

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Szilárd Koszticsák

Restored late Gothic altar piece from Kiszeben, in National Gallery

UPCOMING EVENTS

V4 prime ministers, EC president meet in Brussels

EU, W Balkan interior, justice ministers meet in Brussels

58th Economic Convention

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

ÁDER ADDRESSES UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Hungarian President János Áder addressed the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday, warning of further crises to come unless humanity radically changes the way it influences the environment.

In his video message, Áder noted this was the first time the General Assembly had not met in person. Áder noted the damage the novel coronavirus epidemic has wreaked on the world. He said the health crisis, which upended the rules of family life, work and living in a community, had swiftly turned into a socioeconomic crisis. Many consider the coronavirus pandemic a prototype for crises typical of the Anthropocene, the epoch when humans have the greatest impact on the planet, Áder said. Unless humans radically change their lifestyles, they will have to face new crises after Covid, and perhaps much more severe ones, Áder said. The question is whether humanity can learn from the crisis and act in areas where the danger is known to be imminent, he said. Putting action off would only increase the risks and costs, he added. Áder noted that the UN had discussed the water crisis "unfolding before our eyes" on many occasions. Most of the UN's sustainability goals cannot be achieved without a sound water management policy, he added.

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>



SZIJJÁRTÓ DISCUSSES TIES WITH UKRAINIAN COUNTERPART

Hungary has a vested interest in restoring good relations with Ukraine, as the present situation harms both countries as well as the ethnic Hungarian community living in Ukraine, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said, after talks with his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba. At a joint press conference with Kuleba, held in Uzhhorod (Ungvár), western Ukraine, Szijjártó said Hungary was ready to partly finance the reconstruction of the hospital in Berehove (Beregszász), reconstruct a bridge over the river Tisza near Záhony, build a bypass road in Berehove and extend Hungary's M3 motorway to the Ukrainian border by the end of 2021. The Hungarian delegation also brought 50 ventilators to Ukraine "as a sign of good will", he said. Szijjártó noted that the government had used a total 90 billion forints (EUR 247m) to assist development projects in Ukraine in the past six years. He assured his counterpart of Hungary's support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and said that the Hungarian government would ensure that gas supplies to Ukraine would be continued and Ukrainians allowed a transit through Hungary to Western Europe. He added that Hungary had one of the largest contingents in the Eastern European OSCE mission, and "it will stay so in future". Szijjártó welcomed Kuleba's remarks suggesting that Transcarpathia could be made "a joint Ukrainian-Hungarian

success story" and said that "this obviously necessitates that Transcarpathia Hungarians enjoy all minority rights stipulated by European law". He said he hoped a dialogue concerning the rights of Ukraine's Hungarian minority would be successful. Answering a question, Kuleba said he saw a realistic chance for his country's adopting dual citizenship, but added that in Ukraine the issue was "much broader" affecting not only the Hungarian minority. Szijjártó said, in his reply to another question, that Hungary would "gladly" stop boycotting Ukraine-NATO ties, but added that "we only need Transcarpathia Hungarians to indicate that problems around their rights concerning their mother tongue and education in Hungarian are resolved." Concerning a question about a planned meeting between Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Szijjártó said that the aim was to strike a comprehensive agreement on good neighbourly relations, adding that preparations would soon be under way in the two countries' mixed committees.

EIGHT DIE, REGISTERED INFECTIONS UP 951 IN HUNGARY

Eight Covid-19 patients, all suffering from an underlying illness, have died in the past 24 hours, while the number of registered coronavirus infections in Hungary has risen by 951 to 20,450, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday morning. The number of fatalities stands at 702, and 4,644 people have made a recovery. There are 15,104 active

infections and 558 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospital, 35 on ventilators. Altogether 27,449 people are in official home quarantine and 645,492 tests have been carried out. The website warned Hungarians to observe social distancing guidelines and hygiene regulations. A cabinet meeting on Sept. 16 decided to extend entry restrictions for travellers from abroad. In addition to shops and public transport, wearing a mask is now mandatory in cinemas, theatres, health and social institutions and public offices, and clubs have to close by 11pm to curb the spread of the virus. The operative body responsible for handling the epidemic response has so far ordered 7 schools to revert to digital education. Fully 202 classes in otherwise operating schools have also been ordered to work from home, and 22 kindergartens and 6 schools have gone on emergency breaks, the website said.

