

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

Parrots in Debrecen Zoo

UPCOMING EVENTS

Innovation minister attends ZalaZone ground-breaking in Zalaegerszeg

WW2 bomb removed from City Park

World Water Championships events

TOP STORY

EC SUES OVER 'STOP SOROS' LAW

The European Commission has decided to refer Hungary to the Court of Justice of the European Union over its "Stop Soros" package of laws, initiating the third phase of the ongoing infringement procedure.

Having deemed that the Hungarian government had not done enough to address its concerns, the EC decided to take the case to the Luxembourg-based court. The infringement procedure was launched in July 2018. In a statement, the EC said the new law and a related constitutional amendment were not compatible with EU law. Criminalising activities that support asylum and residence applications restricts the right to request asylum, it added. "The Hungarian legislation curtails asylum applicants' right to communicate with and be assisted by relevant national, international and non-governmental organisations by criminalising support to asylum applications." The EC reasoned that the law excessively restricts EU citizens' right to free movement.

Commenting on the EC's decision, the government spokesman said Hungary would continue to stand by its "Stop Soros" laws and the constitutional amendment banning the mandatory settlement of migrants by non-Hungarian authorities in the country. The Hungarian government is ready to defend itself in court, István Hollik said.

EC ISSUES FORMAL NOTICE

The European Commission has also decided to send a letter of formal notice to Hungary concerning the withdrawal of food provisions for people detained in Hungarian transit zones at the border with Serbia who are waiting to be expelled from the country. The EC found that detention conditions in the Hungarian transit zones does not respect the material conditions set out in the Return Directive and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. "In view of the urgency of the situation, the deadline for Hungary to respond to the Commission's concerns is set to 1 month, after which the Commission may decide to follow-up by sending a reasoned opinion," the statement said.

Another decision taken by the EC concerns the referral of Hungary to the Court of Justice of the EU for excluding non-EU nationals with long-term resident status from practising as vets.

The contested measures serve the protection of the Hungarian people, István Hollik, the government spokesman, said. Hungarians have made it very clear at referendums as well as the parliamentary and EP elections that they want nothing to do with migration and want to protect Europe's Christian culture, he said.

The constitutional amendment prohibiting the settlement of migrants in Hungary and the "Stop Soros" laws, which criminalise the

organisation and promotion of illegal migration, serve just that purpose, he said. The government believes that those measures reflect the will of the Hungarian people and comply with the Geneva convention, the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Regulation, he added.

The government's communications centre said in a statement that the outgoing European Commission "is still working to complete the dirty work of pro-migration forces". According to the statement, the commission's procedures are aimed at "pressuring Hungary to drop its more stringent immigration rules and eliminate transit zones which are crucial for border protection". In its statement, the centre rejected "lies" concerning services for asylum-seekers and insisted that those in the transit zones are catered for "in line with the regulations" and are provided with those services until completion of their asylum process.

JUSTICE MINISTER: HUNGARY REJECTS TYING EU FUNDING TO RULE OF LAW

Hungary will resist any effort by the European Commission to tie European Union funding to observance of the rule of law, the justice minister told the Reuters news agency in an interview. The EU already has the tools it needs to safeguard the rule of law and the distribution of EU funding, Judit Varga said. "We don't have to (re)invent the wheel," the minister said.

Varga said the definition of "generalised deficiency" regarding the rule of law in the EU's 2021-27 draft budget was too vague. She said her goal was to "completely drop" this proposal, pointing out that there was a "package principle" when adopting the draft budget. "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. And this is a red line," she said. Varga denied that Hungary was violating the principle of the rule of law.

The minister dismissed a plan by the outgoing European Commission to introduce a regular rule of law review similarly to how it reviews member states' national budgets, saying it was "completely contrary to the treaties". She added that hopefully the new commission would "build bridges instead of making gaps" between member states.

FINANCE MINISTER CALLS FOR BUILDING UP NEW HUNGARIAN BRANDS

Finance Minister Mihály Varga has called for establishing new Hungarian brands. Addressing a panel discussion on competitiveness at the "Tusványos" Summer University in Băile Tușnad (Tusnádfürdő), in central Romania, on Thursday, Varga said that once these brands were built up, suppliers would be able to allocate competitive Hungarian technologies to them. "Competitiveness doesn't start abroad," the minister said. "First we have to establish ourselves at home

so that we are competitive when we enter foreign markets.”

Varga urged letting go of the idea that competitiveness based on cheap labour can be lasting. “We’re gradually on our way out of this era.” Hungary must now transition to the small and medium-series production of quality goods, he said, arguing that “this has a future from the point of view of the Carpathian Basin.” The minister also touched on the need to be able to adapt to swift market changes, pointing out that products currently in demand may no longer have a market 6 months to a year from now. Varga said the era of manufacturing technologies considered obsolete in Germany being used in central Europe was also at an end. Today, Hungary has access to the latest technologies being used in Germany and Austria but is still behind in terms of sales productivity, he added.

