

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Mallards in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary

MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Year-end celebrations

TOP STORY

HUNGARY ATTRACTS RECORD INVESTMENTS IN 2022

Foreign direct investment in Hungary reached a record 6 billion euros or 2,600 billion forints this year, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Wednesday.

The list of investors was topped by South Korea in terms of the volume of investments, and by Germany in terms of the number of jobs created, the minister said on Facebook. Szijjártó qualified the structure of FDI "healthy", with 48% of investment coming from the East, and 42% from the West. Hungarian investments account for about 10% of the total, the minister said. The majority of investments were in the electric vehicle industry, he added. Hungary's goal has to be bypassing a recession and maintaining economic growth, he said. This can only be done by bringing more and more investment to the country, he said. Szijjártó said the EV industry attracted 73% of investments in Hungary this year. Altogether 43% had to do with electric battery production, while 30% were auto industry investments focused on the production of electric or hybrid vehicles, he added. The food industry attracted 10% of investments, while 8% of investments went to service centres, the minister said. Szijjártó emphasised the role of the government's system of investment promotion in this year's record.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY MEETING POINT FOR EASTERN, WESTERN ECONOMIES

Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, on Wednesday emphasised the Hungarian government's efforts in making Hungary a meeting point for the Eastern and Western economies. He identified the electric vehicle industry as the true meeting point of the East and the West, adding that the major Western car manufacturers would soon shift their focus to electric vehicles. This requires electric batteries which are primarily manufactured in the East by China and South Korea, Szijjártó said. "Hungary by now has become the European champion of the automotive sector's transition to electric vehicles," he said. And because construction of Europe's biggest electric battery plant is not set to get under way until early next year, "Hungary is also a realistic candidate for the world championship title," he added.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said the ongoing war and the "flawed sanctions" imposed by Brussels in response to it were pushing the European economy towards a recession, adding that the longer the war went on and the more sanctions Brussels approved, the more difficult things would get for the European economy.

DEFMIN: REFORM OF ARMED FORCES TO CONTINUE IN 2023

Next year's budget ensures the continued reform of Hungary's Armed Forces and will enable the country to bring defence spending up to 2% of GDP a year earlier than originally planned, in line with Hungary's commitment to NATO, the defence minister said on Wednesday. Hungary's Defence Fund guarantees that the country will be able to purchase all equipment necessary for effective defence and "restore the prestige of Hungarian troops," the ministry cited Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky as saying in a statement. The Armed Forces will prioritise R&D&I, and contribute to a robust economy by boosting the defence industry, the minister said. In line with NATO requirements, over 20% of defence spending will go towards development in 2023, he added. Next year, development will focus on soldiers' individual and operational equipment, the integration of the equipment purchased so far, and the introduction of new strike technology, he said.

Defence innovation is in the interest of Hungary's national security as it eases the country's dependence on imports and boosts supply security, he said. Defence development will also improve Hungary's position within NATO, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said, noting that Hungarian Gripen had protected the Baltic airspace for four months this

year, and the Kosovo KFOR mission operated under Hungarian command. One of the four task forces set up in response to the Ukraine-Russia war was created in Hungary, under Hungarian command, he added.

GULYÁS: GOVT WELCOMES FISCAL COUNCIL'S APPROVAL OF DRAFT BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, on Wednesday welcomed the Fiscal Council's unanimous approval of the government's draft of amendments to the 2023 budget. Gulyás said the budget earmarks more than 2,600 billion forints (EUR 6.5bn) for keeping household utility bills low. The special legal order gives the government the power to amend the budget, Gulyás told MTI, adding, at the same time, that the draft amendments will be submitted to parliament for approval in the first half of January. Though the special legal order allows for swift action, "this can in no way restrict the authority of parliament," he added.

Next year will be the second of the continuing war and the "sanctions-fuelled energy crisis", Gulyás said. The war and the effects of the sanctions imposed by Brussels are a danger to Hungarian families, the Hungarian economy and Hungarian jobs, he added. Gulyás said the most important task in 2023 would be to protect Hungarian families and jobs and maintain economic growth.

Hungary's utility protection fund has to be topped up so that household utility prices can remain capped up to average consumption, he said, adding that the fund was also used to finance support for companies in energy-intensive sectors. "The 2023 budget is therefore the budget of utility protection," he said. Next year's budget will also ensure support for families and guarantee that the value of pensions can be preserved, Gulyás said.

PRESIDENT PARDONS SEVEN DEFENDANTS IN BUDAHÁZY CASE

Katalin Novák, Hungary's president, has granted a pardon to seven of the 17 defendants in the case of right-wing activist György Budaházy and his accomplices who had been convicted of carrying out terrorist activities and other crimes more than a decade ago, the president's office said in a statement on Tuesday. According to the charges, Budaházy set up a terrorist organisation called the Hungarian Arrows to carry out attacks against lawmakers of the then ruling Socialist-Free Democrat alliance between 2007 and 2009. Budaházy and his accomplices were also charged with throwing petrol bombs at the homes of Socialist and Free Democrat politicians and their parties' headquarters as well as Molotov cocktails at gay bars and outlets, such as a ticket office in Budapest's 13th district.