Most infections have been registered in Budapest (8,114), followed by Pest County (2,771) and the counties of Fejér (1,009), Győr-Moson-Sopron (886), Csongrád-Csanád (870) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (820), and Hajdú-Bihar (813). Békés County has the fewest infections (186).

JEWISH LEADERS CONDEMN OPPOSITION POLITICIAN FOR ANTI- SEMITIC STATEMENTS

Several Jewish leaders have slammed László Bíró, a joint candidate of the opposition, for his anti-Semitic and

racist statements, the daily Magyar Nemzet said. Chief Rabbi Tamás Róna told the paper that politicians who influence public opinion were doubly obliged to weigh their words carefully. Jobbik politician Bíró, who will run as an individual candidate in the Oct. 11 Borsod County by-election as a joint candidate of opposition parties, including the major left-wing parties, is accused of having made several anti-Semitic and racist statements in the past. The rabbi said that even though Biro had apologised for making such statements, in his view there was no place in the legislature for politicians who make inflammatory remarks. Slomó Köves of the United Hungarian Jewish Community told the paper that it was worrying that “the parties that support him indirectly legitimise anti-Semitism”. The paper noted that, among others, András Heisler, president of Mazsihisz, Zoltán Somogyi, founder of Political Capital, and Bernadett Szél, former co-president of LMP, had condemned Bíró’s anti-Semitic statements.

**MINISTRY, STATE ORGS
IN JOINT STATEMENT
ON COMBATTING
CORRUPTION**

Various government and state bodies have issued a joint declaration on the importance of combatting corruption. The heads of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Audit Office, the Kuria (supreme court), the Public Prosecutor’s Office, the National Judicial Office, the Public

Procurement Office Authority, the National Bank of Hungary and the Hungarian Competition Authority issued the declaration reaffirming their commitment to fighting graft and, in this connection and more generally, upholding the rule of law. It states that moral integrity and ethical conduct are among the cornerstones of a well-governed state and instrumental in maintaining trust in the state and preventing corruption. Hungary’s constitution is the legal bedrock for fighting corruption as it stipulates that “all organisations that manage public funds are accountable to the public”. Cooperation between several of the institutions on combatting graft started in 2011, and more state bodies joined it in the following years. The State Audit Office releases annual reports showing that systems to monitor integrity in the public sector are in working order. The joint cooperation coincides with the objectives of the medium-term National Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2020-2022, the statement said.

**KOVÁCS RESPONDS
TO DANISH FOREIGN
MINISTER: ‘RULE OF LAW
IN HUNGARY
ALIVE AND WELL’**

Reacting to an article by Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod claiming that Poland and Hungary jeopardised the very foundations of the European Union, Zoltán Kovács, the state secretary for international

communications and relations, said that Kofod’s view was an outlier, even within his own government. In the response published by the Alting news portal on Wednesday, Kovács said the assertion that Hungary and Poland had “trampled” on democratic values by undermining the independence of the judiciary and stifling media freedom was “a crude statement” unattached to “any irrefutable facts”. In connection with Kofod’s statements about the rule of law, Kovács said the concept was too ambiguous and ill-defined at EU level to use as a measure for allocating EU funds to member states. He added that the EU itself had muddied the concept of the rule of law over the past decade. Just like Denmark, Hungary understood the importance of the EU market and therefore considered upholding European norms and values, including the rule of law, of paramount importance, Kovács said. “It’s not in Hungary’s interest to jeopardise such things by undermining the rule of law, curbing the independence of the judiciary or stifling critical media,” he said.

**KOVÁCS CALLS FOR
EFFORTS TO EASE
MIGRATION PRESSURE
OUTSIDE EUROPE**

The Hungarian government has had the same position on migration since 2015, and advocated that members of the European Union should cooperate and ease the pressure of illegal migration outside the community,

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.



Zoltán Kovács, state secretary for international communications, told MTI. Kovács reacted to a draft pact on migration and refugees presented by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen earlier in the day, and called for cooperation with countries generating migration aimed at ensuring conditions that “people are not forced to leave their homeland”. “Aid should be delivered where it is needed rather than importing the problem to Europe.”

Europe’s borders must be controlled; hotspots should be created outside those borders where applications for asylum could be processed, Kovács said.

“We are working to get EU members to help each other in performing those tasks. Hungary does not support a mandatory distribution of quotas, but will protect the common borders and expects to receive the same funds as any other Schengen countries controlling the external borders,” Kovács said.

