

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Prime Minister's Press Office/Balázs Szecssódi

Czech President Miloš Zeman and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at a meeting in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

World Telecommunications Day marked

State Secy Konrád inaugurates new border police barracks in Miskolc

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ OPENS REPRESENTATION IN HOUSTON

Opening a Hungarian trade representation and consular office in Houston, the foreign minister noted the significance of Prime Minister Orbán and US President Trump's recent talks and said that the meeting gave bilateral ties a "new dimension".

Péter Szijjártó added that the new office was the seventh such representation in the US after Washington, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Miami.

Donald Trump and Viktor Orbán reinforced the two countries' political alliance at their meeting, but "it is important that those ties are not concentrated in one place, Washington", Szijjártó said, adding that "it requires a personal presence".

The minister called business ties between the two countries a success story, and said that the US was Hungary's second largest investor, the second largest trading partner outside the EU as well as Hungary's primary export destination. He noted that among all American states Texas is the third largest trading partner for Hungary, and most US imports come from Texas. Nineteen Texan companies have invested in Hungary, creating a combined 7,100 new jobs, he said.

Texas has a community of 3,000 Hungarians, for whom the new office will facilitate easier communication with Hungary, Szijjártó said.

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ORBÁN, ZEMAN DISCUSS V4 COOPERATION, ECONOMIC TIES IN BUDAPEST

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Czech President Miloš Zeman met in Budapest to discuss cooperation within the Visegrad Group, bilateral economic ties and international issues.

Relations between Hungary and the Czech Republic are seamless, and inter-governmental cooperation is excellent in every area, including within the Visegrad Group and the European Union, Orbán said. Orbán and Zeman both underscored the importance of cooperation and solidarity among the Visegrad countries. They discussed current issues in international politics and the EU, too. Hungary and the Czech Republic are each other’s strategic partners with a record-breaking bilateral trade volume in 2018, Orbán and Zeman agreed. They pledged to further boost cooperation in sectors such as nuclear energy and tourism. Several ministers of both cabinets attended the meeting.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: TRUMP, ORBÁN SHARE VIEWS

US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán share very similar approaches to major global issues such as migration, terrorism, patriotism and support for Christian communities, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in

an interview with Israeli news channel i24 News in New York.

He also said that the US and Hungary were on the same side when it came to taking a fair and balanced standpoint on Israel. The European Union has a different position from Hungary’s on many issues but the country is ready to break unity and raise a veto when necessary, he added.

He cited the example of the United Nations Human Rights Council and how Hungary had defied the majority in several instances when their position on Israel was not well-balanced. Szijjártó also noted that Hungary had recently opened a trade representation in Jerusalem.

In response to a question, he said moving the Hungarian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was not on the agenda for the time being. Szijjártó noted that Hungary maintained a strategic alliance and friendly relations with Israel.

Hungary uses zero tolerance against anti-Semitism and it is “proud of its achievements”, he said. Holocaust denial can result in a prison sentence in Hungary. The government supports building and revamping synagogues, even beyond its borders, he added.

CORNSTEIN: TRUMP SAID ‘IT FELT LIKE WE WERE TWINS’

At the end of Monday’s meeting with Viktor Orbán, US President Donald Trump said the Hungarian prime minister and he “were like twins”, the

US ambassador to Budapest said in an interview to news portal 444.hu.

Trump also said: “Not everyone agrees with us, not everyone loves us, but let’s look at our results,” Cornstein said in the interview published on Wednesday. He noted the meeting had been longer than planned. “If you’re interested in someone and have lots of questions, your meeting may go on longer,” he said.

Cornstein said that before his appointment to Budapest, the US administration had paid little attention to Hungary. “This was due to the attitude of Obama’s administration,” he said. Trump, however, assumes “we’re friends, allies in NATO, we have a great common history, and we need to have good relations with each other.” Cornstein said his first priority had been to show that “America’s heart and spirit has changed towards Hungary”. Consequently, top US politicians came to Hungary, most recently Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

“We have shown how we are treating this wonderful country differently,” he said, adding that hopefully these gestures would be reciprocal. The ambassador said the aim of the meeting had been mainly about the two leaders getting to know each other, but they had also talked about immigration, border control, arms purchases, expanding trade ties and how to work together.

