

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI / Zsolt Czeleidy

New bridge for cyclists on River Tisza at Poroszló

UPCOMING EVENTS

Local election campaign events

Parliament holds special session

Krones Hungary opens new plant in Debrecen

World Press Photo 2019 presser, opening

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: OPENING ITALY PORTS 'DANGEROUS'

The Hungarian government believes the Italian government's decision to open the country's southern ports to illegal migrants is "dangerous" and gives cause for concern, the foreign minister has said.

The number of illegal immigrants that have already entered Europe is enough and no more should be allowed in, Péter Szijjártó said, stressing the importance of protecting Europe's borders. The Hungarian government was the first to prove that the flow of immigrants via land routes can be stopped, he said. The previous Italian government with Matteo Salvini as deputy prime minister and interior minister was the first to prove that the same could be achieved on sea as well, Szijjártó said. After opening the ports, the next step will obviously be for the Italian government "to enforce" the migrant distribution quota scheme which Hungary will continue to reject, he added. "We've made it clear that we will not yield to any blackmail should it be directed against us by Soros-supported NGOs, a western European government or Brussels," Szijjártó said. Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, leader of the governing Five Star Movement, on Monday evening rejected the Hungarian government's reservations concerning his government's migration-related decisions in a statement.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI's real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT THANKS HUNGARIANS FOR COURAGE IN 1989

Thanks to the courage of Hungarians, a new chapter of history began in 1989, the president of Germany's Bundestag told public news channel M1 in an interview marking the 30th anniversary of the opening up of Hungary's western border. Former West German politicians always knew that Germans living in the German Democratic Republic would choose unity if they could decide for themselves, Wolfgang Schäuble said. But it was also known that borders could not be changed either in Germany or in Europe, because such efforts would be suppressed by the communist regime, as was experienced by the Germans in 1953, the Hungarians in 1956, and later by the people of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Poles in 1980-81, he said.

"However, in 1989, we felt that something started to change, and thanks to the courage of Hungarians ... it became clear that a new chapter of history began and Europe would no longer remain divided," he said. The Bundestag president said Germany "will never forget" Hungary's decision to open its border in September 1989 which had paved the way for German unity and the unification of Europe," said Schäuble, a leading politician of

Germany's senior ruling party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

Responding to a question, Schäuble said that the Iron Curtain dismantled in 1989 cannot be compared to the fence built along Hungary's southern border in 2015. "The two have nothing to do with one another," he said. While the Iron Curtain "closed people", the fence was an answer to current challenges, including globalisation and regional differences, he said.

"It is quite understandable that people seek to flee from poverty-stricken, war-torn regions but it is also obvious that Europe cannot take in all those in need. We should find a solution to migration," Schäuble said. He said that there is a need for border control but added that "we do not want to isolate ourselves hermetically because Europe is not a fortress". "If we do not want to restore internal border control, we should defend the external border," he said.

Asked about Hungarian-German relations, Schäuble said "we should make continuous efforts so that political differences should not open new ditches between us and that we should be able to resolve issues that can only be resolved efficiently together."

Schäuble said national affiliation should not be set against European endeavours. "Germany's future will not be successful if that of Europe fails ... and Hungary has better prospects if it is part of a unified Europe."

JUSTICE MINISTER: ARTICLE 7 PROCEDURE AGAINST HUNGARY 'COULD HAVE BEEN CLOSED YESTERDAY'

Had it not been for a political order, the European Union's ongoing Article 7 procedure against Hungary could have been closed yesterday, the day before yesterday, or even a year ago, the justice minister told public news channel M1. The procedure could have already been closed since there are legal answers to "accusations" Hungary has been subject to, Judit Varga said, after an EU ministerial hearing in Brussels on Monday. The minister said it was not a surprise that the hearing had not attracted too much interest in the council room as "there was nothing new under the sun, with accusations parroted by the pro-immigration elite."

She said Monday's hearing created an opportunity for the Hungarian government to provide a detailed explanation of the legal and political environment to the critics of Hungary. It demonstrated once again that politics and other member states should not be meddling in legal proceedings. Varga said that although the EU is an advocate of transparency, the hearing was not made public.

Last September, the European Parliament approved a report prepared by Dutch Green MEP Judith Sargentini triggering an Article 7 procedure against Hungary which could ultimately strip the country of its EU

voting rights. MEPs voted to launch the procedure because of the “existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded”.

SZIJJÁRTÓ DISCUSSES ECON COOPERATION WITH CUBA

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó discussed bilateral economic cooperation with Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, a vice president of Cuba’s Council of Ministers, in Budapest, the foreign ministry said. The European Union and Cuba signed an agreement on political dialogue and cooperation in 2016, under which EU countries maintain relations with Cuba, the ministry said in a statement.

The focus areas of Hungarian-Cuban economic cooperation include water management and food industry. In that framework, a Hungarian water purification plant has been installed in an area hit by Hurricane Irma to supply drinking water to 5,000 local residents. There are further Hungarian projects planned as part of the modernisation of Cuba’s water management.

