

PHOTO OF THE DAY



President János Áder at angling competition in Székesfehérvár

UPCOMING EVENTS

Orbán meets Chinese national people's congress head

Szijjártó: Prepare for 'new era'

Vodafone installs its first 5G relay node in Budapest

British drug smuggler sentenced to 8 years in prison

TOP STORY

ORBÁN MEETS TOP CHINESE OFFICIAL

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Li Zhanshu, who heads the National People's Congress of China, in Budapest.

Orbán said it was a great honour to meet Li and thanked him for visiting in the year the 70th anniversary of the start of Hungarian-Chinese diplomatic relations is being celebrated. Orbán said he had recently been in China and the intensity of ties reflected the close friendship maintained by the two countries. He also said that he had high respect for Chinese companies operating in Budapest for making a significant contribution to Hungary's economic performance. He added that he also greatly appreciated China's endeavours in the international area. Orbán said he was a supporter of the Chinese president's strategic plan to revive the Silk Road and wished him much success.

Li expressed his appreciation for Hungary's policy of opening to the East and added that Chinese-Hungarian relations had developed rapidly in recent years. Orbán's visit to China elevated bilateral relations to a new level, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: PREPARE FOR 'NEW ERA'

Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's minister of foreign affairs and trade, addressing an OECD meeting of ministers responsible for digital innovation, said: "We must prepare ourselves for the new era rather than protecting ourselves from it". At the meeting in Paris, Szijjártó, noting that vast changes were afoot in the global economy, said the ability of national economies to thrive in this new era depended on their use of new technologies. This is especially true of smaller countries with limited natural resources, he added. Szijjártó said updating secondary and higher education so that students are competitive on the job market was of key importance. A workforce equipped with complex knowledge will push wages up, he said, noting that this process was already under way in Hungary. But Szijjártó said governments had a duty to keep wage growth under control so as to avoid their country becoming less attractive to investors. The minister highlighted the importance of continuously easing tax burdens on businesses making high value-added products using state-of-the-art technologies, arguing that doing so would allow those firms to save money and invest it in projects that make use of digital technologies. Szijjártó said central and eastern European countries, with their low tax rates, were setting a good example in this respect.

KÖVÉR MEETS CHINA'S PARLIAMENT CHIEF

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér met Li Zhanshu, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, in Parliament. Addressing a joint press conference with Li, Kövér said Hungary and China's relationship was not only important for their nations, but also in terms of the two countries' cooperation on responding to global challenges. The speaker noted that the head of the NPC's Standing Committee last visited Hungary twelve years ago. He also said China and Hungary established diplomatic relations 70 years ago, just a few days after the formation of the People's Republic of China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán have elevated the two countries' ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership, Kövér said. He said economic ties were expanding dynamically, noting that China is Hungary's top trading partner outside the European Union.

Li said the purpose of his visit was to deepen ties between China and Hungary. He underlined the importance of bilateral cooperation and coordination in international affairs, as well as the two countries supporting each other politically. He said China aimed to facilitate free trade and was looking to cooperate with Hungary in ensuring sustainability and the fight against climate change.

At a conference marking 70 years of Sino-Hungarian diplomatic relations

at Budapest's National Public Service University on Thursday, Kövér said China was a key factor in efforts to achieve balance in world politics and economics in the 21st century. He noted a series of events were being held in both countries to appraise the results and review the possibilities in bilateral relations. China is Hungary's largest trading partner outside Europe, with a significant share of foreign investments in Hungary, Kövér said. In the field of culture and education, four Confucius Institutes are operating in Hungary and eleven universities offering Hungarian courses in China. Hungary also boasts the only Chinese bilingual high school in the region, he said.

Li Zhanshu praised the stable bilateral ties based on mutual respect. This year's anniversary will give new momentum to an already strong economic and cultural cooperation, he said.

GULYÁS: 2004 ENLARGEMENT EU'S 'LAST ACHIEVEMENT'

The last few years cannot be regarded as the European project's brightest, Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, said at an award ceremony for students held in Parliament. The European Union's last success was in 2004, when ten countries joined the bloc, followed by three others, he added. Gulyás insisted several EU candidate countries "could be approved tomorrow" but the EU "doesn't appear to be up to the job of accepting new members". He said changes were needed over the next

five years to ensure the participation of the Western Balkans in institutionalised European cooperation became “a realistic alternative”.

