

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

Winter aconite flowering in Debrecen (E Hungary)

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU-Arab League summit in Egypt

Plenary session of parliament

Budapest municipal assembly meets

Budapest mayoral candidate Gergely Karácsony's presser on topical issues

Radical nationalist Mi Hazánk, MIÉP parties sign cooperation pact

TOP STORY

HUNGARY TO OPEN TRADE OFFICE IN JERUSALEM

The Hungarian government will open a foreign trade representation in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said, adding that the move is "another step towards building closer Hungary-Israel ties".

After talks with Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Orbán told a joint press conference that he had briefed his Israeli counterpart about the upcoming European parliamentary elections, "an important goal of which will be to rein in anti-Semitism in Europe". He said that after the elections, new European leaders should emerge "who don't finance NGOs that meddle in political affairs and promote an anti-Israel position". Concerning Poland's boycott of the Visegrad Group-Israel summit, Orbán said that "it would have been better had everybody turned up". He noted close cooperation between Hungary and Poland, and expressed hope that "Poland and Israel will discuss and resolve the situation".

Concerning bilateral ties with Israel, Orbán said the two countries promoted shared positions in several international organisations, including the UN.

Netanyahu noted shared aspects of the history of the two countries. Both countries, he added, seek to build a future based on peace, freedom and prosperity, which he called "a strong bilateral bond".

ORBÁN: ISRAELI COMPANIES ‘A STRONG PRESENCE’ IN HUNGARY

Addressing a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that Israel’s 210 companies active in Hungary “are a strong presence”, adding that both countries seek to increase cooperation in innovative technologies. Orbán noted that Hungary and Israel are celebrating the 30th anniversary of re-establishing diplomatic relations, and said that Netanyahu had been instrumental in reviving cooperation between his country and central Europe.

Hungary supports local Jewish communities and the upcoming Maccabi Games in Budapest “will hopefully be the best so far”, he added.

Netanyahu, referring to the significance of cooperation in the fight against terrorism, said that Hungary and Israel together fought extremist Islam. He mentioned defence, research, science, and environment protection as further areas of cooperation. Netanyahu thanked Hungary for its support in international organisations and said that the opening of Hungary’s new foreign trade representation in Jerusalem was an important gesture.

SZIJJÁRTÓ MEETS ISRAELI OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS SECURITY, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Hungary and Israel are close allies in security and economic affairs and they

cooperate in international forums, too, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said, after meeting Israeli officials in Jerusalem. As a member of a delegation led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Szijjártó met Avi Dichter, head of the Knesset’s foreign affairs and defence committee and Yuval Rotem, the director general of the ministry of foreign affairs.

Hungary’s stance, which it “expresses frequently and unequivocally”, is that international organisations often take a “downright unfair and biased approach to Israel”, the minister said. Hungary has always stood by a balanced and fair approach to the country, he added.

Referring to the Middle East peace process, he said “economic and trade restrictions should not be mixed up with the creation of peace,” since the two had nothing to do with each other. “We reject this as a matter of principle,” Szijjártó said, referring to restrictions, bans and blockades of products from Israeli settlements, “because this won’t get anywhere”. “In spite of European Commission recommendations, Hungary will not apply the method of labelling,” he said, referring to labels that show in which particular territory a product has been made. He added that it was “obvious” that the EU’s aim was to reduce the amount of trade in such products. Szijjártó said that such businesses also employed Palestinians, and if the firms were to go bankrupt, then Palestinians would lose their jobs. Hungary also objects to the United Nations publishing a list of businesses operating in settlements, because doing so had a similar effect. The fallout

of such measures could easily lead to disillusioned people who have lost their jobs turning to terrorism, he added. Meanwhile, he said Israel and Hungary had “fought side by side” against the UN’s global migration compact. He said this was an important achievement from a security standpoint. Migration to Europe from the south is often stopped at the Israeli border, he added.

Regarding economic cooperation, Szijjártó noted that bilateral trade exceeded 500 million dollars in 2018 and that cooperation is thriving in the field of innovative automotive industry products. Some of the most cutting-edge technologies for self-driving cars have been rolled out in Israel first, he said, adding that the two countries cooperate closely in that sector. The Hungarian government is working extensively to entice European and American companies to bring the research and implementation of those technologies to Hungary, he said.

In the food processing sector, Hungary boasts the largest kosher abattoir in Europe, which was built with a 540 million forint (EUR 1.7m) grant and a 2 billion forint credit line from Hungary’s Eximbank, he said. Hungarian food exports to Israel are also rising steadily, he said.

KOVÁCS: HUNGARY CAN PROVE EC PLANNING ‘PRO-MIGRATION’ MEASURES

The Hungarian government can prove that the European Commission is compiling a work plan aimed

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at promoting migration, the state secretary for international communications and relations said on Tuesday. Zoltán Kovács reacted to comments by EC spokesperson Margaritis Schinas, who had earlier dismissed the government's new media campaign on illegal immigration as "fake news and disinformation".

