

PHOTO OF THE DAY



PM Viktor Orbán in talks with Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Budget and Administration

MTI/Prime Minister's Press Office/Zoltán Fischer

UPCOMING EVENTS

Parliament meets

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

FINMIN: EC 'OWES SIGNIFICANT SUMS' TO HUNGARY

The European Commission "owes significant sums of money" to Hungary, and is hindering the country's economy, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said after talks with Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Budget and Administration.

Besides calling for its funding from the European Union's Resilience and Recovery Facility (RRF) to be released, Hungary also "expects answers on how the Commission is planning to support the countries protecting the borders of the Schengen Area in financing growing migration-related costs," he said. The RRF has "not fulfilled its initial promise", he said, arguing that five member states had yet to receive funding. Had Hungary received the monies it is entitled to, its economy would have grown by more than 5% last year, Varga said. Still, Hungary's economy expanded by 4.6% while the budget deficit and the state debt were reduced, he said. Meanwhile, "our expenses in border protection will be over 650 billion forints [EUR 1.7bn] this year, of which the EU has only contributed some 1% since 2015," he said. Regarding support for Ukraine, Varga told Hahn that a loan taken out jointly by EU countries was not the long-term solution. Earlier on Tuesday, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had talks with Hahn in his office.

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DEFMIN CALLS FOR BOOSTING HUNGARY MILITARY’S CAPABILITIES

Lieutenant General Gábor Böröndi, who has been nominated as the next Commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces, is the right person to upgrade the military’s capabilities from a tactical to an operational level, the defence minister said on Tuesday. Speaking to the media after Böröndi’s hearing before parliament’s defence and law enforcement committee, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said both he and the government were expecting a protracted war in Ukraine. The Hungarian government is in favour of a ceasefire and peace, but the country, in a military sense, must be prepared for a protracted conflict on Europe’s eastern border, he added.

The Hungarian Armed Forces must be prepared for this, the minister said, adding that in line with the principle of “having the right people in the right place at the right time”, he had proposed that Böröndi lead the military from the tactical to the operational level. The Hungarian Armed Forces, as a member of NATO, must put its new equipment into service, develop new combat procedures as well as a new organisational culture on its way to reaching a new state of combat readiness, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said.

The minister thanked Romulusz Ruszin-Szendi, who last week was relieved of his duties as Commander

of the Hungarian Armed Forces, for his work, saying he had put the military “on a new path” over the last two years. Meanwhile, he underlined Böröndi’s “outstanding” military career, noting he had served as deputy army commander and most recently had represented Hungary in NATO. This, he said, meant that Böröndi had the deepest and most up-to-date knowledge of and relations with the defence alliance. Szalay-Bobrovniczky also underlined the importance of Hungary’s role given its geographical position and ongoing military upgrade in NATO’s “biggest ever adaptation process”.

BÖRÖNDI AIMS TO BUILD ‘CAPABLE, COMMITTED’ ARMED FORCES

Lieutenant General Gábor Böröndi, who was nominated for Commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces last week, said at his hearing before parliament’s defence and law enforcement committee that his main aim would be the “mental renewal” of the Armed Forces, as well as setting up a capable, committed force that is “operational within NATO too.”

Hungary and Ukraine’s other neighbours are in a “pre-war state”, which should influence the training of its Armed Forces, he said. Hungary’s national army is a well-prepared and well-trained and equipped member of NATO, and the next step is to create a force that is able to exert significant impact on an operational and strategic level, Böröndi said. Voluntary reservists

will play an important role in protecting regional strategic points, and cutting off the enemy’s logistical lines, he said. The task requires a flexible approach employing “a flexible unit of local patriots who are protecting their own localities,” he said. Combat training and strategic reconnaissance are key areas, Böröndi said. At the same time, nuclear deterrence must be re-introduced into military education, he said. Logistics must be developed so it can cater for fighting units, he said. Böröndi said he saw missions as a key terrain for assessing the progress in the training of troops.

Előd Novák of the opposition Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) party said that while the aim was to increase the number of troops, the forces had recently relieved of their duties a large number of servicemen as part of a “rejuvenation programme”, suggesting that army commander Romulusz Ruszin-Szendi had been relieved of his duties for similar reasons. In response to Novák’s question, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky, who was also present, said that Ruszin-Szendi had been relieved of his duties “due to the Armed Forces proceeding from tactical to operational mode”.