Hungary and the US agree that Hungary must diversify its energy supplies, adding that it was unhealthy for 85% of a country’s energy supply

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to come from a single country. "We are working together to continue Exxon's extraction and for Romanian gas to be supplied to Hungary, as well as to deliver liquefied gas to Hungary via Croatia." At the White House meeting, the issue of Ukraine was also raised, Cornstein said. The US backs Ukraine, he said, but the administration understands the Hungarian government's concerns about the fate of its Hungarian minority and its access to education in the mother tongue. "But I have also said many times that I do not agree with the linkage between Ukrainian law and NATO affairs," he said, adding that it was in Hungary's interest that good relations between NATO and Kiev are maintained.

Commenting on potential arms purchases, Cornstein said he hoped that Hungary would be able to buy weapons from Raytheon and Lockheed Martin.

Asked about China and Orbán's goal of building good relations with the Beijing leadership, the ambassador said he was confident that Orbán would be on the side of NATO and the West. "But if I were in his place, I would also be keeping an eye on the world's leading powers just as he is doing," he added.

ÁDER MEETS CZECH PRESIDENT IN BUDAPEST

President János Áder held talks with Miloš Zeman, his Czech counterpart, in Budapest on Wednesday. "We

hold identical positions on illegal migration, fighting terrorism, energy security, as well as on the objective of improving the Visegrad Four countries' competitiveness," Áder told a subsequent joint press conference.

Áder said they agreed on the need of using nuclear energy, adding that the Czech president would visit Hungary's sole nuclear power plant at Paks. Hungary's president highlighted the importance of bilateral trade, noting that its volume had come close to 10 billion euros last year. He said the two countries should strengthen ties in car manufacturing. This sector has long traditions in the Czech Republic, employing 150,000 people and accounting for 20% of the industrial output, he said, adding that car manufacturing had also become an important player in the Hungarian economy. Áder stressed the need for all voters to exercise their democratic rights and cast their ballots in the upcoming European parliamentary elections.

Zeman said that the Czech Republic views Hungary as its honorary neighbour. "There is sympathy and friendship between the two nations," he said. Zeman said Hungary deserved appreciation for its perseverance on the issue of migration over the past years despite the criticism it had faced. He expressed the Czech Republic's readiness to contribute to defending Europe's borders.

SOCIALIST-PÁRBSZÉD CALL FOR ACTION AGAINST AIR POLLUTION

Rather than representing the interests of the industrial lobbies, the Hungarian government should take action to reduce air pollution and protect Hungarians' health, the Socialist-Párbeszéd alliance said.

Párbeszéd MEP candidate Benedek Jávor told a news conference that some 400,000 people die in the EU every year from diseases connected to air pollution. In Hungary, that number is 16,000, he said. The Hungarian government "refuses" to tackle the problem, Jávor said. In recent years, less than one percent of EU funds have been used to fight air pollution in Hungary, he said. Jávor called on the government to adopt the EU's recent stricter regulations regarding vehicle emissions and threshold values of pollutants.

Párbeszéd co-leader Gergely Karácsony, the joint Budapest mayoral candidate of several opposition parties, said that the Budapest authorities have done nothing to improve air quality in the city in past years. Even smog alert regulations "have been weakened", he said.

A series of measures is needed to address the problem, involving increasing green areas and curbing the use of diesel cars in the capital, Karácsony, who is also the mayor of Budapest's 14th district, said.

Socialist MEP candidate István Ujhelyi said that Socialist-Párbeszéd MEPs will sit in the European Parliament's Socialist and Green groups, with a good chance to staunchly represent Hungarians' interests. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and ruling Fidesz's MEPs "are switching to sit among Europe's enemies, and their ability to assert their interests will navigate to nil," he said.

Regarding reports that German car giant Mercedes is about to suspend the expansion of its facility in central Hungary, Ujhelyi said it was a "mistaken policy to build the country's economy on the success of German car plants."

