

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Launch of charity collection 'Mikulástrolé' in front of the 5th district City Hall

MTI/Balázs Mohai

UPCOMING EVENTS

OSCE ministerial conference ends in Bratislava

Stats office first estimate on industry in Oct 2019

Parliament judicial committee meets

Parliament sustainable development committee holds outpost meeting in Eger

TOP STORY

ORBÁN OPENS EXHIBITION IN TOKYO

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán opened a large-scale exhibition featuring Hungarian and European artwork in the National Art Centre in Tokyo.

"Hungarians are innovative people, capable of producing world-class artwork like those seen here today," Orbán said, opening the exhibition marking the 150th anniversary of Hungarian-Japanese diplomatic relations. "This is because Hungarians must prove the world needs them, and the world is well served if there are Hungarians." "This is why there are so many Hungarian Nobel laureates, Olympic Gold winners and works of art such as these; it is all about Hungarians claiming their place under the sun," he said. "There are more things that bind us together than separate us. The common fabric of spirit, emotion and virtue is immediately recognised when Hungarians talk with Japanese," Orbán said, adding that the exhibition paid proper tribute, via culture, to Japan and Hungary, two nations with long-standing cultural heritage and traditions. The prime minister thanked Japan for the 150 years of friendship between the two nations. Princess Tsuguko of Takamado said at the event that the exhibition in Tokyo presented works never seen in Japan before and would further strengthen Hungarian-Japanese ties.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY- JAPAN RELATIONS AT 'ALL-TIME HIGH'

Bilateral ties between Hungary and Japan are the best they have ever been, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Tokyo. Hungary and Japan's friendship and alliance is based on mutual trust and respect, as evidenced by the confidence Japanese companies and people have had in Hungary over the years, Szijjártó told an investment seminar. Japanese companies were among the first foreign entities to invest in Hungary during the country's transition to democracy in 1989-90, a time when he said few had believed that central Europe and Hungary would be capable of achieving rapid growth, Szijjártó said.

The creation of the "Hungarian model" in 2010 was a similar turning point, he said. Up until then, the belief had been that a country had to choose between economic growth and fiscal discipline, he said, adding that Hungary had proven that both could be achieved at the same time.

Hungary aims to maintain a long-term growth rate that is at least 2 percentage points above the European Union average, Szijjártó said. Among Hungary's economic achievements, the minister mentioned the steady economic growth rate, declining public debt, the creation of a labour-based economy, tax reforms, a new vocational training system and persistent wage growth. Szijjártó

praised Hungarian-Japanese economic relations, saying that Hungary aimed to further intensify bilateral cooperation. He noted that the seminar had been organised to coincide with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's visit to Japan. Szijjártó said the absence of any unresolved issues between the two countries gave them a strong chance to intensify business ties.

MATOLCSY: CBANKS SHOULD WORK TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO MODERN CHALLENGES

National Bank of Hungary (NBH) governor György Matolcsy said central banks should work to find solutions to new challenges of a "revolution of money and technology". Speaking at a conference marking 30 years of diplomatic ties between South Korea and Hungary, Matolcsy said a "new world order" was in the making, with the United States and China in key positions. The role of regions and megacities will grow, he said. South Korea's roaring economy and the activities of its companies have contributed to Asia's growing economic weight, he said.

MINISTER: GOVT WANTS COMPETITIVE HUNGARIAN COMMUNITIES IN CARPATHIAN BASIN

The Hungarian government aims to make the Hungarian communities of the Carpathian Basin competitive, the

minister of agriculture said in Budapest. Development schemes geared towards the region's communities aim to boost economic cooperation among ethnic Hungarian communities and, in a broader sense, across central and eastern Europe as a whole, István Nagy told the Carpathian Basin Unity Forum. The first such schemes, made possible by Hungary's improving economic performance, mainly targeted ethnic agricultural firms, he said. The government gives special attention to supporting development schemes that lead to the establishment of value-creating businesses through cooperation among local farmers, Nagy said.

FINMIN: HUNGARY URGES EFFECTIVE EU ACTION AGAINST MONEY LAUNDERING, TERRORISM

Effective action against money laundering and terrorism serve the common interests of all European Union member states, Finance Minister Mihály Varga told an Ecofin meeting. But Hungary does not back proposals that would entail national authorities ceding power to EU institutions unless there is a proper justification, he added.