PRESIDENT TO ATTEND KING CHARLES III’S CORONATION

President Katalin Novák on Tuesday said she will attend the coronation ceremony of King Charles III. Sharing the official invitation card she received,



Novák said in a post on Facebook that she will travel to London on Friday “to attend the Coronation of Their Majesties in Westminster Abbey” taking place the following day. “I would like to express my high regard for the Royal Couple, and further strengthen the alliance between Hungary and the United Kingdom...” the president said.

MINISTRY: ECONOMY TO AVOID RECESSION THIS YEAR, EXPAND BY 4% IN 2024

Hungary's economy will avoid recession this year, expanding by 1.5% and by 4% in 2024, the finance ministry said in an update of the country's Convergence Programme submitted to the European Commission. In a statement issued on Tuesday, the finance ministry said Hungary had faced “a number of economic policy challenges” since the last Convergence Programme update was submitted a year earlier because of the “perilous international environment”.

Disinflation will accelerate in the second half of the year, with inflation falling into single digits by the end of the year, the statement said. The updated programme shows GDP growth accelerating to 4% in 2024 and climbing over 4% for the rest of the forecast horizon. It shows unemployment staying below 4% in the coming years. The document affirms this year's budget deficit target of 3.9% of GDP and calculates with a falling deficit in the following years. The public debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to fall to 63.9% by 2025, the ministry said.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINISTER DISCUSSES MANDATORY FOOD DISCOUNTS WITH RETAILERS

Economic Development Minister Márton Nagy discussed a proposal on requiring larger supermarkets to offer regular discounts on selected products in a number of categories, at a meeting with retailers and professional associations on Tuesday, his ministry said. The consultations focused on finalising the details of the draft decree, the economic development ministry said in a statement. The mandatory discounts would be in force from June 1 until September 30, they said, noting that products must be selected for the special offers on a weekly basis.

The regulation will classify basic foodstuffs into 20 categories, including poultry, cheese, bread, baked goods, vegetables, fruit, rice and other cereals, the statement noted. Grocery chains will have to discount a product of their choosing from all 20 categories by at least 10% from the lowest price in the previous 30 days.

Nagy said the government devoted special attention to cooperation and consultations with state and market players, adding that the government will take into consideration recommendations made by its partners when finalising the discount regulations. Nagy and agriculture ministry state secretary for the food industry and trade policy Márton Nobilis held two separate meetings

on Tuesday with industry insiders to discuss the measure: one with representatives of supermarket chains CBA, Real, Ecofamily, AFEOSZ-COOP and the chief secretary of commerce association MNKSZ; and the other with representatives of Aldi, Auchan, Lidl, Penny, Spar and Tesco, and the chief secretary of commerce association OKSZ, the ministry said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: GYŐR UNI INNOVATION PARK LINK BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION, ECONOMY

The Science and Innovation Park in the University of Győr, in northwest Hungary, will have a serious role in the close cooperation of higher education and the economy, and so in Hungary's economic success, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said on Tuesday, after a visit to the construction now starting a new phase. The 6.7 billion forint (EUR 1.8bn) investment will create an innovative environment that will foster the growth of Hungarian start-ups and facilitate the ties between research and industry, Péter Szijjártó said. The park offers more than 50 laboratories, and the number of students is over 15,000, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARIAN SCHOOLS FACING “PRESSURE BY GODLESS IDEOLOGIES”

Hungarian schools are “under pressure by various civil groups trying to

capture them under the name of godless ideologies," Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said at the inauguration of a refurbished school in Hegykő, in north-western Hungary, on Tuesday. Such groups "question the rights and role of parents ... while the future lies in building communities, with the Catholic Church having a crucial role," the minister said. Communities will be much needed in view of the current challenges, he said. "The lightning strikes of war are above our heads, while animosity has become the cornerstone of international politics, and the world is on its way to being divided into blocs once more," he said. But, he added, "a strong Hungary built on strong communities will overcome even those challenges." Hegykő's Old School has been refurbished with 220 million forints (EUR 592,000) in state and European Union funds.

