

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Balázs Mohai

Spanish tenor José Carreras performing at Papp László Budapest Sports Arena

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office second estimate on foreign trade in Oct 2018

Stats office preliminary report on demographics in Jan-Oct 2018

Report on public finances at end of Nov 2018

TOP STORY

ROGÁN: EP ELECTIONS 'CRUCIAL' FOR HUNGARY, EU

Next year's European Parliamentary elections will be "crucial both for Hungary and the European Union", the prime minister's cabinet chief said.

In an interview published in daily Magyar Hírlap, Antal Rogán said that "George Soros and his circles will do everything in their power to maintain the current power relations" and "those countries that are markedly anti-migration will be attacked by all means". "They seek to destroy the reputation of those countries that have been firmly against migration; that is what Ms Sargentini is doing, an old, reliable ally of George Soros," the cabinet chief insisted. Rogán stressed that "the situation could be changed" in the European elections next spring. Concerning Hungary's recently established administrative courts, Rogán said that "these courts will deal with migration cases" and insisted that "no wonder that they are being attacked by Europe's pro-migration institutions".

On another subject, Rogán said that recent, anti-government protests involved "violent groups that attacked police" and added that those detained during the demonstrations included "innumerable" people with a police record.

ÁDER SIGNS AMENDMENT TO LABOUR CODE

President János Áder has signed an amendment to the labour code, the president's office said in a statement published on its website.

Áder said he had assessed the amendment approved by parliament on December 12 from three aspects. First of all, he established that the amendment was compatible with the constitution. Secondly, he compared the new overtime regulations with those in force in other European countries and found that in several countries, including the UK, Denmark, Ireland and the Czech Republic, the allowed overtime is equal or more than in Hungary. Thirdly, he assessed how the amendment would affect Hungary's 4.5 million employees and whether the guarantees protecting them decreased. Áder said the new law does not weaken the protective regulations affecting employees. Increased overtime can only be applied after preliminary written approval by the employee and the employer must not punish those who are unwilling to work overtime.

The amendment to the labour code, despite some concerns raised, must not hinder the peaceful celebration of Christmas and the upcoming holiday period, Áder said and wished all citizens of Hungary a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: UN GLOBAL MIGRATION PACT 'MORE OF AN AFRICAN-ASIAN-LATIN AMERICAN ACCORD'

It was no surprise that the United Nations' African, Asian, Latin American and small island member states voted for the UN's migration compact at Wednesday's General Assembly session, given that it supports their interests, Hungary's foreign minister said in New York after the vote on the document.

Hungary was one of five countries to vote against the document. The UN General Assembly approved the accord with 152 countries voting in favour of it, five against it and 12 abstentions.

Speaking to public media, Péter Szijjártó said that over the past year, "not a single European politician attended the preparatory meetings" for the compact. "Europe's interests were barely represented," he said. This is why, he argued, the accord is more of an African-Asian-Latin American compact than a global one, as its name would indicate.

Of the 28 European Union member states, nine did not vote for the package, he said. Szijjártó pointed out that at the beginning of the process, the "bureaucrats and politicians belonging to Europe's liberal mainstream" said that Hungary was again "going its own way", whereas now one-third of EU member states disagreed with the document.

It was also clear, he said, that the countries that voted against the agreement were those whose leaders put the safety of their citizens first. The countries that backed the document, on the other hand, will have to take responsibility for their contribution to the emergence of new migration waves, he said.

In response to a question, Szijjártó said he also held business talks in New York, and reached an agreement with a major American IT service firm that will build IT development bases in Budapest and Szeged. The investment which will be worth over 10 million euros will create more than 100 new jobs, Szijjártó said, without naming the company in question.

KOVÁCS: POLICE GAVE MUTED RESPONSE TO DEMONSTRATORS' 'ATTACKS'

Zoltán Kovács, state secretary for international communications, says police at the recent demonstrations in Hungary gave a markedly muted response to the protests considering how opposition MPs and political activists "attacked" them and public institutions.

Kovács told MTI by phone from Paris that he and Szabolcs Takács, the state secretary for European Union affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, had addressed a press event there, discussing the context of the recent events in Hungary. Kovács said western European media

had attempted to portray the demonstrations -- which he said had clearly been initiated by opposition lawmakers and political activists -- "as if something completely different were going on in the country".

The state secretary said he and Takács had told journalists that the demonstrations were political in nature and could also be linked to NGOs with ties to the "Soros network".

Contrary to how western European media outlets were trying to portray the demonstrations -- implying that police had used excessive force against the protesters -- the authorities "actually gave a very muted response" considering that the opposition lawmakers and political activists "attacked" them and public institutions, Kovács said.

The state secretary said the media outlets in question were applying double standards in their portrayal of the protests. He cited the example of the "claim" that the demonstrations are about the amendment to the labour code, saying that Dutch Green MEP Judith Sargentini had raised the issue of human rights in recent days, when the upper threshold for annual overtime in the Netherlands is the European maximum of 416 hours, 16 hours more than the upper threshold in the Hungarian amendment.

