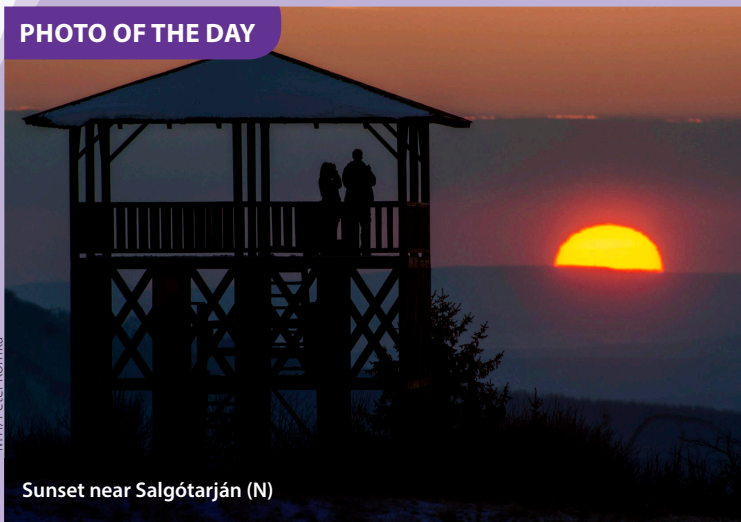


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Sunset near Salgótarján (N)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases Nov 2018 foreign trade data

Parliament's defence and law enforcement committee meets

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: UN MIGRATION PACKAGE GLOBAL THREAT

The United Nations Global Migration Compact is “clearly a threat to the entire world” and could trigger further waves of migration, the foreign minister has said.

“This package promotes the interests of migrants only, and neglects people who wish to live in security and in stable circumstances in their own countries,” Péter Szijjártó told MTI over the phone from Liechtenstein. Szijjártó said that 40 countries voting against the compact in the UN general assembly “clearly shows” that efforts “to make the package a point of reference” are “devoid of credibility and unacceptable”.

In Liechtenstein, Szijjártó had talks with his counterpart Aurelia Frick, with migration as well as issues around taxation in the focus. At the talks, the minister said Hungary will not allow a single illegal migrant to enter its territory.

Parties at the talks voiced agreement that low taxation is key for competitiveness, and each country should be allowed to define its own taxation policy and set its own tax rates. “We are against endeavours to harmonise tax brackets in Europe, because that would lead to higher taxes both in Liechtenstein and Hungary, and neither government would want to see that,” Szijjártó said.

**GOVT OFFICIAL:
HUNGARY WON'T BECOME
'IMMIGRANT COUNTRY'**

Hungary has again made it clear that it does not want to become a country of immigrants and insists that the direction of the European Union's future migration policy should be decided by its citizens in the upcoming European parliamentary elections, a senior government official said in Brussels. In the ballot in May, voters will get to have their say on whether "pro-migration forces should become stronger or weaker", Szabolcs Takács, state secretary for EU affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, told Hungarian journalists after a meeting of EU affairs ministers. The Hungarian government faces "attacks" not only from its own opposition, but also from pro-migration countries and politicians across Europe for its firm stance on rejecting migration, Takács said. He said it was not by accident that Dutch Green MEP Judith Sargentini was also scheduled to participate in a demonstration against the Hungarian government organised by the Hungarian opposition in Brussels on Tuesday afternoon.

Takács called a planned reduction of cohesion and agricultural funding in the EU's 2021-2027 funding cycle a "disproportionate" measure under a "discriminative" approach, insisting that it aimed "to punish" countries unwilling to cooperate on Brussels's migration policy.

In connection with the EU's rotating presidency which Romania took over in January for six months, Takács said Hungary's expectation was that it should give ample consideration to the stance and interests of Hungary and the Visegrad Four grouping. "Hungary will support the Romanian presidency's every effort to make the EU more secure and competitive," he said.

**VARGA: ONLINE INVOICING
SYSTEM CONTRIBUTES
TO WHITENING ECONOMY**

Hungary's comprehensive online invoicing system has been operating seamlessly since its introduction in July 2018 and has contributed to a 403 billion forint jump (EUR 1.3bn) in VAT revenue year on year, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said. Varga noted that millions of electronic invoices contained a huge amount of data, an analysis of which enabled law-abiding taxpayers to be distinguished from non-compliant businesses.

Online invoicing helps targeted and swift action against fraud, he said. It provides the tax authority NAV a large amount of data in real time, which helps to uncover fraudulent activity and is a deterrent in itself, he said. Its implementation alone prompted certain companies to invoice according to their actual income, he said. NAV also compares online invoices with data from other digital systems such as the Electronic Public Road Trade Control System (EKÁER), Varga noted.

**JOBBIK AGAINST
ALL-OPPOSITION
COOPERATION IN EP
ELECTIONS**

Conservative opposition Jobbik is against the cooperation of all opposition parties before the European Parliamentary elections because votes would be cast for party lists and "such cooperation stands without an example" in Europe. An opposition list "would turn into a parody"; it would quickly disintegrate, causing confusion and only serving ruling Fidesz's interests, Jobbik said in a statement. Jobbik, which defines itself as a "social people's party", said it will not enter into an alliance with Democratic Coalition leader Ferenc Gyurcsány or other political forces that refuse to contribute to efforts to establish a European wage union and do not believe that men should be eligible to retire after 40 years of work. However, Jobbik added that being the strongest opposition party, it will continue to cooperate with others on certain concrete issues.

Jobbik lawmaker Andrea Varga-Damm said in response to a question at a press conference held on a different subject that Jobbik would not participate in the joint list proposed by the opposition Socialists but the opposition should formulate joint messages during the campaign in order to boost voter turnout. Considering Hungary's "difficult state", cooperation is necessary in certain

matters but Jobbik will make every effort to prevent Gyurcsány from being placed in the focus of any campaign drive, she said.