Hungary’s task now is to reach German levels of productivity, the minister said, adding that this required a move towards robotisation. The workforce replaced by robotisation will be able to find work in the fields of programming, logistics and quality management, he added. Varga said Hungary should concentrate on improving its competitiveness in areas that involve new technologies where no one has gained a significant advantage yet. He named the production of electric and autonomous vehicles, the green economy and renewable energy as

examples of sectors Hungary should focus on.

The minister noted the National Competitiveness Council set up in 2016 to give policy recommendations to the government on how to improve competitiveness. Over the past year-and-a-half, the government has focused on improving the country’s business environment and the competitiveness of companies, Varga said. It also “fixed” the budget, he said, adding that public debt was declining and the unemployment rate had fallen to 3.4%.

SZIJJÁRTÓ THANKS CROATIA FIRST RESPONDERS

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó on Thursday decorated volunteer firefighters and doctors who helped in the rescue of a Hungarian family involved in a car accident on Croatia’s A4 motorway earlier this month. The minister presented the Hungarian government’s awards to volunteer firefighters of the town of Sveti Ivan Zelina and staff members of Zagreb’s Clinical Hospital Dubrava. Szijjártó said the medals handed over to the awardees were an expression of Hungary’s appreciation of their efforts.

On July 11, a Hungarian-Croatian family of three was severely injured when a car ploughed into theirs at a motorway toll gate at Sveta Helena, Croatia. Test results later

revealed the presence of various types of drugs in the driver’s bloodstream.

OFFICIAL: GOVT ALLOCATES OVER HUF 1 BN TO SUPPORT VOJVODINA HUNGARIANS

The Hungarian government allocated 1 billion 89 million forints (EUR 3.3m) this year to support ongoing and new projects of ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina, Serbia, a government official said at the summer university in Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő), in central Romania. Next year, the region will receive 325 million forints, and in 2021, 290 million, Árpád János Potápi, the state secretary for policies for Hungarians abroad, said.

Potápi said that around the millennium, Serbia had been in a “very difficult economic, political and social situation”, to the extent that it threatened the ethnic Hungarian community’s very existence. They persevered, however, and found the way to progress in cohesion, he said. Vojvodina Hungarians have developed hugely in the past twenty years, Potápi said, and greatly contributed to Serbia and Hungary’s steps to a historic reconciliation.

István Pásztor, head of the Association of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ), said that the Hungarian funds will go towards renovating historical buildings in Vojvodina and creating community space for Hungarians. Vojvodina Hungarians

preserve their identity but are also committed to Serbia's prosperity, Pásztor said. The Hungarian government's support means that "for the first time in the past century, it is an advantage to be Hungarian in Serbia", he said. Building the ties between Serbia and Hungary was a "tightrope act", Pásztor said. By now, they are each other's best neighbours, which benefits Vojvodina Hungarians hugely, he said.

FIDESZ MEP: EU ACTION NEEDED IN PROTECTING TRANSCARPATHIA HUNGARIANS

Fidesz MEP Andrea Bocskor, in a letter to European Union officials, has asked for the EU to take action in protecting the Hungarian community in western Ukraine's Transcarpathia region. In the letter addressed to European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen, European Parliament Speaker David Sassoli, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and EU Commissioner for Enlargement Johannes Hahn, Bocskor also called attention to

various legal breaches that took place during Ukraine's recent parliamentary elections.

She touched on the "harassment" of the representatives of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community by Ukrainian authorities, the distribution of "provocative flyers meant to mislead Transcarpathian voters" as well as "misleading" text messages that had been sent to voters during the campaign-free period. Bocskor added that there had been proven cases of vote-buying during the campaign. She said that whereas the swift organisation of the snap election had a positive effect on democracy, the rejection of the establishment of an electoral district with a Hungarian majority, the "abuses" against ethnic minority leaders by authorities and the "unequal conditions" faced by local Hungarian representatives had a negative effect on it, as well as on the human and civil rights of ethnic minorities.

Bocskor asked the officials to "pay closer attention" to the violations of minority rights in Ukraine, arguing that positive change could only be achieved through social and legal equality.

WW2 BOMB UNEARTHED IN CITY PARK TO BE DEFUSED ON FRI

A large unexploded bomb dating from the second world war has been discovered during earth works in Budapest's City Park, the municipal government office announced. The 100kg device will be neutralised at the site on Friday morning, the office said, adding that the police will evacuate and close down streets around the south-western corner of the park for the duration of the operation starting at 8am.

JEWISH CULTURAL FESTIVAL TO BE HELD SEPT 1-9

The 22nd Jewish Cultural Festival will be held between Sept. 1 and 9 in seven venues in downtown Budapest. The festival offers a variety of events in several genres of music. Artists such as the Budapest Klezmer Band, pop singer János Bródy, jazz musician Edina "Mókus" Szirtes, singer Kati Rák and violinist Orsolya Korcsolán, will perform. The festival will close with an operetta gala featuring Bálint Bársony and his orchestra, organisers said.