Gulyás said Hungary’s experiences of 15 years of EU membership had been mixed. “In a club ... it’s not obligatory to praise everything; there’s room for criticism too,” he said. The chief of the PM’s office said not only had the EU not expanded, it had actually shrunk, having lost a member with its second largest economy. “For some countries the EU is no longer as attractive as it used to be.” The EU has not been up to the task of effectively handling the economic and migration crises of the past decade, he said, adding however that “no alternative to European cooperation” existed and Hungary “has no other option than to be a member”. Gulyás said hopefully the upcoming European parliamentary election would lead Europe in “a new direction”.

Gábor Zupkó, the head of the European Commission’s representation in Hungary, pointed to an increasing number of challenges, such as illegal migration and climate change, which, he said, called for joint European efforts. “At the same time, what can effectively be handled at national level should be handled at national level,” he added.

GOVT BILL AIMS TO PREVENT OPPOSITION FROM ‘HELPING CRIMINALS’

“The opposition must be prevented from helping criminals”, Lőrinc Nacsa,

parliamentary spokesman for the co-ruling Christian Democrats, said on Thursday after submitting an amendment dubbed “Lex Czeglédy”. Under the proposal, sponsored by the Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance, an election candidate would not have immunity in criminal proceedings if charges are pressed or the candidate is detained before they are officially registered as a candidate, Nacsa said, referring to the case of Csaba Czeglédy, a candidate of the leftist opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) in the upcoming European parliamentary elections. Nacsa said it had been “unprecedented” by opposition members of the National Election Committee to refuse to remove Czeglédy’s immunity at the request of a law court which sought completion of proceedings under way. Leaders of the opposition party “have sought to cover up for their lawyer” charged with large-scale tax fraud, Nacsa said, adding that “according to reports” some 6 billion forints (EUR 18.3m) “disappeared on Czeglédy’s watch”.

He accused the opposition of siding with a suspected criminal rather than with the judiciary, Nacsa insisted, calling it “unprecedented, shocking and unacceptable”. Criminal proceedings “such as those against Czeglédy” have “nothing to do with [the issue of] candidacy”, Nacsa said. He added that the amendment could be passed and take effect before the summer, after which “the opposition will not have an opportunity to abuse elections and immunity to help criminals avoid prosecution”.

JOBBIK DEMANDS ZERO TOLERANCE AGAINST ALL FORMS OF IMMIGRATION

Opposition Jobbik demands zero tolerance against all forms of immigration to Hungary, deputy party leader Daniel Z. Kárpát said. He accused Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his government of aggravating a trend of “population exchange” in recent years. The number of work permits issued to “migrant workers” doubled in 2017 compared with the previous year and the residency bond scheme, “marred by corruption mechanisms”, pushed the number up even further, Z Kárpát told a press conference. A government resolution was introduced also in 2017 which enabled towns and villages to apply to set up “migrant hostels”, and several hospitals and other public institutions “fell victim” to this, he added. Z Kárpát demanded that instead of drawing on estimates by representatives in various sectors, a professional body independent of the political parties should decide which sector suffered from a labour shortage. In addition to inactive workers, “masses of people working in the grey and black economies” could also be used to fill vacancies, he said.

MI HAZÁNK CALLS FOR LEGISLATORS TO ACT AGAINST FACEBOOK

Radical nationalist Mi Hazánk is calling on legislators to take action against

Facebook “censorship” and “the monopoly on opinion by left-liberals”, the party’s campaign chief said. Előd Novák said it was “unacceptable” that Facebook had taken down party leader László Toroczkai’s page and regularly deleted entries by Mi Hazánk and its supporters. The party also called on the competition office to start a procedure against Facebook due to its monopoly on social media, he added. Novák said that in the run-up to the EP elections, Facebook was trying to thwart the party’s mobilisation efforts. He called on supporters to continue distributing information and remain active on Facebook.

Toroczkai recently offered to relinquish his immunity as a European Parliament (EP) election campaign candidate after police in Törökszentmiklós, in central Hungary, charged him for abusing the right to assembly. He said police had launched proceedings against him for, as he phrased it, helping to “put a Gypsy criminal behind bars”.

LMP: FIDESZ ‘DENIES CLIMATE CHANGE’

Hungary’s ruling Fidesz “turns a blind eye” to climate change, the greatest challenge of the 21st century, Gábor Vágó, top candidate of the opposition LMP party in the upcoming European parliamentary election, told a press conference. Fidesz “constantly speaks about migrants, failing to mention that those people had no drinking water where they come from,” Vágó said. According to Fidesz, people would

not be aware of climate change were it not for “the media brainwashing them”, Vágó said. “The natural environment is being destroyed by large companies controlling policies in Hungary and in a number of other countries,” Vágó added.

