

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tiborllyés

Speed skaters Alex Varnyú and Sándor Liu Shaolin practising for the Beijing Winter Olympics

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office reports on Nov 2021 industrial producer prices

Coronavirus updates

Athlete of the Year Gala

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ HAILS 2021 INVESTMENT RECORDS

Hungary broke “two great, investment-related records” last year despite negative developments in the global economy, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said on Facebook.

Péter Szijjártó said agreements had been signed on FDI totalling an unprecedented 1,886 billion forints (EUR 5.3bn) during the year. He added that the Hungarian government was providing 270 billion forints in grants to aid those projects. Last year also saw the launch of the greatest greenfield development ever made in Hungary, with South Korea’s SK Innovation building a battery plant worth 680 billion forints, the minister said, adding that altogether eight projects worth over 100 million euros were launched last year, including schemes by South Korean Eco Pro, and Turkey’s Sisecam. Szijjártó pointed to a “significant increase in the weight of the East in the global economy”, and he said the Hungarian government had launched its strategy of Eastern opening in 2010 “just in time”. Fully 60% of Hungary’s foreign investment came from the East last year, with the list of investors led by South Korea, he said. German businesses, however, “continue to have a good time” in Hungary, having seen through 24 out of a total 96 development projects, Szijjártó added.

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MINISTRY: GOVT IN TALKS ON SUPPORTING LOCAL COUNCILS HIT BY MINIMUM WAGE RISE

Hungary's government will continue to compensate local councils for a shortfall in their local business tax revenues, and is engaged in talks on easing the burden on them stemming from the increase in the minimum wage, the finance ministry said in a statement on Wednesday. The government's recently-announced tenders for 140 billion forints (EUR 383.5m) in funding to improve energy efficiency in smaller settlements aims to protect them from rising energy prices, the ministry cited state secretary Péter Banai as saying at a meeting with Károly Szita, head of the Association of Cities with County Rights (MJVSZ). The ministry noted that the government has cut the local business tax for small businesses to 1%. Settlements with populations under 25,000 will be fully compensated for the resulting revenue shortfall, while bigger cities will be compensated depending on their tax capacity, the ministry said. The government is also weighing the possibilities for reducing the burden on local councils stemming from the increase of the minimum wage for unskilled workers to a gross monthly 200,000 forints and for skilled labourers to 260,000 forints, the statement added.

BAKONDI: BORDER POLICE APPREHENDS NEARLY 122,000 VIOLATORS IN 2021

The Hungarian authorities apprehended nearly 122,000 illegal entrants and over 1,200 people smugglers last year, György Bakondi, chief security advisor to the prime minister, told public broadcaster Kossuth Radio. Bakondi noted that 45,000 entered Hungary illegally in 2020. In the first days of January alone, 860 border violators have been detained, he said. "Migration routes into Europe continue to be busy," Bakondi said, adding that "the countries protecting the European Union's external borders" were under enormous pressure. In 2021 a new migration route via Belarus and Poland emerged, he noted, calling this "a grave development". He also warned that many Afghan, Indian and Pakistani migrants were on their way to Europe via Turkey.

OPPOSITION PARTIES PROMOTE REFERENDUM AS 'STEP TO GOVT CHANGE'

Representatives of parliamentary opposition parties have called on the public to support a referendum initiative which they say would be "a step towards changing the government". Péter Márki-Zay, prime ministerial candidate of the united

opposition, called on voters to support the referendum "to stem corruption and poverty". One of the referendum's two questions aims to provide affordable housing for students as opposed to plans to construct a campus of Fudan University at the site. The other question is about the opposition's initiative to extend the period of unemployment benefits from three months to nine, which he said was the shortest in the European Union.

The referendum, he insisted, had a "larger significance" and would help the opposition win "a majority which could release Hungary from the most corrupt government in its history". Gergely Karácsony, mayor of Budapest and co-leader of the Párbeszéd party, said that so far the united opposition has gathered almost 100,000 signatures in support of the proposed referendum.

Hungary, he said, needed "a government which serves the people" rather than "rulers who lord it over them", adding that the six opposition parties had formed an alliance to make that happen.

Democratic Coalition MEP Klára Dobrev said "each signature is as much contribution as a vote" to replacing the government and building a "freer, more democratic Hungary". Momentum leader Anna Donáth said a longer period of unemployment benefits would help to remedy Hungary's "existential problems". Co-leader of the Socialist Party Ágnes Kunhalmi called on citizens to back

plans to build a “student city” instead of creating a campus for China’s Fudan University. LMP co-leader Máté Kanász-Nagy said that the referendum was motivated by a desire to create greater social security. Conservative Jobbik deputy leader Dániel Z. Kárpát said that an opposition government would “steer the country towards western prosperity rather than in the direction of Eastern dictatorships”. He insisted that the ruling Fidesz party was “pseudo-patriotic” and “betrayed Hungary’s young people”. A government run by the current opposition, he added, would offer a rental subsidies, student hostels and “opportunities to prosper in the homeland”.

