten coronavirus related measures to slow the spread of the infection during the fourth wave of the pandemic, the party's co-leader said. Entry to restaurants and cultural, sports and leisure facilities should be restricted to people with an immunity card, Erzsébet Schmuck said. Also, detailed data on the number of unvaccinated and vaccinated patients who have died of Covid nationwide should be made public, she said, adding that mandatory mask wearing in densely packed indoor facilities and free weekly testing in schools, social and health-care facilities should be considered, too.

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## **ÁDER DISCUSSES ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CARWASH TECHNOLOGY ON PODCAST**

On his Blue Planet podcast streamed on Monday, President János Áder discussed environmentally friendly carwash technology with the founder and managing director of the company CleanGo Services. Áron Kaczur

said that a biologically degradable concentrate is used and with the help of nanotechnology, a few litres of water is enough to wash a car clean instead of 120-130 litres needed for a conventional carwash. Globally, some 69,000 litres of pure water is being used every second for washing cars and the hazardous chemicals can make their way back in the environment despite water treatment, he added. The Hungarian company has been set up to reduce the biological footprint of carwash, he added. The company is currently in talks with investors and plans to introduce the technology throughout the region and later export it to the whole of Europe, he said.

**MTVA CHIEF HIGHLIGHTS  
TURKEY, HUNGARY PUBLIC  
MEDIA COOPERATION**

Dániel Papp, the chief executive of Hungary’s public media provider MTVA, underlined the importance of cooperation between the Hungarian and Turkish public media services in connection with a recent bilateral agreement signed in Ankara. MTVA signed an agreement with Turkish state media service TRT and Turkish state news agency Anadolu during a high-level Hungarian delegation’s visit to Ankara last week. Under the agreement, the partners will expand cooperation involving joint television productions and between two country’s national news agencies, Papp told public news broadcaster M1.

Papp said that Hungarian and Turkish public media forged strong ties earlier, too, noting a 2+2-year cooperation agreement signed in 2013 that saw the production of thematic programmes on Hungarian and Turkish television.

The Turkish news agency has subscribers in 100 countries and offices in 41, and it publishes news in 13 languages, he said. The Turkish news agency wants to become a global news agency, and Hungary’s news agency and Hungarian public media can be a partner in this endeavour by serving as their base in central Europe. He said MTVA’s Turkish partners have expressed heightened interest in Hungarian economic, investment, tourism and cultural news, and it was agreed that the two news agencies would speed up and increase the volume of their news exchanges. “Hungarian news agency MTI has an English-language service, which is important because it is easier to use for foreign consumers, for instance in Asia, and this could contribute to the strengthening of economic ties, too,” the MTVA head said.

**MATOLCSY SAYS RETHINK  
ON DEFICIT SPENDING  
NEEDED TO RESTORE  
BALANCE**

The way in which Hungary narrows the gap with more advanced economies requires a rethink so that not only is growth the aim but sustainable growth is too, György Matolcsy, the governor of Hungary’s central bank (NBH) wrote

in an op-ed published on Monday. Balance in all areas is necessary when it comes to narrowing the gap, but currently financial balance is most germane to this goal, Matolcsy wrote in the article posted on the mno.hu website. The crisis, the subsequent crisis management and recovery have been accompanied by rapid deterioration in all the balance indicators, Matolcsy said. The high budget and current account deficits are such that Hungary is again trapped in a twin deficit, one that it successfully emerged from after 2010. But now the associated risks are greater, he said. With a budget deficit possibly around 8% of GDP and a public debt ratio of 80% of GDP, coupled with deteriorating exchange rates, the current account situation, which had been positive until recently, is worsening, Matolcsy added.

Higher inflation makes matters worse, the governor said. Global economic developments are doubtless behind the high rate, but domestic budget deficit spending outpacing productivity and competitiveness improvements are also to blame, he added.

Matolcsy said addressing these problems and restoring balance were urgent tasks. Measures that have improved living standards can be maintained, but public investments based on deficit spending which hamper competitiveness must be ditched or delayed, Matolcsy argued. The public debt must be brought down

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faster, the current account restored to health, and a recovery is needed in inflation expectations, he added.

### **FIDESZ CALLS FOR BUDAPEST ASSEMBLY MEETING OVER ALLEGED PLANS TO SELL CITY HALL**

Deputies of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat parties in the Budapest assembly have initiated an extraordinary session of the body to discuss alleged plans to sell the capital's City Hall, group leader Zsolt Láng said on Monday.

Láng said on Facebook that Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, had 15 days to meet the request, though, he added, he should convene the body "without delay" since residents "are entitled to answers to the questions raised in recent weeks". He urged a "meaningful investigation" by a special committee. Láng has insisted that "more and more audio recordings and documents are turning up" concerning such alleged plans, but the mayor was heard "either denying the plan or contradicting himself". Karácsony has denied ever planning to sell City Hall.

### **DK QUERIES GOVT MEMBERS IN CONNECTION WITH SALE OF MOL SHARES**

Did government members and their relatives sell shares in Hungarian oil and gas company MOL shortly before the cabinet's decision to cap fuel prices, is a question the opposition Democratic Coalition says it wants answered. László Varju, the party's deputy leader, told an online press briefing that DK had written to government members in the hope of finding out. József Molnár, MOL's chief executive, sold company shares worth over 200 million forints (EUR 545,000) on Nov.8. "Three days later, Gergely Gulyás, the prime minister's chief of staff, announced the cap on fuel prices which obviously resulted in a weakening of MOL shares," he said.

Varju, who is the chairman of parliament's budget committee, said Molnár's move "raises suspicion of insider trading", adding that state companies "controlled directly by Fidesz and Viktor Orbán are not only unethical, but don't even care whether they appear ethical or not."

### **OVER 22,000 SIGN EUROPEAN PETITION TO SAVE BEES, FARMERS**

Over 22,000 Hungarians have added their signatures to a European citizens' initiative on protecting bees and agricultural producers, the National Election Office (NVI) told MTI on Monday. The required minimum was 15,750 signatures. Most signatures were made online in support of the initiative registered in 2019 promoting "bee-friendly agriculture" and a healthy environment. The initiative seeks to reduce the use of synthetic pesticides by 80% in Europe by 2030, and to ban those chemicals entirely by 2035. Proponents of the initiative also call for measures to restore biological diversity in farmlands, as well as subsidies for ecological farming. According to the organisers, some 1.1 million people have joined the signature drive, and the minimum number of signatures required were collected in 11 countries by the Sept. 30 deadline.

Citizens' initiatives are declared valid if the minimum number of signatures is collected in at least 7 states with at least one million signatures overall.