SOCIALIST CANDIDATE FOR BUDAPEST MAYOR ANNOUNCES PROGRAMME

The opposition Socialists' candidate for Budapest mayor Csaba Horváth announced his programme on Tuesday, promising to address the city's main problem which he defined as a lack of freedom and financial independence. He told a press conference that his programme had been in the making for over ten years and it represented an "indictment" against Mayor István Tarlós, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and ruling Fidesz. He said that since 2010, Budapest has been "systematically destroyed" by the nationalisation of schools and hospitals, the use of City Park as a construction site and the felling of tens of thousands of trees. He promised that if he becomes mayor, 10% of all the tax paid in Budapest will remain in Budapest.

All Budapest buses will be electric, new tramlines will be built, the metro will be extended and disabled access will be developed, he added. He also said that 100,000 square metres of new parks would be built annually in the next five years and a park-guarding service would be set up to improve security. Horváth promised that the Budapest city council would recover the ownership of hospitals and schools

will offer competitive knowledge with language skills. He said poverty must be eliminated and people must be offered help to prevent homelessness.

In response to a question, Horváth said his personal ambitions for the post will last until Feb. 3 when the ongoing primary among left-wing candidates ends. He said the election programme of Párbeszéd mayoral candidate Gergely Karácsony greatly overlaps with his, so if Karácsony were to win the primary, he would support him.

TRADE UNIONS SUBMIT LIST OF DEMANDS TO GOVT

Trade unions demand the withdrawal of labour code amendments, changes to the strike law, fair wages and a flexible pension system in a letter addressed to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and submitted to a representative of the innovation and technology ministry on Tuesday. Head of the trade unions confederation MaSzSz László Kordás told a press conference after submitting the demands that the government had five days to set up a negotiating delegation and failing to do so will result in the preparation of nationwide strikes. Additionally, the preparation of a nationwide demonstration for Jan. 19 is already under way, he said.

The letter submitted on Tuesday has been signed by MaSzSz, the Forum for the Cooperation of Trade Unions (SZEF) and the Trade Union Federation of Intellectuals, he said.

The demonstration will start at 3:00pm, to avoid disrupting students' school entrance exams, he said. So far, sympathisers in 140 communities have signalled they are ready to support unions' goals in some form, be it demonstrating or closing down roads, he added. Fielding a question about the possible country-wide strike, Kordás said workers' willingness to strike must be gauged before any preparations can be made. Unions want to stage the strike within the bounds of the law, he added.

MASzSz called for the Jan. 19 demonstration at a protest in Budapest on Saturday. A number of anti-government demonstrations have taken place in the capital and other cities around the country since lawmakers approved legislation in December raising the upper threshold for annual overtime from 250 hours to 400 hours and extending the period employers may account overtime for the purpose of calculating wages and rest days from twelve months to three years. Members of the government have defended the amendments to the labour code and called the controversy over their passage "pretence".

ANALYST: STRIKE HAS NO PUBLIC SUPPORT

There is no "mood for striking" in Hungary and support for protests has not grown in the past few weeks, political scientist Zoltán Kiszelly told current affairs channel M1. "The trade

union bubble will be the first to burst” as people do not back their demands, he added.

By 2013, the country had left behind the debt trap which was a legacy of successive left-liberal governments. “Life has become gradually easier since,” he said, adding that people on middle and lower incomes now felt more financially secure. The opposition parties are trying to appropriate the demands of trade unions for their own political purposes, he said. Meanwhile, movements launched by “fake NGOs”, and “self-styled politicians” have also appeared, he added.

HUNGARY INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP 4% IN NOV

Industrial output in Hungary grew by an annual 4% in November, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. Output increased by 3.5% adjusted for the number of working days.

For the period January-November, industrial output was up an unadjusted 3.5% year on year. In a month-on-month comparison, output slipped a seasonally and working day-adjusted 1.1%.

A government official said the data showed Hungary in second place among the Visegrad countries and the 24% increase in Hungarian industrial output since 2014 was twice the European average. Gyula Pomázi, deputy state secretary at the ministry of information and technology, said that the positive industrial data indicated that growth was here to stay “in some form”.

The automotive industry accounted for the biggest slice of output in January-November last year, while food products, electronic devices and the health industry were also major components. He said there was scope for a further significant expansion in the vehicle industry with the emergence of new technologies such as self-driving and electric vehicles.

Gergely Suppan, an analyst at Takarékbank, noted that industrial output growth had slowed to 4% in November last year after a 5.9% increase in the previous month, underperforming expectations.

Péter Virovác, chief analyst of ING Bank, said industrial output continued its rollercoaster ride in recent months following weak performance in October, too. The duller figures are not specifically attributable to any one

key sector and most manufacturing segments were able to grow in annual terms, he added.

BUSINESSMAN BEHIND BARS IN WAKE OF OLAF WARNING

The municipal appeals court handed a six year prison sentence to the head of a business group last November in the wake of an alert by European Union anti-fraud office OLAF, the Budapest chief prosecutor’s office said, noting that the ruling has taken effect. The businessman, who was not named, was also fined 5 million forints (EUR 15,600) for fraudulently acquiring domestic and EU subsidies totalling 770 million forints, the statement said.

The defendant and his accomplices were charged with bidding for grants, between 2005 and 2010, to buy machinery which their companies already possessed. The primary defendant was initially sentenced to three and a half years in prison but after an appeal lodged by the municipal prosecutor the sentence was increased to six years, while three accomplices were handed suspended prison sentences.