GOVT OFFICIAL: FAMILIES TO RECEIVE HUF 600 BN IN REIMBURSED TAXES

Tax authority NAV received 835,000 applications for family tax reimbursements last year, under which over 600 billion forints (EUR 1.7bn) will be refunded to taxpayers, András Tállai, state secretary at the finance ministry, told MTI. Tállai noted that families raising children, disabled people and pregnant women are eligible for the tax refund under a “unique” measure taken by the Hungarian government. Personal income tax on basic wages, family assistance, incomes from farm produce and property leases will be refunded, he said. Fully 81% of the applications were tendered online, the state secretary said.

TRÓCSÁNYI RECOMMENDED FOR REFORMED CHURCH UNIVERSITY RECTOR

Leaders of the Reformed Church in Hungary have recommended László Trócsányi for rector of Károli Gáspár University, the university told MTI on Wednesday. The church has initiated that President János Áder should appoint Professor László Trócsányi, representing Hungary’s ruling Fidesz party in the European Parliament, as the university’s rector, the institution’s Senate said in line with the proposal of the General Synod and its head, Bishop Zoltán Balog. Trócsányi was Hungary’s ambassador to Brussels from 2000 to 2004, and to Paris from 2010 to 2014. He served as minister of justice from 2014 until his election as member of the European Parliament in 2019.

LMP CALLS ON GOVT, MEPS TO REJECT EU CLASSIFICATION DRAFT ON GAS, NUCLEAR ENERGY

The opposition LMP party is calling on the government and MEPs to reject the European Commission’s draft taxonomy system in connection with the future use of natural gas and nuclear energy, Erzsébet Schmuck, the co-leader of the party, said on Wednesday. Under the classification system which establishes a list of environmentally sustainable economic activities, natural gas investments

carried out before 2030 with CO2 emissions below a certain threshold and nuclear energy projects licenced before 2045 would be classified as sustainable, Schmuck told an online press conference. The taxonomy, if accepted, would stand in the way of fulfilling the EU’s climate goals, including conversion to renewable energy, Schmuck said. Natural gas and nuclear energy cannot be considered sustainable technologies, she said. Schmuck criticised the Orbán government for “participating heavily” in the European nuclear lobbying to get Brussels to drafting the taxonomy, saying that the Hungarian prime minister “wants to greenwash natural gas and nuclear energy”.

HUNGARY RECORDS 82 CORONAVIRUS DEATHS, 5,270 NEW INFECTIONS

Altogether 82 patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 5,270 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday. So far 6,269,955 people have received a first jab, while 5,990,568 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 3,191,997 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections has risen to 101,457, while hospitals are treating 3,090 Covid-19 patients, 307 of whom are intubated on a ventilator. Since the first outbreak, 1,269,979 have been registered with the virus, while 39,599 deaths have been recorded. Fully 1,128,923 people have made a recovery.

HUNGARY JOBLESS RATE 3.7% IN NOV

Hungary's jobless rate was 3.7% in November, down from 3.9% in October, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The rate covers unemployment among people between the ages of 15 and 74. In absolute terms, there were 179,200 unemployed, 9,400 fewer than in October and 10,200 fewer than in the same month a year earlier. The rolling average jobless rate was 3.6% in the three months to November. KSH noted that data from the National Employment Service (NFSZ) show there were 242,000 registered jobseekers at the end of November, down by 18.3% from twelve months earlier. The employment rate for the 15-74 age group was 63.7% in November, down from 63.8% in October. In absolute terms, there were 4,677,500 employed, 10,300 fewer than in October but 45,100 more than twelve months earlier. The number of

economically active people in the age group stood at 4,856,600, an activity rate of 66.1%.

Analysts told MTI that Hungary was recording near full employment, and robust growth in the labour market may soon taper off. Gábor Regős of the Századvég Institute highlighted the increasing labour shortage, adding that only by creating more value-added jobs could the economy expand further. András Horváth of Takarékbank noted that a market characterised by labour shortages and strong wage competition last seen a year and a half ago had re-emerged towards the end of the year, with associated upside risks to inflation.

DUBAI EXPO HUNGARIAN PAVILION DRAWS OVER 400,000 VISITORS

The Hungarian pavilion at the 2020 World Expo in Dubai has attracted 400,000 visitors since the fair opened in October, the Hungarian Tourism

Agency (MTÜ) said on Wednesday. The 400,000th visitor was a member of a family visiting from Abu Dhabi. The pavilion, dubbed Aqua Roots of Hungary, showcases water, a resource in which Hungary is rich. It is the largest wooden structure in the entire Persian Gulf region. Expo 2020 Dubai will run until the end of March this year. It had to be postponed for a year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

HUNGARY SEES RECORD HIGH TEMPERATURES

Hungary has seen unseasonably warm weather in the past few days, and a daily record of above 15°C was broken on Tuesday, the Hungarian Meteorological Service (OMSZ) said. The mercury hit 15.7°C in Drávaszabolcs, in southern Hungary, 0.1°C higher than the daily temperature recorded in Ásotthalom in 1949, OMSZ said. A cold front is expected to reach the country on Thursday, however, OMSZ said.