

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Tilla Kovács

Future Playground in Gárdony near Lake Velence (W)

UPCOMING EVENTS

President Áder in Vienna

Coronavirus updates

LMP's presser on climate change, Russian gas

Stats office publishes data on wages in Jan-August 2020, foreign trade in August 2020

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ WELCOMES VOJVODINA HUNGARIANS' PARTICIPATION IN NEW SERBIAN GOVT

Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's foreign minister, has welcomed that Serbia's governing coalition remained in office after the elections. "It is an even better news that the new Serbian government counts on the participation of Vojvodina Hungarians in the coalition's future work," Szijjártó told Hungarian public media during his visit to Belgrade.

The Serbian parliament on Wednesday endorsed the country's new government composed of five parties including the ethnic Hungarian Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (VMSZ). VMSZ's participation in the government is a guarantee that the opinion of Vojvodina Hungarians will continue to matter when it comes to the future of Serbia and ensures an excellent opportunity for close future cooperation between Hungary and Serbia in the areas of economy, trade, energy and prevention of illegal migration, Szijjártó said.

During his talks in Belgrade, Szijjártó underlined the importance of close cooperation in anti-migration efforts with a view to the fact that "as a consequence of Brussels' ill-designed migration policy the western Balkans continues to face an increasing pressure posed by migration". Szijjártó called on the European Union to change its migration policy and disallow illegal migration.

As regards EU affairs, Szijjártó stated the Hungarian government's continued support for Serbia's integration endeavours.

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ORBÁN EXPRESSES CONDOLENCES OVER NICE CHURCH ATTACK

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has sent a letter of condolences to French President Emmanuel Macron after a suspected terrorist attack left three people dead at a church in Nice, his press chief said. Orbán expressed his sympathies to the people of France, wishing much strength to the families of the victims, Bertalan Havasi said.

The prime minister said he was shocked to hear about the attack. "The attacks witnessed today and in recent weeks have made it clear that our shared European culture, way of life and values are caught in the crossfire of extremist terrorism," he wrote.

In a Facebook entry, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said that "extremist, anti-Christian ideologies, groups and persons that aim to destroy traditional European values and ways of life are starting to break loose" and called on Europe not to "give in".

ÁDER TO VISIT AUSTRIA ON FRIDAY

President János Áder will pay a visit to Vienna at the invitation of Alexander Van der Bellen, his Austrian counterpart, on Friday, the president's office said.

During their last meeting in Vienna in February 2019, the two presidents discussed EU enlargement, the western Balkans and climate change

as well as bilateral relations, economic cooperation and the situation of Hungarians working in Austria.

Áder is scheduled to address the unveiling of the statue of 19th-century Hungarian physician and scientist Ignaz Semmelweis at the campus of the University of Vienna. He will later meet Wolfgang Sobotka, the president of the National Council, the lower house of Austria's parliament.

FIFTY-SIX DIE, NUMBER OF CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS UP 2,194

Fully 56 Covid-19 patients have died over the past 24 hours in Hungary -- most of them elderly and suffering from an underlying illness -- while 2,194 have been officially diagnosed with coronavirus, bringing the total number of registered infections to 68,127, koronavirus.gov.hu said. The death toll has risen to 1,634, while 17,469 have made a recovery. There are 49,024 active infections and 3,197 Covid patients being cared for in hospital, 255 on ventilators. Fully 25,585 people are in official home quarantine, and the number of tests has increased to 1,032,942.

Border controls and restrictions on entry are still in place, and citizens have been asked to avoid participating in large events. Wearing face masks is obligatory in shops, on public transport and in cinemas, theatres, shopping malls, health-care and social-care facilities. Restaurants and entertainment venues must close

after 11pm. Also, a ban is in place on visits to hospitals and nursing homes. Schools are on autumn break during which the facilities are undergoing disinfection, the portal said. It added that 82 kindergartens have gone on emergency breaks.

Hungary's National Ambulance Service (OMSZ) has said that to meet the rising demand for Covid tests it will deploy an additional 200 mobile testing units with the help of the Interior Ministry over the coming days. The units will be made up of senior medical students trained by OMSZ and their vehicles will be supplied by the ministry.

Most registered infections are in Budapest (18,874), Pest County (8,601) and the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (4,334), Győr-Moson-Sopron (4,114), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (3,624) and Hajdú-Bihar (3,297). Tolna County has the fewest infections (666).

FACE MASKS TO BE MADE MANDATORY AT RESTAURANTS, ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

The Hungarian government is extending face mask requirements to restaurants and entertainment venues from next week, the deputy head of the operative board responsible for handling the coronavirus epidemic said. The new regulations enter into effect on November 2, Róbert Kiss told a press conference.