THINK-TANK HEAD: HUNGARIAN RIGHT WING PUNCHING ABOVE ITS WEIGHT

The right wing in Hungary is punching above its weight, the head of the Center for Fundamental Rights said ahead of the CPAC Hungary conference to be held on May 4-5. "Our sovereignty must be asserted while building global alliances," Miklós Szánthó said in an interview published by mandiner.hu on Monday. Commenting on the upcoming Conservative Political Action Conference, he said the Hungarian

event was the only European CPAC that was a big draw for the world's major right-wing figures. The idea of the trinity of God, homeland, and family as pillars of civilisation was shared "from the Potomac to the Danube", Szánthó said. Meanwhile, he said the importance of protecting the integrity of Ukraine "cannot be overestimated" in terms of ensuring that the region never lives under the shadow of the Russian threat again. But, he added, the question should be raised as to what kind of West "we want to offer Kyiv" as an alternative. Referring to the upcoming CPAC Hungary, Szánthó said two incumbent prime ministers, two former prime ministers, four party heads, two congressmen, "former and future senators", as well as "countless representatives from Europe, and politicians and journalists from South America to Israel" would attend.

RÉTVÁRI: ILLEGAL MIGRATION THREAT TO WHOLE EUROPE'S SECURITY

People smugglers operated by organised crime rings pose a threat to the safety of the whole of Europe, and firm action must be taken against them, the state secretary of the interior ministry said at a farewell ceremony to Hungarian police contingent on Tuesday. The first contingent of Hungarian police officers was dispatched to serve on the southern borders of Serbia in January in framework of a Hungarian-Austrian-Serbian partnership mission,

Bence Rétvári said, sending off the latest group of officers. The mission is aimed at reinforcing protection efforts against illegal migration and human smuggling, he noted. Smuggling migrants to western Europe has become a major source of revenue in organised crime, Rétvári added.

OPPOSITION PROPOSES AMENDMENT TO PROTECT GAY PEOPLE FROM HATE SPEECH

Parliament's "For a Diverse Hungary" group of opposition MPs is preparing to submit its first amendment to ensure protection to LGBTQ people, Momentum MP Dávid Bedő told a press conference on Tuesday. The opposition group was formed by five parties with the aim of "amplifying the voice" of Hungary's gay community "in and outside of parliament", Bedő said. László Sebián-Petrovszki, a deputy of the Democratic Coalition, quoted journalist András Bencsik, "one of the oldest opinion leaders of Fidesz", as recently making fun of homosexuals facing execution in Uganda. The ruling party has not distanced itself from Bencsik's remarks, which "leads us to think that what he said is in line with Fidesz's position", he said. Sebián-Petrovszki also slammed the civil code for not including gay people among groups protected against hate speech, and said the opposition bill, to be submitted later on Tuesday, would add minorities based on sexual identity or orientation. If the amendment is

passed, LGBTI people could go to court when confronted by hate speech, he added. "In the past all actions against minorities started with hate speech, leading to a curbing of their rights and then to physical violence," Sebián-Petrovszki said, adding that "that trend must be interrupted".

DK CALLS FOR 'EUROPEAN HUNGARY' TO 'RESTORE DIGNITY OF WORK'

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) called for a "European Hungary, so we can restore the dignity of work" in a statement issued on May 1. DK said the government had "taken away the dignity of work", adding that "Orbán inflation" was making pay cheques and pensions "worthless". DK said it had worked to restore the dignity of work since its establishment. "That's why we joined the EU 19 years ago, that's why we wanted to be full-fledged European citizens living in European prosperity, so we could finally make a living from our work, not just survive," the party added. As long as the "Orbán system" remains in place, DK said, there would also be "Orbán inflation".

MOMENTUM: HUNGARY AT FURTHEST POINT FROM EUROPE

Opposition Momentum has argued that Hungary has never been "so far from Europe", in a statement to mark the 19th anniversary of the country's accession to the European Union. The

Momentum Movement on Monday put an EU flag on the fence in front of the Carmelite Monastery in the Castle District which houses the Prime Minister's Office. "[W]e must remind ourselves that there's no European prosperity without European values and freedom," MEP Anna Donáth said. She insisted that the fence cordoning off the PM's office building symbolised the gulf between Hungary and the rest of Europe. Referring to a recent student demonstration there, she said police had resorted to defending the cordon with tear gas. Donáth also decried the absence of EU flags on public buildings in Hungary. "There's nothing to celebrate," she said.

Referring to a proposed law on the status of teachers, she said the new rules would deprive teachers "of their basic human and employment rights", and she called the bill an act of "revenge" by the government.