RADICAL MI HAZÁNK PARTY'S LEADER INTERVIEWED ON PUBLIC TV

László Toroczkai, the leader of the non-parliamentary radical nationalist Mi Hazánk party, was interviewed on public television on Wednesday as part of coverage of the European parliamentary election campaign. Toroczkai said none of the mainstream parties had offered solutions to "the problem of Hungarian-Gypsy coexistence". He said Mi Hazánk would only lend its support to "Gypsy leaders who condemn crime". Criminals, he added, should be sent to Siberia, regardless of their nationality, "as a deterrent". The European Union, he said, was leaving Hungary on the scrap heap because it sees countries

that joined the bloc later merely as sources of cheap labour.

Toroczkai said Hungarian citizens did not benefit from EU subsidies as both the ruling Fidesz party and the left-liberals had either stolen the monies or spent them on "useless" investments.

FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL DISCUSSES BOOSTING HUNGARY- RWANDA ECONOMIC TIES

A senior foreign ministry official charged with developing exports held talks in Kigali on a mission between May 13-15 with a view to boosting Hungarian-Rwandan economic ties. After emerging from the 1990-94 Civil War, Rwanda has become one of Africa's safest and most rapidly developing countries, deputy state secretary István Joó told MTI by phone.

Rwanda has posted a 9-10% annual GDP growth and has significantly developed its infrastructure over the past 10 years, said Joó, who is heading a delegation of 20 business representatives. Rwanda plays an important role in the Sub-Saharan region's stability, Joó said, adding that with its strategic location the country can serve as a bridgehead for Hungary.

At the talks, the Rwandan partners expressed interest in business opportunities in agriculture with a focus on seed and soil enriching exports, as well as water management. They also expressed interest in cooperation in security technology, IT services, information

and communication technologies, and the production of personal identification documents. Talks also took place with officials of Rwanda's defence and foreign ministries and leaders of the country's development council. He said Hungary would soon send to Rwanda an honorary consul tasked with promoting bilateral economic ties.

GOVT SET TO SUBMIT 2020 BUDGET PLAN ON JUNE 4

The government will start discussing plans for next year's budget on Wednesday and plans to submit a 2020 budget bill to parliament on June 4, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said. Next year's budget will contain sizable reserves, he said, adding that this year's budget had over 300 billion euros (EUR 950m) of reserves to buffer Hungary against any European or global economic headwinds.

HUNGARY Q1 GDP RISES BY 5.3%

Hungary's first-quarter GDP grew by an annual 5.3%, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. The rate was above the 5.1% estimate by analysts polled by business news site Portfolio.

Analysts told MTI a gradual slowdown was expected in the coming quarters. Gergely Suppan of Takarékbank noted that output, especially of the construction industry, had sped up at a fast clip and the

acceleration of retail sales showed consumption was still strong. The decline in the foreign trade balance weakened economic output to a lesser extent due to peppy industrial production. Péter Virovác of ING Bank said Hungary's economy was still performing well and the fresh data put Hungary at the top end of EU performers. Still, growth could lose its momentum for the full year of 2019, he added. Gábor Regős of the Századvég economic research institute said Hungarian economic expansion had taken place within a less positive external environment, especially when it came to Hungary's main export destination, Germany. Based on today's data, he forecast growth of just above 4% for the full year.

NO RISK TO EXPANSION OF MERCEDES PLANT IN C HUNGARY

German carmaker Mercedes-Benz's earlier plans to expand its production base in central Hungary, are not at risk, the company's plant in Kecskemét said. The plant issued a statement after its headquarters in Stuttgart confirmed to Hungarian news portal index.hu that an earlier announced expansion in Kecskemét had been temporarily suspended.

Orsolya Ludvig, the communications director for the Kecskemét plant, told index.hu that a company may modify its plans. The plant said in its statement that a number of developments are taking place at the base in addition to

the expansion. The plant is operating at full capacity and the production timetable is full for next year, too, considering demand for the compact cars the plant makes is growing, it added. Market demand, technology trends and industry regulations all impact the way in which automotive industry companies develop, thus Mercedes-Benz regularly reviews its product portfolio and strives to achieve a balanced use of capacity in its international production chain, the plant said. The factory in Kecskemét is an important link in that production chain, it added. Mercedes-Benz has only had good experiences in Hungary and is building on its investment in Kecskemét for the long term, the plant said.