Under the new rules, members of the public will be required to wear masks at entertainment venues,

restaurants and in catering facilities at sporting events. Masks will only be allowed to be removed for eating and drinking, Kiss said.

He noted that mask-wearing is currently obligatory in shops, on public transport and in cinemas, theatres, shopping malls, health-care and social-care facilities, at sporting events and public offices.

AMBULANCE SERVICE TO EXPAND NUMBER OF TESTING UNITS

The National Ambulance Service (OMSZ) has said it will deploy an additional 200 Covid-19 testing units over the coming days.

Demand for Covid-19 tests has risen significantly in recent days, OMSZ spokesman Pál Győrfi told public media. Whereas not too long ago the ambulance service was getting a few hundred requests for Covid-19 tests a day, it has been getting over 5,000 daily requests over the past few weeks, Győrfi said. More recently OMSZ has been getting over 12,000 requests on some days, he added.

In order to meet the increased demand for tests on time, OMSZ, with the help of the Interior Ministry, will deploy 200 extra mobile testing units across the country, Győrfi said. The units will be made up of senior medical students trained by OMSZ and their vehicles will be supplied by the ministry. The additional 200 testing units will "practically double" the ambulance service's testing capacity, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: W BALKANS' EUROPEAN INTEGRATION HUNGARY'S STRATEGIC INTEREST

Hungary sees the European integration of the Western Balkans as its strategic interest, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said after talks with Meliza Haradinaj-Stublla, Kosovo's minister of foreign affairs and diaspora, in Budapest.

Having peace and progress in the Western Balkans is in Hungary's interest, Szijjártó told a press conference he held jointly with Haradinaj-Stublla. "If the opposite is the case, that's bad for Hungary," the minister said. "Whatever happens in the region, it will have an immediate effect on Hungary."

Hungary does more than just talk about the importance of supporting the Western Balkans, Szijjártó said, adding that the country also does its part in aiding the region. Often Hungary even punches above its weight when it comes to advancing peace and stability, he said. Hungary provides the third largest contingent for NATO's KFOR mission in Kosovo, Szijjártó said, adding that the mission will have a Hungarian commander from November next year.

Concerning the coronavirus pandemic, the minister said Hungary was in a position where it could care for its own citizens and send protective equipment to other countries as well. Hungary is providing Kosovo with 50,000 face masks and 5,000 protective suits, he said.

As regards economic ties, Szijjártó said Hungary has agreed with Kosovo to launch a 62 million euro tied aid programme. Under the programme, Hungarian companies are building two water treatment plants and undertaking infrastructure projects in Kosovo, he said. The country is also using cooling technologies developed in Hungary in the construction of its power plants, he added. Hungary will now also offer university scholarships to 75 Kosovar students, Szijjártó said.

He said the European Union had at least as much to gain from integrating the Western Balkans countries into the bloc as the region itself. Hungary has an interest in speeding up EU enlargement, Szijjártó said, adding that since Kosovo had fulfilled all the criteria for receiving visa-free status, Brussels and the western European member states should not establish any more.

On another subject, Szijjártó said the situation was deteriorating in the regions where migrants were coming from, adding that this posed the threat of new migration waves emerging. Due to Brussels's "botched migration policy" the Western Balkan migration route is becoming more and more crowded, leading to critical situations in the region. Unless the EU makes changes to its migration policies, the Western Balkan countries will be in danger of an influx of migrants, "putting the lives of peaceful people in disarray".

Haradinaj-Stublla expressed Kosovo's appreciation for the continuous support Hungary has given to Kosovo

and the Western Balkans region. She thanked Hungary for the help received in fighting the epidemic and welcomed an increase in the number of scholarships offered by Hungary to Kosovar students. She said increasing economic cooperation had been one of the main topics discussed at the talks and added that Hungarian investments were welcome in Kosovo. The minister also highlighted the importance of Euro-Atlantic integration for the region.

In response to a question, Haradinaj-Stublla said getting visa-free status would be very important for her nation. Kosovo is the only country in the Western Balkans that has not received such a status yet despite the fact that it fulfilled all the necessary conditions eight years ago, as officially recognised by the EU two years ago. She expressed hope that the situation would change during Germany's EU presidency.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó, in response to a question about Ukraine banning the entry of two Hungarian officials, said Ukraine had not considered Hungary's delivery of 50 ventilators an interference in its domestic affairs. The minister called the entry ban "unfriendly, nonsensical and in some ways, pathetic". "Hungary being the only country allowing Ukrainian citizens transit towards western Europe was not seen as interference either and neither was the Hungarian central budget financing the revitalisation of the most polluted river in Transcarpathia," he said.