ORBÁN CALLS ON FARMERS TO VOTE FOR FIDESZ

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Thursday called on Hungarian farmers to vote for the ruling alliance of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats in this weekend’s European Parliament elections. Addressing a farm machinery expo organised by the National Agriculture Chamber (NAK) and the National Association of Farm Machinery and Equipment Sellers (Megfosz) in Mezőfalva, in central Hungary, Orbán urged farmers to “say no to migration” on Sunday. The prime minister said Brussels was planning to cut funding for farmers and spend the money it would save on supporting migrants. “This must be prevented,” he said, adding that the MEP candidates of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats were capable of stopping migration and protecting the interests of Hungarians in Brussels

GOVT SPOX: ‘SOROS WON’T DECIDE’ EP VOTE’S OUTCOME

The government will not allow “George Soros and his money” to decide the outcome of the European Parliament elections, government spokesman István Hollik told a press conference. The spokesman insisted that the US

billionaire and the NGOs he financed were attempting to manipulate the EP election. Meanwhile, he responded to a question about Jean-Claude Juncker’s recent comments to CNN in which the European Commission president called nationalists “stupid” and berated populist leaders. Hollik said it was “quite amazing” that anyone in Europe declaring their love for country and nation was held to be guilty of a sin. Juncker’s statement, he added, proved that “the pro-migration elite in Brussels” did not stand behind the people of Europe and their security but supported immigrants. He said May 26 presented an “excellent opportunity” to remove pro-migration politicians from the European Union.

BRITISH DRUG SMUGGLER SENTENCED TO 8 YEARS IN PRISON

An appeals court in Szeged sentenced a British citizen to 8 years in prison for attempted drug smuggling. The man, of Iraqi origin, was convicted of trying to smuggle 7 kilogrammes of opiates to the United Kingdom via Hungary. Under the binding ruling, he is to be expelled from Hungary for a period of eight years upon his release. The man was on his way back to the UK from Iraq when his car was checked by excise officers at the Röske border station in southern Hungary on April 13, 2017. The officer inspecting his vehicle noticed that the car’s spare tire had been tampered with. The authorities deflated the tire before

cutting it up to find seven packets containing morphine and codeine-based opiates.

VODAFONE INSTALLS ITS FIRST 5G RELAY NODE IN BUDAPEST

The local unit of UK-based telco Vodafone installed its first 5G relay node in Budapest on Thursday on its HQ in the 9th district. Amanda Nelson, CEO-president of Vodafone Hungary, said this is their second relay node in the country. The first one was installed in Zalaegerszeg, in western Hungary. Gergő J Budai, Vodafone Hungary's vice-CEO, said the group has started testing 5G technology in several places on its European network in the last months. The Hungarian unit aims to launch its commercial 5G service this year, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: FRENCH COMPANIES TO INVEST HUF 40 BN IN HUNGARY

French pharmaceutical and automotive companies will invest

40 billion forints (EUR 122m) in Hungary based on agreements signed at business meetings on Thursday, Peter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, told MTI in a phone interview from Paris. The investments in the near future will focus on research and development, innovation and technological progress, helping to further improve the Hungarian economy's competitiveness, Szijjártó added. Hungary has traditionally fared well in the pharmaceuticals and automotive sectors in the more traditional age of the global economy and now its successes need to be reproduced in the two sectors in the new innovative age too, the minister said.

GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY DIGITALISATION MODELS EXEMPLARY

Besides producing one of the highest GDP growth numbers in the EU, Hungary's models in digitalisation are also exemplary, a government official said after a ministerial meeting of the Organisation for Co-operation

and Economic Development (OECD) in Paris. The Hungarian government is in the vanguard of employing digital solutions in services and in fighting black economy, the finance ministry cited state secretary Gábor Gion as saying. Digital solutions such as online invoicing, the electronic control system for road haulage companies (ekae) and online cash registers have brought hundreds of billions of forints in revenues through whitening the economy, he said.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Gion met South Korean Deputy Finance Minister Lee Ho-Seung. Gion and Lee discussed the two countries' dynamically developing economic ties. The Hungarian government has so far signed strategic cooperation agreements with two South Korean corporations, Hankook Tire and Samsung Electronics, he noted. Several other companies have chosen Hungary and thereby contributed to job creation and boosting Hungarian economy, he said. The talks also touched on a knowledge exchange programme regarding domestic financial information systems, Gion said.