According to a ministry statement, Varga said that before setting up any new EU institution, its role should be made clear. Additionally, the question of whether the security of European citizens would improve as a result should be assessed, he added. The European strategy against money

laundering and financing terrorism was a headline topic of the Ecofin meeting, Varga said. Hungary's position is that transferring supervisory functions to EU institutions would be a reason for concern. The supervisory authority may well oversee the enforcement of common regulations, but Hungary believes a national authority with access to detailed and up-to-date information could better handle the challenges facing the EU, he added.

Meanwhile, commenting on Hungary's fiscal policy, Varga said that Hungary disagrees with an Ecofin resolution stating that the country had failed to introduce sufficient measures in connection with a Significant Deviation Procedure (SDP). Hungary is currently the fastest growing economy in the EU. Thanks to government measures, the public finances have improved, public debt has decreased, and employment and wages have grown, he said. Varga noted differences in methodologies, saying that under current macroeconomic and fiscal trends, corrections demanded by the EU would unnecessarily hinder Hungary's economic performance.

On the subject of developing countries, Varga noted that the finance ministers had discussed a proposal for restructuring the EU's development-financing system. Hungary's standpoint, he said, was that development financing should be increased in countries of origin for mass migration, and investment, job-creation and infrastructure development should be used to ameliorate the causes of migration.

VÁRHELYI: EU MUST OPEN ACCESSION TALKS WITH ALBANIA, N MACEDONIA NEXT SPRING

The European Union must open accession talks with both Albania and North Macedonia before next May's EU-Western Balkan summit in Zagreb, the European commissioner for enlargement and neighbourhood policy said in Brussels. Addressing a session of the European Parliament's foreign affairs committee, Olivér Várhelyi urged support for the EU aspirations of the Western Balkan countries, saying that they were located "in the heart of Europe".

Europe also has a vested interest in supporting the region, the commissioner said, arguing that ensuring prosperity and security in the Western Balkan countries would benefit the entire continent. Given that the Western Balkan region is a part of Europe, the European Union must offer its countries a credible outlook for joining the bloc, he said. The reforms prescribed by the EU should enhance growth, create jobs and improve the standard of living in those countries, Várhelyi added. The commissioner said that next month the European Commission will unveil its plans for speeding up the accession talks. He added that it was important for all of the region's candidate countries to join the European Green Deal, the Digital Agenda for Europe as well as the bloc's shipping

and energy network prior to becoming full-fledged EU members.

He said the EU must also do its part so that it is ready to take on the new members once they meet all the criteria. Várhelyi said the Western Balkan countries were cooperating well with the EU on the handling of migration, adding, at the same time, that they would require further assistance in overcoming their continued challenges.

In response to a question, he underlined the importance of standing by Ukraine's territorial integrity. Until there is progress in the implementation of the Minsk process on Moscow's part, the EU must not ease sanctions on Russia, he added. As regards Belarus, he said EU cooperation with the country was "modest", adding, however, that the bloc should maintain a presence there so that it can represent its values.

Asked about the handling of collective minority rights in the EU, Várhelyi pointed out that not all member states recognised the rights of minorities as collective rights. At the same time, the protection of minority groups is an EU value, he said, adding that it must be preserved under all circumstances.

On the topic of Turkey's EU integration, Várhelyi said that as long as Turkey considered itself a candidate country, it must address the bloc's concerns over its approach to fundamental rights, press freedom and every area in which respect for rule of law is deteriorating.

NOVÁK: BRAZIL, HUNGARY, POLAND, US TO COOPERATE ON FAMILY POLICY

Brazil, Hungary, Poland and the United States are working on a family protection cooperation scheme with a view to standing up to “anti-family measures that put family life in the shade”, the state secretary for family and youth affairs said in Washington, DC. Speaking to MTI after attending a family protection conference on Wednesday, Katalin Novák said the Partnership for Families alliance would work on proposals to improve the welfare of families “and not to merely react to events”. Wednesday’s event was the second family protection conference between US and Hungarian partners and the first to also be attended by Brazilian and Polish experts, she noted. Among the participants were Joe Grogan, assistant to the US President and director of the domestic policy council, Republican politicians and the leaders of conservative and religious organisations. The Hungarian family support system is greatly appreciated in the US, and some of its elements are being implemented there, Novák said.

OPPOSITION URGES DECLARING CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The parliamentary groups of the five opposition parties urged parliament

to declare a climate emergency in Hungary. Representatives of the parties addressed a joint press conference in response to parliament’s vote on Tuesday to put on the agenda opposition proposals on declaring a climate emergency and urging measures to eliminate the effects of climate change.

Erzsébet Schmuck, co-leader of green LMP, noted that they had submitted their climate emergency proposal back in May. The party also urged Hungary to draft a climate law and a roadmap for decarbonisation by 2050, she said.