Hungary has made it clear on multiple occasions that it is prepared to advance its bilateral relations with Ukraine, Szijjártó said. Hungary's interests lie in building friendly ties with Ukraine on the basis of mutual respect, respect for international law and compliance with bilateral obligations, the minister said, adding that this required the cooperation of both governments.

Before the press conference, Szijjártó and Haradinaj-Stublla signed an agreement on investment promotion and protection, scholarships and cooperation in academic research and higher education.

BUDAPEST MAYOR RE-APPLIES FOR GOVT APPROVAL TO EUROPEAN LOAN TO BUY TROLLEYBUSES, TRAMS

The municipality of Budapest will approach the government for a second time to request approval to the city's taking out a loan from the European Investment Bank on "extremely good" conditions to buy 50 new trolleybuses and 50 trams, Mayor Gergely Karácsony told a press conference.

Karácsony said that the city council had on Wednesday "been faced with the fact" that the government's pledge to allow the city to reallocate funds of 3 billion forints (EUR 8.2m) from "badly managed" European Union projects to buy the vehicles had "gone to nothing". "This is not the first time the government goes back on its promise",

Karácsony said, noting that last summer the city and the government had already signed an agreement under which the government should have paid for the purchases.

Concerning the government's approval to the loan, Karácsony said that "the government is not likely to do even this little" because "they are not interested in a developing Budapest". But "if they thwart this (purchase) that will be an obvious declaration of war on the residents of Budapest," the mayor said.

JOBBIK: GOVT SHOULD FAVOUR HUNGARIAN LABOUR OVER IMPORTING MIGRANT WORKERS

The opposition Jobbik party says the government should work to reboot the Hungarian economy by giving jobs to young people and those inactive on the labour market instead of importing migrant workers. The Hungarian economy should be restarted using domestic labour rather than by importing hundreds of thousands of foreign workers, Jobbik's deputy leader Dániel Z. Kárpát told a press conference.

The government's economic policies "still serve the interests of multinationals over Hungarian workers", Z. Kárpát insisted. He said the migrant workers coming to Hungary were not being hired in the industries actually facing labour shortages.

He said temporary employment agencies were making "brutal profits"

and should be replaced by state employment agencies. The money saved from transitioning to publicly funded agencies should go towards workers' salaries, Z. Kárpát added. The politician called for policies that would make it worthwhile for skilled workers to stay in Hungary instead of seeking employment abroad.

ROLLING AVERAGE JOBLESS RATE EDGES LOWER IN SEPTEMBER

Hungary's three-month rolling average jobless rate reached 4.4% in September, edging down 0.2 of a percentage point from the previous month, but still 0.9 of a percentage point over the rate a year earlier because of the coronavirus crisis, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) show. The rate covers unemployment among people between the ages of 15 and 74. In absolute terms, there were 208,300 unemployed, 6,100 fewer than in the previous month, but up 45,800 from a year earlier.

Continuing a practice begun several months earlier because of

the coronavirus crisis, KSH released data for the month of September alone showing the average number of jobless stood at 222,000, bringing the unemployment rate to 4.7%. In absolute terms, the number of jobless rose 37,000 from August and 57,000 from the same month a year earlier. The unemployment rate for the month was up 0.8 of a percentage point from August and 1.2 percentage points from the same period a year earlier.

KSH said it published the September data to better show the impact of the pandemic on the labour market, although it acknowledged that the numbers do not have the same degree of accuracy as the three-month rolling average figures.

KSH noted that data from the National Employment Service (NFSZ) show there were 323,000 registered jobseekers at the end of September, one-third more than twelve months earlier.

PARRAGH RE-ELECTED BUSINESS CHAMBER HEAD

Chairman of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK)

László Parragh has been re-elected for the 2020-2024 period. In a public vote held at a delegates' meeting, Parragh received 127 votes in support, no votes against and 19 abstentions.

DUTCH DRUG DEALERS SENTENCED TO EIGHT AND A HALF YEARS

A court in Balassagyarmat in northern Hungary has sentenced two Dutch men in a non-final ruling to eight and a half years in prison for selling drugs at a music festival in Nógrád County in 2017. The court has also ruled to expel them from Hungary for ten years, the county chief prosecutor said.

Gyula Bóna said the men travelled to the music festival in July 2017 for the purpose of selling drugs. Police found during a check of their pavilion large amounts of pre-packaged and labelled Amphetamine, LSD and cannabis. More drugs were found in suitcases and bags in their car, he added. The men who are currently under detention have appealed for acquittal.