PARTIES DELEGATE 4,000 TO VOTE-COUNTING CTTEES SO FAR

Parties running in the European Parliament election on May 26 have so far delegated a total of only 4,000 people to vote-counting committees, two days before the deadline for registering delegates, figures published by the National Election Committee showed. Candidates from nine party lists will compete at the election so the affected parties are entitled to delegate a total of 185,000 people by 4pm on May 17. The highest number of delegates, 3,105, have been registered by ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrats, followed by 556 by the opposition Socialists-Párbeszéd, 202

by the Democratic Coalition (DK), 84 by Jobbik, 23 by radical nationalist Mi Hazánk, 9 by LMP, 5 by the satirical Two-tailed Dog Party and one by the Hungarian Workers' Party. The records show that Momentum has not registered any delegates so far. There will be a total of 10,277 committees around the country. Sending delegates to the vote-counting committees enables parties to check the fairness of voting and participate in decisions to be made on any disputed matters.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY TO HOST WORLD SCIENCE FORUM IN NOVEMBER

Hungary will host the World Science Forum in November, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó noted at an education conference in the United Nations headquarters in New York. The Budapest forum will give scientists and politicians a chance to discuss the role of science and the economic, social and cultural aspects of new research, Szijjártó said on Tuesday local time.

In his address, Szijjártó said the government's aim was to ensure that education helps school-leavers to find jobs in a labour market which is being transformed by digital and technological developments.

Referring to German-style vocational training, he said dual education was of key importance, adding that the system whereby students get internships as part of their studies was already present in secondary education in Hungary. People finishing



secondary education are encouraged to move towards technical areas and information technology. Their number has doubled in the past few years, he added.

Szijjártó also addressed a panel discussion on handling social inequality and emphasised the importance of sharing burdens equally. The government has introduced the principle that state benefits only apply to people who work, Szijjártó said. The tax and social systems have been amended accordingly, he said, adding that this had had a “whitening” effect on the economy and had led to almost full employment. He said Hungary’s economic achievements had proven the naysayers wrong that fiscal discipline cannot run in parallel with vigorous growth, he said. The government has also made it clear that instead of migration it wants to support families in order to address the challenges in Europe’s labour market, Szijjártó said. Instead of encouraging migration, those in need must be given help to remain in their homelands, he added. The government has offered thousands of scholarships to students from developing countries and it supports persecuted Christian communities around the world, he noted.

At an accompanying event on creativity and target-oriented thinking, Szijjártó talked about the role of the car industry. He said the car industry accounted for 27% of Hungarian exports and 29% of industrial output. Hungary is the 20th largest car industry exporter in the world, he added. During his US visit, Szijjártó met Grand Rabbi Moshe Leib Rabinovich, current Munkacser Rebbe in New York, and held talks with representatives of local Hungarian churches.

OFFICIAL ATTENDS INAUGURATION OF CHURCH BUILT IN IRAQ WITH HUNGARY ASSISTANCE

Tristan Azbej, state secretary in charge of the Hungary Helps programme, attended the inauguration of a church built in Iraqi Kurdistan with assistance from the Hungarian government’s scheme. The Hungarian government’s support “lends hope to Assyrian Christians to start over again”, the state secretary told MTI by phone.

At the inauguration ceremony, Azbej read out a letter from the Hungarian prime minister, in which Viktor Orbán voiced his government’s commitment to protecting Christian communities

and culture. The ceremony was attended by Mar Gewargis III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, and other religious leaders.

RUSSIAN MUSIC FESTIVAL TO BE HELD IN BUDAPEST, DEBRECEN

The cities of Budapest and Debrecen will hold a Russian Music Festival between October 7 and 13. Classical music concerts will be dedicated to composers such as Prokofiev, Glinka, Scriabin, Rimsky Korsakov and Tchaikovsky. The festival will mark the 180th anniversary of Mussorgsky’s birth with a day of concerts, lectures, exhibitions and film screenings, organisers said. A folk music group will present the gusli, a traditional Russian string instrument.

The concerts will take place at the Music Academy, the St Stephen Cathedral and the Russian cultural centre in Budapest and the Kölcsey Centre and the Reformed Great Church in eastern Hungary’s Debrecen. Performers will include opera singer Anatolij Fokanov, the Kruppa Quartet, harpist Anastasia Razvalyaeva, Debrecen’s Kodály Choir and Kodály Philharmonic Orchestra.