

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Sándor Palácz/Vatican Media

Pope Francis receives President Novák in Vatican City

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office publishes employment, retail trade figures for Nov 2022

Events related to the war in Ukraine

LMP presser on social sector's problems

TOP STORY

HUNGARY ISSUES USD 4.25BN OF FX BONDS

Hungary has issued forex bonds worth a total 4.25 billion dollars, the finance minister has announced.

Offers for the bonds came to over 12 billion dollars, "showing investor confidence in the Hungarian economy remains strong", Mihály Varga said on Facebook. He noted Hungary's year-end state debt ratio fell to 73.5% of GDP at the end of last year from 76.8% at end-2021, while the budget deficit reached 4.9% of GDP, instead of 5.9% expected earlier. Varga also said the ratio of forex debt within Hungary's state debt would remain under the 30% threshold. "We count on a further reduction in the public debt and a lower deficit this year, too," the minister said.

The State Debt Management Centre (ÁKK) said it had issued 1.5 billion dollars of five-year bonds, 1.5 billion dollars of ten-year bonds and 1.25 billion dollars of 30-year bonds on Wednesday. The yield on the 5-year bond is 6.27%, 240bps over the benchmark US Treasury yield, while that on the 10-year bond is 6.51%, 280 bps above. The 30-year bond is 7.10%, 325bps above. Part of the proceeds will be used to buy back USD bonds maturing in 2023 and 2024, and the rest will go toward "general financing purposes".

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PRESIDENT NOVÁK ATTENDS POPE BENEDICT'S FUNERAL MASS

President Katalin Novák and her husband István Veres attended the funeral mass of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI together with Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén in Rome on Thursday, the presidential Sándor Palace said. Novák, her husband and Semjén were received by Pope Francis ahead of the ceremony, the president's office told MTI. The Secretariat of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference (MKPK) said it was represented at the funeral by Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, András Veres, Bishop of Győr and head of the MKPK, and Tamás Tóth, the Conference's secretary. The ceremony was also attended by Greek Catholic Metropolitan Fülöp Kocsis, Ábel Szócška, bishop of Nyíregyháza, and Lajos Varga, auxiliary bishop of Vác, as well as several Hungarian priests and pilgrims, they added.

ORBÁN HOLDS TALKS IN SLOVENIA

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held talks with former counterpart Janez Jansa, head of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), in Slovenia on Wednesday afternoon, Orbán's press chief said. The talks focused on current bilateral and international affairs, Bertalan Havasi said.

DK: 'DIRTY DEAL' BETWEEN ORBÁN AND PUTIN CAUSING 'HUNGARIAN GAS RESERVES TO RUN DRY'

The Democratic Coalition opposition party has accused Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of striking a "dirty deal" with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Hungarian gas reserves were "running dry" as a result. László Varju, DK's shadow minister for energy and utility affairs, said in a statement on Thursday that the government had "failed to arrange the purchase of gas other than Russian gas and has been buying gas from Russia for several times of the world market price" as a result of the "Orbán-Putin deal". "While other European Union member states are not allowing themselves to be blackmailed, and refuse to finance Putin's war, Orbán has opted for dependence on Russian gas," he said. "As a result, Hungarians are paying seven times the price of gas, while gas reserves are running dry in the middle of winter," he added. He said the shadow government was "Hungary's only hope" when it came to ensuring affordable gas supplies for everyone.

LMP CALLS FOR REPEAL OF DECREE ALLOWING MINES ON NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

Opposition LMP has called on the government to immediately repeal a decree that allows for mines to

be opened on nature conservation sites. LMP also wants the "green ombudsman" to look into the decree issued on Dec. 30 allowing for the opening and expansion of opencast mines in ecological corridors as well as the opening of mines to be used for energy-related purposes on Natura 2000 sites, Máté Kanász-Nagy, the green party's deputy group leader, told a press conference. Kanász-Nagy said the decree would allow for the harming of nature conservation sites for the purpose of expanding mines, urging Gyula Bándi, the deputy ombudsman for the protection of future generations, to do everything in his power to have the decree repealed. Opencast mines destroy the landscape and reduce biodiversity, Kanász-Nagy said, calling it "absurd" that the government had issued the decree citing the state of emergency declared over the war.

SOME 14,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON WEDS

Fully 5,988 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Wednesday, while 7,930 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 286 people. Altogether 102 refugees, 55 children among them, arrived in Budapest by train, ORFK said on Thursday.

CORONAVIRUS - 2,921 NEW INFECTIONS, 51 DEATHS LAST WEEK

Fully 2,921 new infections were confirmed last week, while there were 51 fatalities in connection with Covid-19, the Coronavirus Press Centre told MTI on Thursday. The number of active infections stands at 13,070, they said. Currently, 368 coronavirus patients are being treated in hospital, 9 intubated on a ventilator. Altogether 6,420,824 people have been vaccinated against the coronavirus, with 6,207,270 having received a second jab, 3,903,721 a third, and 413,792 a fourth. The number of registered infections since the start of the pandemic has reached 2,188,737 in Hungary, while there have been 48,546 deaths. Fully 2,127,121 people have made a recovery.

PPI FALLS TO 37.0% IN NOV

Factory gate prices in Hungary rose by an annual 37.0% in November, driven by dearer energy and commodities, and the weaker forint, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Thursday. Prices for domestic sale climbed 63.7%, boosted by energy prices, while export prices rose by 23.4%. In a month-on-month comparison, factory gate prices edged down 0.8% as prices for domestic sale rose by 1.6% but export prices fell by 2.0%.

ROMANIANS SOUGHT IN EUROPE-WIDE ELECTRONICS HEISTS NABBED WITH HELP OF HUNGARY POLICE

Four Romanian nationals suspected of stealing high-value electronics from stores across Europe were arrested in an international operation after being identified by police in Zala County, in western Hungary. The four men robbed an electronics store in Zalaegerszeg in October 2021 by tearing down its back wall, taking with them around 38 million forints (EUR 95,510) worth of mobile phones, tablets, smart watches and headphones, Márton Vincze of the Zala County police said. The suspects were caught on surveillance cameras buying the tools they would use to break into the Zalaegerszeg store in Siófok, in south-western Hungary. Investigators determined that the suspects had arrived in Hungary from Austria on the day they purchased their tools. After robbing the Zalaegerszeg store they left Hungary for Romania. Zala County police were able to identify the suspects after reaching out to the authorities of several European countries, discovering that they were wanted for similar break-ins in France, Germany, Austria, Czechia and Slovakia.

Izabella Karmazsin Srágli of the Zala County police headquarters said

representatives of the Hungarian, Romanian and other European authorities met in The Hague last April after the four men were identified. They were arrested in a series of raids in Romania on Dec. 6 under a European arrest warrant with the help of Zala County police, she said.

OVERLY MILD WEATHER 'HARMFUL' TO AGRICULTURE

Overly mild weather in Hungary is harmful to the country's agriculture, the National Meteorological Service said on its website on Thursday. Last week saw unseasonably mild weather and record high temperatures for this time of year in Hungary, with 15 C. recorded over several days in the south-east, while ground frost has been sparse so far this winter, the weather forecasters said, adding that it is expected that mild weather will continue over the next 8-10 days. Persistently mild weather disrupts the vegetation cycle, it added, and in the absence of cold, pests and pathogens stay relatively abundant, while fruit trees are also endangered as sap circulation has already started; normally frosts slow down and stop this process, whereas in the south-west, hazelnut trees have already started to bloom. Meanwhile, a large amount of rain is expected next week, and drier soil will be replenished, the forecasters said.