LMP TO TURN TO TOP COURT OVER GOVT DECREE ON PUBLIC HEARINGS

Opposition LMP will turn to the Constitutional Court over a recent government decree on public hearings which the party says violates the constitutional right of citizens to express their opinion, a lawmaker of the party said on Tuesday. At a press conference, deputy group leader Antal Csárdi noted the decree published on April 27 which states that a public hearing can be conducted during

a public administrative procedure without the actual presence of the affected members of the public. Csárdi called the decree "absurd", saying that with its approval, the Fidesz-led government "has created a system that hushes up the public". He said that with its earlier measure that "practically bans" a national referendum, Fidesz had already left little room for the Hungarian people to have a say in social affairs. The new decree makes any public hearing impossible, which means that the people will have no opportunity at all to give their opinion or ask questions on such important issues as the construction of battery plants, Csárdi said. He said that the government was afraid to hear the opinion of Hungarian people because it had "things to hide" from them, adding that these included "the immeasurable threat to the environment" of battery plants.

KARÁCSONY: METRO LINE 3 TO BE FULLY OPENED ON MAY 22

Budapest's metro line 3 is to be fully opened to the public on May 22, after a five-and-a-half-year renovation, Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony said on Facebook on Tuesday. The metro has been in operation along the whole line on weekdays since March 20, except for the Nagyvárad Square and Lehel Square stations. On weekends, it ran only on the northern stretch, with busses transporting passengers on the rest of the line.

BUDAPEST TRANSPORT AUTHORITY PROPOSES KEEPING CAR BAN ON CHAIN BRIDGE

The Budapest Transport Centre (BKK) has proposed that current traffic rules barring private cars from Budapest's landmark Chain Bridge should be kept, BKK head Katalin Walter told a press conference on Tuesday. The ban was introduced for a trial period after the bridge's reconstruction, and BKK has concluded that it should be made permanent, Walter said.

Since December last year, vehicles of public transport, taxis, motorbikes and bicycles have been using the bridge, while pedestrians will be allowed to cross when the reconstruction is fully completed. At the press conference, Samu Balogh, the cabinet chief of the mayor, noted that the final decision will be made "at the first residents' meeting" of the city. Providing figures of an analysis of traffic since the partial reopening of the bridge in mid-December last year, Ádám Bodor, BKK's mobility development director, noted a 54% drop in travel time for buses to cross the bridge from the Pest side to the Buda side during peak hours. Bodor said current traffic rules have attracted cyclists to use the bridge more frequently, with their numbers doubling to 1,958 per day in April compared with 2019. "As a result of this new model, the city's carbon dioxide emissions have dropped by 29 tonnes per day," said Bodor, adding that emissions in the area around the bridge had dropped by one tonne per day.

HUNGARY TRADE BALANCE MOVES BACK INTO SURPLUS

Hungary posted a February trade surplus of 581 million euros, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data on Tuesday. The surplus was raised from 513 million euros in the first reading released on April 6. Exports rose by an annual 11.5% to 12.756 billion euros, while imports increased by 4.3% to 12.175 billion. Trade with other European Union member states accounted for 78% of Hungary's exports and 68% of its imports during the month.

HUNGARY PPI FALLS TO 21.7% IN MARCH

Factory gate prices in Hungary grew by an annual 21.7% in March, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Tuesday. Prices for domestic sales rose by 48.2%, while export prices increased by 8.8%. Headline PPI fell from 29% in February. Month on month, factory gate prices fell by 1.2% as prices for domestic sale eased by 0.9%, while export prices declined by 1.3%.

HUNGARY APRIL PMI 61.9

Hungary's seasonally adjusted Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) rose to 61.9 points in April from 56.0 in March, the Hungarian Association of Logistics, Purchasing and Inventory Management (Halpim) said on Tuesday. A PMI over 50 signals expansion in the manufacturing sector. Among the PMI sub-indices, the new orders index rose from the

previous month and remained over the 50-point mark. The production volume index increased and was over 50.

NEARLY 13,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY

Fully 4,928 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 7,918 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 73 people, ORFK said on Tuesday. Fully 25 people, 9 children among them, arrived in Budapest by train.

FORTY ILLEGAL MIGRANTS FOUND IN TRUCK AT ROMANIAN BORDER CROSSING

Police have discovered forty illegal migrants jammed into the cargo compartment of a truck with Austrian number plates at the Nagylak border crossing with Romania, the police headquarters said on its website on Tuesday. The migrants identifying themselves as Bangladeshi, Lebanese and Pakistani citizens were detected by a pool of Hungarian, Romanian and Turkish police officers on Saturday. The vehicle was driven by a Turkish national, according to police.hu. A video footage posted on the site shows the migrants squeezed in between stacks of wooden pallets in a compartment lower than one metre. Hungarian and Romanian border guard units working in partnership at the Nagylak crossing have already taken action against 2,500 illegal migrants discovered hiding in vehicles this year, the website said.