

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Hungary PM, wife paying last respects to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in Vatican City

MTI/PM's press office/Cher Vivien Benkő

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Stats offices publishes figures on October 2022 wages

TOP STORY

ORBÁN PAYS LAST RESPECTS TO POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his wife, Anikó Lévai, paid their respects at the catafalque of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in St Peter's Basilica in Rome on Tuesday.

The prime minister and his wife prayed for the late pope and for mourning Christians, Bertalan Havasi, the PM's press chief, said. The funeral service of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who died on Saturday, will be held in Vatican City on Thursday. Hungarian President Katalin Novák will be in attendance, along with other heads of state and government. The president will be accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén, according to information from the president's office. In a telegram of condolences sent to the Vatican on Saturday, Orbán said the late pope would be remembered for his courage and commitment for the dialogue among religions.

The prime minister recalled his private audience with Benedict XVI in 2010, saying the talks on faith, the sanctity of family and of the protection of "our common Christian roots" had shaped his views since.

"Now, at a time of bereavement, we join in the prayers and express our heartfelt condolences to the clergy of the Catholic Church and its congregation," Orbán said in the message.

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FINANCE MINISTER: PUBLIC DEBT FELL FASTER THAN PROJECTED

Public debt fell faster than projected last year and the deficit target was fulfilled, the finance minister said on Tuesday. Mihály Varga said on Facebook that public debt was 73.5% of GDP last year as against 76.8% in 2021. The budget deficit was 4.9% of GDP, in line with plans, or 6.1% taking into consideration natural gas reserves, he added. Balance indicators are expected to continue improving this year, with projections of decreasing public debt and lower deficit, he said.

GOVT SPOX: PENSIONS RAISED IN PROPORTION WITH 2023 INFLATION FORECAST

Pensions were hiked by 15% from January 1, raising average pensions by 27,120 forints (EUR 67) per month, government spokeswoman Alexandra Szentkirályi said in a video on Facebook on Tuesday. Including the 13th month pension, average pensions will grow by 352,560 forints this year, she said. The raise was calculated to offset estimated inflation this year, and pensions will be supplemented should it be higher than anticipated, she added. Price caps on basic foods will be maintained until the end of April, she said. The caps on utility prices also help pensioners, she added.

GOVT TO HELP MUNICIPALITIES PAY ENERGY BILLS

The government has decided to spend a total 44 billion forints (EUR 109.6m) helping local governments pay their energy bills in view of "energy costs increasing manifold due to the war [in Ukraine] and Brussels sanctions", the Prime Minister's Office said on Monday. The funds are aimed at 138 municipalities in the provinces and 17 district governments in Budapest with more than 10,000 residents, after an earlier measure helping smaller communities. The PM's Office said beneficiaries of the programme were expected to make their operations more economical and prepare an assessment of their options.

CHRISTDEM LAWMAKER: RULING PARTIES 'HOLDING ELDERLY IN ESTEEM'

The ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat coalition "holds the elderly in high esteem", while "if the leftist parties were in power there would be no 13th month pensions nor pension hikes, and there would be no cap on utility and food prices," Christian Democrat lawmaker Lőrinc Nacsa said in a video published on Tuesday. Nacsa pointed to the "hard times in Europe resulting from the war in Ukraine and the ill-advised sanctions by Brussels" but added that Hungary's seniors could always rely on assistance from the ruling

parties. Nacsa said the government was committed to retaining the 13th months pension, and also noted that seniors had been given a 15% pension hike as of January 1.

The elderly "cannot expect help from the Left", Nacsa said, and insisted that leftist governments had "crucified" seniors through scrapping the earlier system of 13th month pensions and "letting pensions lose their value". "They increased the price of gas threefold and doubled the price of electricity, they introduced pay-for health services and introduced an exorbitant VAT on food products," he said.

DK: BUDAPEST DISTRICT MAYORS TO FILE LAWSUIT ON UTILITY SUPPORT

District mayors of opposition DK in Budapest will file a lawsuit alleging that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán "rejected utility support to some districts as political revenge", the party said on Tuesday. Budapest group leader Sándor Szaniszló said in a statement that the government had rejected paying utility support to around a third of Budapest residents or 620,000 people, "purely because they voted for opposition-led local councils". Five districts led by DK mayors and the 9th district of Budapest are not getting anything from the support totalling at 8 billion forints (EUR 20m), partly paid from taxes collected from Budapest residents, he added. DK mayors were

originally planning to negotiate with the government commissioner in charge of distributing utility compensation but this has been “unlawfully denied them”, he said.

LMP CALLS FOR STEPS AGAINST BURNING HOUSEHOLD GARBAGE

The opposition LMP has called on the government to take immediate steps against the burning of household waste as heating fuel. Party board member Örs Tetslák told a press conference on Tuesday that air pollution led to some 10,000 premature deaths annually and to nearly 100,000 illnesses. Tetslák, who is also the deputy mayor of Érd, near Budapest, said the practice to burn household waste for heating purposes had been spreading with the growing energy crisis.

Poisonous fumes from burning painted window frames or bales of clothing cause cancer, heart failure and are extremely dangerous for children, Tetslák warned. He called on the government to phase out coal and lignite heating and to ban selling bad quality firewood and burning garden waste. The government

should also launch a programme to revamp the energy use of low-income homes, and to consider income levels when setting energy prices. He also called for reinstating the right of local authorities to take meaningful steps against polluters. According to surveys, only some 15% of those heating with garbage do so for purely economic reasons. One-third of polluters do so due to lack of information or carelessness, he added.

KSH: GOVT SECTOR DEFICIT 3.7%/GDP IN Q1-Q3

Hungary's government sector had a 1,824.9 billion forint (EUR 4.5bn) deficit in Q1-Q3, equivalent to 3.7% of GDP, preliminary data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) on Tuesday show. Government sector revenue came to 20,047.5 billion forints during the period, up by an annual 24.7%, while expenditures rose by 19.7% to 21,872.5 billion.

In the third quarter, the government sector deficit reached 931.7 billion forints, 5.4% of GDP. Government sector revenue climbed by 20.3% to 6,724.0 billion forints and expenditures increased by 22.3% to 7,655.7 billion.

TEMPERATURE RISES TO RECORD HIGH FOR JAN 2

The warmest January 2 on record was registered in Fülöpháza Hattyús-szék, in central Hungary, on Monday, with the mercury hitting 18.2 C., according to the Hungarian Meteorological Service (OMSZ). The previous record of 16.4 C. had been measured in 1992 in Szentgotthárd Farkasfa, in the west, OMSZ said on Facebook. A cold front is expected to reach the country on Tuesday, OMSZ said, adding, however, that temperatures are still set to remain warmer than what is normally expected for this time of year.

MORE THAN 14,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY

Fully 4,820 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 9,727 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 176 people. Altogether 96 refugees, 30 children among them, arrived in Budapest by train, ORFK said on Tuesday.