Takács said Hungary has had to endure a "systematic attack on its reputation" for eight years, the most notable example of which has been the Sargentini report, the resolution

resulting from it and the events that have followed its approval by the European Parliament.

TRÓCSÁNYI RULING PARTIES' TOP CANDIDATE FOR EP ELECTION

The ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance has selected Justice Minister László Trócsányi to head their list for next year's European Parliamentary elections, Fidesz announced. Trócsányi will also be nominated for European commissioner, Balázs Hidvéghi, the party's communications director said.

On the election list, published on Fidesz's website, Trócsányi is followed by József Szájer, Lívia Járóka, Tamás Deutsch, András Gyürk, Kinga Gál, György Hölvényi, Enikő Győri, Ádám Kósa, Andrea Bocskor, Andor Deli, Balázs Hidvéghi, Edina Tóth, István Kovács, Norbert Erdős, Balázs Rákossy, Tamás Schanda, Csaba Faragó, Nóra Király, József Ékes and Gergely Losonci.

Hidvéghi said that "Hungary cannot rely on its opposition" in the European Parliament "in the fight against attempts to import even more migrants to Europe" and insisted that "such candidates are needed that will promote Hungary".

OPPOSITION PARTIES, CIVIL GROUPS STAGE ANTI-GOVT DEMO IN HUNGARY

Opposition parties and civil groups staged a demonstration against the

government in Eger, in northern Hungary on Wednesday.

The protest, which was attended by a few hundred people, was organised against the recent amendment to the labour code, which organisers referred to as the "slave law" in the online advertisement for the event. The organisers said they were also protesting against the "unabashed theft" which they say is going on in Eger. The crowd, which proceeded through downtown Eger demanding democracy and press freedom, was addressed in front of ruling Fidesz's local headquarters by local politicians of the opposition LMP, Socialist, Democratic Coalition, Jobbik and Momentum Movement parties. The speakers called on Hungarians to unite for the sake of ousting the "Fidesz regime" and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

Jobbik's Ádám Mirkóczki said Fidesz's only real political achievement was that it had united people across the country who want democracy.

LEFT-WING OPPOSITION CALLS FOR JOINT CANDIDATE FOR BUDAPEST MAYOR

Parties of the opposition should field a joint candidate for the post of Budapest mayor in next year's municipal elections, representatives of the Socialist, Democratic Coalition (DK), Párbeszéd parties and of the

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Solidarity movement told a press conference.

Zsolt Molnár, head of the Budapest chapter of the Socialist Party, said that independent candidate Róbert Puzsér, backed by opposition LMP, would not participate in the pre-election procedure in January but indicated his readiness to step down if the winner of the pre-election has higher chances of winning the mayoral post.

The Socialists now back Csaba Horváth, but will “respect the results of the selection and support the winner,” Molnár said. DK and Párbeszéd have not made nominations as yet.

Molnár called cooperation between the opposition parties of historic significance and said that without such cooperation incumbent Mayor István Tarlós “could be declared the winning candidate right now”.

PROTESTER ATTACKING POLICE RECEIVES SUSPENDED PRISON SENTENCE

A protester in Sunday’s anti-government demonstration, who attacked police officers after the event, has been sentenced to one year imprisonment, suspended for four years, the municipal court told MTI. The court said that the defendant had been drunk and

attempted to hit two police officers. The defendant, who had a multiple police record, pleaded guilty, and accepted the sentence.

DEFENCE MINISTRY PURCHASES AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM FROM AIRBUS

The defence ministry has decided to purchase a state-of-the-art air defence system and signed a relevant contract with Airbus representatives in Budapest.

Airbus said in a statement that SAMOC is a solution for coordination of all Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) assets and it is a combat-proven system which has been tested at several NATO drills.

The contract was signed on behalf of Airbus by Martin Deister, head of the air defence division, and Michael Apel, division head at the company’s German subsidiary. On behalf of the defence ministry, it was signed by Péter Fodor, director-general of the defence economy office.

SAMOC is compatible with similarly advanced NATO system centres and is able to provide fast, reliable and precise information in standard formats. As a result, the Hungarian army will be able to protect important facilities and the country’s population against flying objects, including aircraft, helicopters, missiles and drones, the ministry said.

GOVT, USAID SIGN AGREEMENT CONCERNING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Hungary’s foreign ministry has signed a cooperation agreement with the US government aid agency USAID on protecting and supporting persecuted Christians, the ministry’s state secretary told MTI. Under the agreement the two countries’ governments will launch joint programmes, Levente Magyar told MTI. The agreement was initiated by the US and comes as an appreciation of the Hungarian government’s Hungary Helps programme aimed at strengthening Christian communities in the Middle East, he said, calling it “a huge diplomatic success”.

GROSS WAGE GROWTH REACHES 10.8% IN OCTOBER

Gross wage growth in Hungary reached 10.8% year-on-year in October, the Central Statistical Office said. In absolute terms, Hungarians employed full time earned a gross monthly 327,100 forints (EUR 1,000). Net wages climbed 10.9% to 217,500 forints during the period. Annualised wage growth has been in the double digits since early 2017, after an agreement was reached by employers, unions and the government on big minimum wage increases paired with payroll tax cuts.