

PHOTO OF THE DAY



The Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's New Year's Day concert at the Liszt Academy

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office reports on 2023 Q3 budget balance

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

TOP STORY

SOVEREIGNTY OFFICE 'TO SAFEGUARD ELECTIONS'

Hungary's new Sovereignty Protection Office will be responsible for ensuring the transparency of the upcoming local and European Parliament elections as "its first major task", Tamás Láncki, appointed to head the new body, has said.

The new body will aim to "protect the country's economic, cultural, communication and political identity and independence," Láncki told public television on Tuesday, adding that "the office will not be an authority ... having primarily analytic and fact-finding tasks." The office "will not launch probes or impose sanctions," he added. The office will cooperate with other agencies and "make possible violations public and report to the respective state organs," he said, adding that the office could "call the attention of lawmakers to any legal deficiency or the need for an authority to act". For example, Láncki said recipients of illegal party financing could face imprisonment but "the punishment will not be imposed by the office but by the respective state authority". The new office will be tasked with "preventing foreign attempts to influence the elections ... and if it sees signs of such activities, it will alert the authorities," he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ DISCUSSES WAR WITH ISRAELI MINISTER FOR STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, spoke with Ron Dermer, Israel's minister of strategic affairs, by phone on Monday. They discussed the situation in the Middle East, and Szijjártó reiterated Hungary's stance that Israel had the right to self-defence, the Hungarian minister said on Facebook. The minister said the international community had a vested interest in avoiding terror attacks like the one Israel had suffered. Dermer confirmed media reports that the body of a hostage, a Hungarian-Israeli dual citizen, had been found, Szijjártó said. The ministers again reinforced their commitment to freeing the other Hungarian-Israeli hostage still held by Hamas, he said.

HUNGARIAN-ISRAELI MAN MISSING SINCE OCT 7 DECLARED DEAD

Ilán Weiss, a Hungarian citizen thought to have been taken hostage by Hamas on October 7, has been declared dead, the Be'eri kibbutz he lived in said on Monday. Weiss, a 56-year-old father of three, who left his family to join the disaster relief unit of the community, probably died on the first day of the war, the kibbutz now said. His wife and youngest daughter were taken hostage by Hamas but released on November

25. His two elder daughters hid in Be'eri until the Israeli forces arrived, the statement said.

DEFMIN: '2024 BUDGET GUARANTEES SECURITY OF HUNGARIANS'

Hungary's 2024 central budget allocations will ensure the continuation of the armed forces' reform and "appreciation for soldiers", the defence minister said on Tuesday. Hungary will continue to work towards fulfilling its objective to build a top-notch, technically advanced military force, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said in a statement. It will remain for the Hungarian government a national strategic goal to build a capable, innovative and high-tech defence force that can effectively respond to challenges, he said. Allocations in this year's budget will ensure the participation of Hungarian troops in NATO missions and international military exercises and guarantee maintaining a 2% of GDP defence spending, he added.

FINMIN: HUNGARY GETS ANOTHER HUF 170 BN IN EU FUNDING

Hungary has received another 170 billion forints (EUR 445m) in European Union funding, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said on Facebook on Tuesday. This latest transfer and the 779.5 million euros in recovery funding received last week bring the total funding

received by Hungary in recent days to 470 billion forints, Varga said. The minister said 240 million euros of the funds will go toward Integrated Transport Operational Programme Plus developments, while 205 million is being allocated towards the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme Plus.

FINMIN HAILS LOWER DEFICIT

Hungary's public finance deficit narrowed in 2023 from 2022, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said on Tuesday, after receiving the first aggregates of budget data from last year. Varga also hailed that revenues in corporate tax totalled 1,013 billion forints (EUR 2.6bn), over the target, which he said was "another sign of favourable changes in economic trends". State debt relative to GDP continued to decline, Varga said, adding that data from the Central Statistical Office were to be received to determine the final figure. "In 2024, we will continue to reduce the deficit and state debt with the start of stronger economic growth," he said.

GOVT OFFICIAL: 'NEW YEAR, NEW PENSION HIKES'

Similarly to 2023, the government will protect the value of pensions also this year, the cultural and innovation ministry's state secretary said on Tuesday. With a 6% increase this month, pensioners will receive

on average 13,000 forints (EUR 34) more each month compared with December, Eszter Vitályos said. Next month, Hungary's 2.5 million pensioners will also receive a one-off payment of a 13th month pension bonus, she said in a Facebook video.

MORE THAN 6,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY

Fully 2,178 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 3,907 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 43 people, ORFK said on Tuesday.

CENTRAL BANK TO MARK 100TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2024

The National Bank of Hungary will mark the 100th anniversary of its founding with special events and publications in 2024, the bank said on Tuesday. The independent NBH is one of the most important symbols of Hungary's sovereignty whose

founding was already demanded among the 12 points of the Hungarian Revolutionaries of 1848, the statement said. Since it was set up in 1924, the central bank regulating and overseeing Hungary's finances has become one of the most important institutions of Hungary's unity, it added. The law on setting up the central bank came into force on April 26, 1924, the founding general meeting of the shareholders' company that owned the bank was held on May 24, and the bank actually started operations on June 24 of the same year. The memorial year series of events dubbed MNB100 will highlight periods and dates in the past 100 years that demonstrate how the bank fought successfully for enforcing Hungarian interests, while playing a fundamental role in preserving the financial and economic stability of the country, even in years that posed historic challenges, the statement said.

HUNGARY PMI EDGES UP TO 52.8 IN DECEMBER

Hungary's seasonally-adjusted Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) edged up to 52.8 points in December from 52.2 in November, staying over the 50-point threshold that signals

expansion in the manufacturing sector, the Hungarian Association of Logistics, Purchasing and Inventory Management (Halpim) said on Tuesday. Among the PMI sub-indices, the new orders index rose and was over the 50-point mark. The production volume index also increased and was over 50. The employment index rose and indicated an expansion again. The gauge of purchased inventories climbed and was over the 50-point mark.

HUNGARY HOME SALES CLIMB 21% IN DECEMBER

Home sales in Hungary rose by an annual 21% to 7,813 in December, a monthly estimate by listed real estate broker Duna House shows. For the full year, home sales reached 90,840, down 27% from 2022. Duna House estimated that mortgage outlays came to 67 billion forints (EUR 174.6m) in December, up 63% from the same month a year earlier. For the full year, mortgage outlays fell by around 51% to 586 billion forints. This year, voluntary rate caps at lenders and subsidised credit for borrowers with children could lift outlays to 750-850 billion forints, Duna House said.