In the summer of 2016, the municipal court of Budapest sentenced Budaházy to 13 years in prison. Of the 17 defendants, 15 were sentenced to between 5 and 13 years in prison each for terrorist activity. This March, in the retrial of the case dismissed in 2018, the municipal court of Budapest sentenced Budaházy to 17 years in prison. Five other accomplices were handed prison sentences of more than ten years, and others of around five years.

In its statement, the president's office said that Novák had received the defendants' plea for mercy in mid-December, noting that "legal proceedings are still ongoing against 17 people after 13 years and the president regrets that no binding court ruling has yet been meted out" during this long time. According to the statement, the president decided "after a careful consideration to separate the cases" of defendants who were either acquitted by the lower court or those whose acts were judged by the court "of being of lesser weight". The time spent under pre-trial detention and the several years of "misery" have caused a lot of suffering to those in question and their families, the statement quoted Novák as saying, adding that "in the case of seven persons I have decided to grant a presidential pardon". As regards the pleas of the other defendants, the president said, "the correct thing for me to do is to take a decision once a binding ruling is at hand, considered the gravity of the charges against them".

RYANAIR BRUSSELS- BUCHAREST FLIGHT MAKES EMERGENCY LANDING AT BUDAPEST INTL AIRPORT

Ryanair's flight from Brussels to Bucharest on Tuesday evening made an emergency landing at Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport after the detection of a technical fault, Budapest Airport said. The flight with 176 passengers and a crew of 9 on board landed safely at the airport and all passengers and the crew disembarked safely. An immediate inspection revealed no signs of fire on the aircraft. The airline was to send a relief plane to take passengers to the final destination later in the evening.

MAGYAR POSTA TO REOPEN SEVERAL POST OFFICES IN JAN

Several post offices will be reopened in January, after operator Magyar Posta's "intense and constructive" talks with local authorities, the company told MTI on Wednesday. Magyar Posta announced late in October that it would temporarily shutter 366 post offices in 210 settlements to reduce energy consumption. Besides the company's efforts to make internal operations more energy efficient, post offices and local authorities have agreed to "handle increased energy costs together"

after a leadership change in the company earlier this year, Magyar Posta said. Talks are ongoing on the exact number and location of the post offices to be reopened, the statement said.

HUNGARY RECORDS 4,397 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 56 DEATHS LAST WEEK

Fully 4,397 new infections were confirmed last week, while there were 56 fatalities in connection with Covid-19, according to the website koronavirus.gov.hu, which published data from last week on Wednesday. The number of active infections stands at 13,571, the website said. Currently, 386 coronavirus patients are being treated in hospital, 19 intubated on a ventilator.

Altogether 6,420,813 people have been vaccinated against the coronavirus, with 6,207,249 having received a second jab, 3,903,679 a third, and 413,303 a fourth. The number of registered infections since the start of the pandemic has reached 2,185,816 in Hungary, while there have been 48,495 deaths. Fully 2,123,750 people have made a recovery.

MORE THAN 11,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON TUESDAY

Fully 5,807 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Tuesday, while 5,253 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 218 people, ORFK said on Wednesday.

SINGLE-WAGONLOAD SUBSIDIES KEEP 5 M TONNES OF FREIGHT OFF ROADS

Rail freight volume supported by government subsidies for single-wagonload transport has reached 5 million tonnes, state-owned railway company MÁV said on Wednesday. The subsidies rechannelled several hundred thousand lorry loads to railways, reducing emissions by 79,000 tonnes, MÁV said. MÁV, together with peers CER Hungary, GYSEV Cargo, Floyd -- now called EUROGATE Rail Hungary -- and Rail Cargo Hungaria, signed a framework contract with the government in November 2021 on support for loss-making single-wagonload transport which allows

individual wagons from different consignors to be bundled into a single train. The subsidies come to an annual 6.4 billion forints (EUR 15.9m) for the period 2022-2025. MMV Magyar Magánvasút has since joined the subsidy scheme.

GEORGIAN NATIONAL INJURES TWO POLICEMEN DURING ARREST ON SUSPICION OF PEOPLE SMUGGLING

A Georgian national was arrested in Budapest late on Tuesday, after failing to stop for police control and injuring two police officers as he attempted to escape. Police discovered 35 illegal entrants in the loading area of his small lorry, the Budapest police headquarters said. Late on Tuesday, police wanted to control a small lorry driving on the M1 highway with Polish licence plates, the statement said. The lorry drove on and slammed into ten vehicles in the ensuing chase, it said. Police forced it to stop in Budapest, where the driver slammed into a police car before trying to flee on foot. He was arrested shortly after. The 35 illegal migrants in the back of the lorry said they were of Moroccan and Syrian origin.