The Cuban government is seeking to boost domestic food production to substitute imports and plans to set up chicken and pig farms with the involvement of Hungarian companies. Talks about financing these investment projects are under way with the International Investment Bank (IIB), the statement said.

VARGA TOUTS BUDAPEST’S STRENGTHENING ROLE AS FINANCIAL CENTRE

Finance Minister Mihály Varga, at a business forum in Budapest, highlighted the Hungarian capital’s strengthening role as a financial centre, saying that the relocation of the Russia-based International Investment Bank’s headquarters to Budapest had boosted the institution’s global recognition and competitiveness. The IIB’s relocation of its headquarters in Budapest is a “significant recognition” for Hungary’s economic policy, Varga told the forum organised by the bank and the Finance Ministry. Setting up the HQ in Budapest will prove favourable for the IIB’s shareholders and Hungary as well and will also present new opportunities to Hungarian businesses, he added.

Given that none of the five major international development banks with headquarters in the European Union are based in the CEE region, the IIB’s move to Budapest will strengthen the financial role of Hungary and the region as a whole, the minister said. Varga also noted that the IIB’s move to Budapest has prompted Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor’s to raise their ratings for the bank by one notch. This, combined with the bank’s recent bond on the Budapest Stock Exchange, will help the IIB increase its profits, which will benefit all of its shareholders, including Hungary, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ CALLS INDONESIA IMPORTANT ECONOMIC, POLITICAL PARTNER

Indonesia is an important economic and political partner for Hungary, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said after meeting his Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi for talks in Budapest. All the more so because it is located in Southeast Asia, the world’s fastest growing region, the minister told a joint press conference.

Szijjártó said they agreed that there was no room in international politics for double standards and for the proliferation of unilateral opinions that ignore national characteristics.

It is not right for major international organisations to irresponsibly judge certain countries, he said, underlining the importance of building international ties on the basis of mutual respect.

As a UN Security Council non-permanent member in 2019-2020, Indonesia will play an important role and carry serious responsibilities, he said, noting that Hungary as a country sharing Indonesia’s commitment to fighting against international terrorism and extremism had supported its nomination for the post.

Addressing economic cooperation, Szijjártó highlighted agreements on large-scale projects in water management and energy production. He noted that GE Hungary is participating in the modernisation of



Indonesia's energy systems, a project supported with a 218 million dollar credit line by Hungary's Eximbank. Hungarian firms are also in talks on IT cooperation with a 460 million dollar credit line by Eximbank. Under another project, Hungarian water management companies will build a water purification plant in Indonesia with a 36 million dollar tied aid grant, Szijjártó said. He said Hungary will increase the number of scholarships granted to Indonesian students from 50 to 100.

Marsudi said Indonesia has an interest in expanding economic cooperation with Hungary identifying water management a priority area. She noted that the two countries will celebrate the 65th anniversary of their diplomatic ties next year.

PALKOVICS: HUNGARY-FRANCE COOPERATION IN INNOVATION GETTING STRONGER

Cooperation in innovation between Hungary and France is getting stronger, with the two countries' ministers holding identical views on the area and common issues, Hungary's minister of innovation and technology said. László Palkovics told

MTI by phone from Paris that he had held talks with French innovation and research experts, including Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation Frédérique Vidal. The ministers discussed cooperation opportunities with the Pasteur Institute which is in talks with Budapest's Semmelweis University on joint application for projects. French involvement in the work of the laser research centre in Szeged was also discussed, he added. Palkovics also held talks about developing laser-based technologies for nuclear waste disposal with the involvement of Hungarian and French scientists.

DUOCOR INAUGURATES HUF 3.2 BN EXPANSION

Duocor Ipari inaugurated a 3.2 billion forint (EUR 9.6m) expansion at its base in Makó, in south-eastern Hungary. Duocor added to production capacity for institutional furniture, creating 65 jobs, said Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó. The government supported the investment with a 635 million forint grant, he added. Szijjártó said that thanks to recent years' investment projects and high exports Hungary was among the

winners of the new global economic era. Hungary has the fastest growing economy in the European Union and unemployment has dropped to 3.3% from the earlier 12.5%, he said. German companies have played an important role in the successful transformation of Hungary's economy, he said. Bilateral trade totalled 54 billion euros last year and Hungary's exports to Germany grew by 60% in ten years, he added. Germany is the most important investor in Hungary, with 6,000 German companies employing 300,000 Hungarians, he said. The government signed strategic cooperation agreements with 101 German companies in the past five and a half years as a result of which 2,000 billion forints worth of investment was carried out in Hungary, Szijjártó said.

Duocor owner Michael Stegner said the new production hall, outfitted with the latest technology, as well as the company's well-trained staff, would allow the company to meet new challenges. Duocor had revenue of 18.4 million euros last year, public records show. It employed a staff of 347. Duocor is a unit of Germany's ASS group, a family-owned business that supplies public institutions with furniture.