"In recent years, we've seen on multiple occasions that the commission considered even the most obvious things to be disinformation and lies" while "being behind the measures which it denies," Kovács told journalists. He said the Hungarian government could prove the existence of "every single item on a seven-point work plan" supporting immigration put together by Brussels. The state secretary cited as an example that while the EC denies that it is planning to introduce a "migrant visa", it had already voted to introduce so-called humanitarian migrant visas. Through these visas, Kovács said, the commission would "institutionalise the process of getting migrants to Europe from any part of the world" through the embassies of EU member states.

The government's media campaign features images of US financier George Soros and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. A caption reads: "You, too have the right to know what Brussels is planning." A smaller caption says Brussels is planning to introduce mandatory migrant quotas, weaken the border protection rights of member states and introduce "migrant visas" with a view to facilitating immigration. Schinas told a

press briefing that it was untrue that the EU was undermining national border protection measures, and had no plans to introduce humanitarian visas, either. He said it was up to member states to decide the extent to which they want to accept legal immigration.

FARM MINISTER: HUNGARY TO FULFIL EU AIR POLLUTION REDUCTION REQUIREMENTS

The measures included in a national air pollution reduction scheme will enable Hungary to fulfil strict European Union directives on decreasing air pollution by 2030, the farm minister said on Tuesday in response to a question submitted by green opposition LMP lawmaker Péter Ungár. Hungary has started preparing its national air pollution scheme and the government had already made many efforts to reduce air pollution, István Nagy said in his response published on parliament's website. He highlighted efforts by various sectors to reduce coarse dust particles (PM10) in the air, saying that since 2011, some 160 billion forints (EUR 500m) have been spent in areas such as industrial production, transport, agriculture and public life to improve air quality.

He said that thanks to tenders supporting the modernisation of heating systems and improved energy efficiency of buildings, more than 412,000 households have reduced their pollution since 2010. The majority of PM10 emissions result from common heating and garden waste incineration, he said. A campaign

to promote efficient heating methods to reduce air pollution was launched in 2014 and it has highlighted the importance of individuals' responsibility in improving air quality, he added.

TŐKÉS ADDRESSES EP CONFERENCE MARKING TIMIȘOARA REVOLUTION ANNIVERSARY

László Tőkés, an ethnic Hungarian MEP of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party, addressed a European parliamentary conference marking the 30th anniversary of Romania's democratic revolution. Tőkés, a pastor targeted by the Ceaușescu regime whose acts of defiance sparked the revolution which led to the end of the communist era in Romania, said the Timișoara (Temesvár) revolution "opened Romania's gates to a free, democratic and unified Europe". "[But] the current, critical state of our country cannot be remedied without justice and atonement," he added. More needs to be done "to successfully complete the [political] regime change..." "Looking at Romania and the European Union, we are right to sense a lack of appreciation by transition countries and the EU of their shared past..." he said. Romania is now "basking in the international limelight" but "it is still under communist rule" from which "all kinds of misery arise", Tőkés insisted. Further fundamental changes should embrace minority policy with a view to creating "a future in central and eastern Europe in which lives can be led amid humane conditions,"

he added. Kinga Gál, another Fidesz MEP, said in her address: "Nothing has changed in recent decades in Romania, where Hungarians are still treated as second-class citizens". Commemorating the developments of 1989 "teach us vigilance, remembrance, and to promote the heritage of Transylvanian Hungarians, which has become the symbol of never-ending hope," she said.

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BUYS VAN DYCK PORTRAIT

Budapest's Museum of Fine Arts has bought Anthony Van Dyck's Wedding Portrait of Princess Mary Henrietta Stuart, which is being shown together with several of the museum's other pieces, László Baán, the museum's director, said on Tuesday. The exquisite portrait of the nine-year-old

princess was ordered to celebrate her wedding to fourteen-year-old William of Orange in 1641, Baán noted. The museum bought the painting when Christie's auctioned it last December for 2.1 billion forints (EUR 6.6m) with a government grant. At the presentation of the portrait to the press, Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler noted that Van Dyck was one of the giants of his era, equal to his master Peter Paul Rubens. The portrait of Princess Mary will also be exhibited at the museum's October show, "Rubens and the Golden Era of Flemish Painting", Baán said.

GOVT STARTS FREE PERFORMING ARTS SCHEME FOR STUDENTS

Hungary's government is allocating 6 billion forints (EUR

18.9) this year and 5.5 billion from 2020 to pay for primary school students to attend a theatre, dance, circus or classical music performance once a year. The funding will be available to all pupils in grades 1-8, "regardless of social situation or place of residence". Also, visits to farms or zoos with native Hungarian domesticated animals will be covered by the scheme. "Hungary's thousand-year-old culture is a value of fundamental importance to the enculturation, self-expression and national identity of today's citizens and future generations, as well as the cultural preservation of Hungary," the related resolution states. "Therefore its fulfilment is a priority responsibility of the state."