Tibor Nunkovics of the nationalist Jobbik party said that the opposition had been surprised to see government lawmakers backing their proposals in parliament. “But the question is whether the governing parties really want to have a meaningful debate on climate change or just want to show to their international partners that they are taking steps against it,” he said.

Zita Gurmai, deputy group leader of the Socialists, said that on a per-capita basis Hungary had the second-worst air quality after China. Some 13,000 people die in Hungary every year due to air pollution, she said, adding that the opposition unanimously urges the government to declare a climate emergency.

The ruling Fidesz party said in response that it fully supported a parliamentary debate on the climate emergency and climate change. The two parties are ready to support further government measures aimed

at meeting climate targets. Climate protection is an issue that needs to be taken seriously, Fidesz said, adding that Budapest’s new opposition leadership, however, so far had used the issue exclusively to advance its own political interests.

IMF COMMENDS HUNGARY ON STRONG GROWTH, URGES CONTINUED FISCAL CONSOLIDATION

International Monetary Fund (IMF) directors acknowledged Hungary’s strong economic growth and reduced external vulnerability, but urged continued fiscal consolidation in an assessment issued Thursday, after a regular Article IV consultation. “[IMF Executive Directors] commended Hungary’s continued strong economic performance, which has led to faster income convergence towards the European Union average and reduction of vulnerabilities,” the IMF said in a press release. “However, given the increased external uncertainty and Hungary’s still high public debt and gross financing needs, Directors encouraged continued fiscal consolidation and supply-side reforms, to further build resilience and sustain the growth momentum,” the fund added.

The directors recommended decision-makers reduce exemptions, broaden the tax base, phase out sectoral taxes, moderately reduce spending on goods and services, contain the public wage bill and

rationalise generalised subsidies. They also said “close monitoring” of the housing market is warranted, adding that existing demand-stimulating incentives should be scaled down. A table of selected economic indicators for the country attached to the release shows Hungary’s GDP growth reaching 4.9% this year. In the latest World Economic Outlook, the IMF had put Hungary’s GDP growth at 4.6% for 2019.

Data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) late in November show Hungary’s GDP rose an unadjusted 5.1% year on year in Q1-Q3. Days after the release, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said Hungary’s GDP growth was expected to reach 4.8% for the full year. The table attached to the latest IMF release projects Hungary’s economy will expand by 3.5% next year, above the 3.3% forecast in the October World Economic Outlook. The table shows Hungary’s current-account deficit is expected to widen to 0.9% of GDP this year, before narrowing to 0.7% of GDP in 2020.

RETAIL SALES GROWTH REACHES 6.2% IN OCTOBER

Retail sales in Hungary climbed an annual 6.2% in October, edging down from a 6.3% increase in September, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) show. Calendar-adjusted data show retail sales were up by 6.2% year on year in October. Adjusted food sales were up 3.4%, non-food sales climbed 9.8% and vehicle fuel sales were up 5.4% year on year. In the non-food segment, adjusted retail sales of non-specialised stores climbed 14%, sales of clothing retailers rose by 6.5%, sales of book and computer shops were up 6.4%, and sales of second-hand shops increased by 6.2%. Sales at chemists rose by 4.6% and sales of furniture shops were up 2.2%. Online and mail order sales jumped by 38%, accounting for around 6.2% of total retail sales. Sales at petrol stations were up 5.4%. Sales of motor vehicles and vehicle parts, which are not included in retail sales, climbed 29%. In absolute terms, retail

sales came to 1,098 billion forints (EUR 3.3bn) in October. In January-October, retail sales rose by 5.9% according to both unadjusted and calendar year-adjusted data. Adjusted food sales rose by 3.2%, non-food sales climbed 8.8% and fuel sales increased by 6.8%.

AUDI HUNGARIA STARTS SERIAL PRODUCTION OF MILD-HYBRID E-VEHICLES

The local unit of German carmaker Audi has started serial production of its Audi Q3 and Q3 Sportback models with mild-hybrid system, the company said. The Q3 models are Audi’s first hybrid cars, the company added. Audi Hungaria has now electrified its vehicle manufacturing as well after its engine production, chairman Alfons Dintner said. The Q3 and Q3 Sportback models made with MHEV (Mild Hybrid Electric Vehicle) technology are the first cars with electric drive system made in Hungary, he said. Audi Hungaria turned out almost 2 million engines and 100,000 cars at its plant in Győr, in north-western Hungary, last year.