BUDGET DEFICIT HUF 2,261 BN AT END-AUGUST, FINMIN CONFIRMS

Hungary’s budget deficit, excluding local councils, was 2,261.3 billion forints (EUR 6.2bn) at the end of August, widened by spending related to the coronavirus, economic stimulus and pre-financing for European Union funded projects, the Finance Ministry confirmed in a detailed reading of data. Spending on protective measures

against the virus, such as acquisitions of personal protective equipment and ventilators, had come to more than 553 billion forints by the end of August, while payouts in connection with EU funded projects were just above 1,374 billion. Transfers from Brussels came to 772.4 billion. Based on a slow-down in the economy and planned measures to protect the economy, the shortfall could reach 7-9% of GDP, the ministry said. The central budget ran a 1,873.1 billion forint deficit. Separate state funds were 2.3 billion in the red, while social insurance funds had a shortfall of 385.9 billion.

DK CALLS FOR UEFA SUPER CUP MATCH TO BE HELD WITHOUT SPECTATORS

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) has called on the Hungarian Football Association to order the UEFA Super Cup match scheduled for Thursday in Budapest to be played to an empty stadium. The match between Bayern Munich and Seville in Budapest’s Puskás Aréna will be the first UEFA match to be played in front of spectators since the novel coronavirus outbreak in March. Erzsébet Németh Gy, a deputy mayor of Budapest, called the match a “human experiment courtesy of [Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán”, who, she insisted, refused to put the event behind closed doors “in service of his hobby”. The municipality will increase the capacity of public transport in the area “to breaking point” in order to

protect the health of spectators, she said. The public should wear masks and keep distance from each other at bus stops, she added. According to current plans, 20,000 people, a third of the arena’s capacity, will be allowed to attend. Seville has announced it will use only 500 of the 2,500 tickets allocated to the team.

LMP: GOVT MEASURES STRIP JOBLESS, POOR OF EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE

The opposition LMP party has accused the government of introducing measures that would strip anyone who cannot pay their health insurance contributions of essential emergency services from January. Anyone who loses their job and cannot afford to pay the contributions from their own pockets could be forced to pay “hundreds of thousands of forints” when using health-care services, LMP co-leader Máté Kanász-Nagy told an online press conference. The measures would return health coverage in Hungary to “a pre-war level”, he said. He noted that teachers will not automatically receive their full salaries if they are forced to go on sick leave due to the coronavirus pandemic. Granting full pay will be up to school supervisory bodies, he noted, adding that teachers were at extreme risk of contracting the virus. Referring to an article by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán published in Monday’s Magyar Nemzet, Kanász-Nagy insisted that the prime minister was “the only

neoliberal in Hungary right now”, and was dismantling the welfare state and “societal rights”. Kanász-Nagy said LMP believed in a “green, social state” where basic services are free of charge. In the midst of the emergency situation brought about by the coronavirus epidemic, it is especially important to guarantee emergency services and full salaries during sick leave. LMP, he added, calls for jobless benefits for a period of nine months, he said.

**BOOK MARKING POPE
JOHN PAUL II’S 100TH
BIRTH ANNIVERSARY
PRESENTED IN BUDAPEST**

The life of St. John Paul II was an “open book”, Deputy Prime Minister

Zsolt Semjén said at a presentation of a book marking the former pope’s 100th birth anniversary. John Paul II’s decades of service to the church, his role on the world political stage, his pastoral visits and theological teachings were known all over the world, Semjén said at the event in Budapest’s Inner City Parish Church. The Second Vatican Council allowed the Catholic Church to “open a window to” the modern world, Semjén said, adding that this opening up of the church had become a reality under John Paul II’s many foreign trips.

Jerzy Snopek, Poland’s ambassador to Hungary, said that whatever differences Poles may have amongst each other, they all agree that they had the Polish pope to thank for

the values of human dignity and freedom. Becoming pope during central and eastern Europe’s communist era led to Karol Wojtyła playing a significant role not just in spreading the gospel, faith, hope and love but also in the liberation of the region’s countries from communist rule, the ambassador said. John Paul II, who served as pontiff from 1978 to 2005, made 104 pastoral voyages around the world, including visits to Hungary in 1991 and 1996. The 336-page book presenting the pope’s life largely through commemorative stamps was commissioned by the Polish Institute in Budapest. Its publication was also supported by the institute along with the Hungarian government.

