

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Balázs Mohai

Budapest's Megyeri Bridge covered in fog

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU foreign ministers meet

Plenary session of parliament

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: EU BUDGET VETO IN LINE WITH TREATIES

The Hungarian government has vetoed the EU's budget package in line with its position communicated during the summit this July, and in accordance with the power of veto laid down in the EU treaties, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has said.

"Those who protect their borders and their countries from migration are no longer considered by Brussels to be rule-governed states," Orbán said, adding that once the current proposal tying the rule of law to funding was adopted, funding would be "tied to support for migration" and used to "blackmail" countries that oppose it. Throughout the debate, he said, Hungary had maintained a policy of "loyal cooperation, predictability and transparency", while always remaining open to compromise, even though Hungary never considered raising joint loans as an adequate solution. He insisted that Hungary was a "dedicated adherent" to the rule of law, noting that Hungary's current leadership had once fought for democracy in the face of the communist dictatorship. "In our view, tying economic and financial issues to political debates would be a grave mistake, one that would undermine European unity. Any new procedure aimed at penalising member states should only be introduced through the unanimous amendment of the Treaties. We request that fellow member states adhere to this requirement," he said.

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JUSTICE MINISTER: EU NARRATIVE ON RULE OF LAW 'FALSE'

Justice Minister Judit Varga has commented on Facebook in connection with an interview she gave to BBC's HardTalk on Tuesday, saying she had made clear in the interview that "the Brussels narrative on the demolition of the rule of law is hypocritical and false". In the Facebook post on Wednesday, Varga said it was regrettable that "Europe's best-known and most-watched" programme on politics had relied for its background research on the CEU and civil organisations and news outlets allied to critics of the government. Varga said the "coordinated disinformation campaign" in the western press, waged "with the powerful help of the Hungarian opposition" was easily debunked with legal arguments and facts. "No matter how loudly they shout, no matter how many times it is repeated that Hungary and Poland have blocked the historic agreement, the reality ... is that the moral responsibility lies with those who want to rewrite the ... unanimous agreement [of the European Council] in July," Varga said. "Make it clear to everyone that Hungary cannot be blackmailed," she added. She said Hungary would be the first to adopt the agreement if it were to be tabled again with a draft "free from ideological blackmail and in line with the EU treaties". "In the meantime, we will do our best to

make the voices of Hungary and the Hungarian people louder and louder across Europe, because I believe that the old continent did not need this clear, sincere voice as much as it does today," she said.

GOVT STATEMENT: BRUSSELS ONLY SEES PRO-MIGRATION COUNTRIES AS ADHERING TO RULE OF LAW

Brussels wants to use funding due to member states to support immigration, the government said in a statement. "For years, Brussels has been working to turn Europe into a continent of immigrants," the statement said. Now "Brussels bureaucrats" want to make funding contingent on a willingness on the part of member states to allow migrants into the country, adding Brussels only regarded countries that supported immigration as adhering to the rule of law. "We Hungarians have said 'no' to that many times, however," the statement said. "We want nothing to do with the pro-migration policies of Brussels..." The government said that when some states teetered on the edge of an economic crisis, Europe needed fast economic aid rather than migrants. The statement said Hungary was willing to vote for "an economic plan or financial package" to help them but "we find it unacceptable that such issues should be tied to migration under the pretext of the rule of law". "Irresponsible" policies of pro-

migration forces undermine European unity and jeopardise the response to the crisis, the statement added.

JUSTICE MINISTER: RULE OF LAW MECHANISM FOR DISTRIBUTION OF EU FUNDS 'BLACKMAIL'

The European Union introducing a rule of law mechanism for the distribution of EU funds is "about blackmail", Justice Minister Judit Varga said in an interview published online by conservative German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Commenting on a debate about linking the rule of law to the distribution of EU funds, Varga said "Poland and Hungary got to feel what it is really about: Not about values, but about the usual blackmail of those countries that do not follow the majority trend in fields such as migration or the family."

SZIJJÁRTÓ: 1,600 US COMPANIES EMPLOY 100,000 PEOPLE IN HUNGARY

Some 1,600 US companies employ 100,000 people in Hungary, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó has said, addressing an online meeting of the US-Hungary Business Council (USHBC). He said that in the new era of global economy, only companies that can adapt to new challenges would be successful. The two principles behind the government's measures introduced during the second wave of the novel coronavirus epidemic have

been to protect people's health and lives, and to maintain the functioning of the economy, he said. He said recent measures included curfews, bans on gatherings, restrictions on shops and restaurants and a ban on hotels catering for tourists. At the same time, business travel is not prohibited and company employees can visit Hungary without the obligation to stay in quarantine, he added.

Szijjártó said it was commonly understood that a vaccine would provide a real solution to the current situation and Hungary was in talks in several directions in this regard. "I would like to inform you that we will be the first country to receive samples of the Russian vaccine on Thursday," he said. The ten doses of vaccine to be received will undergo laboratory testing in Hungary and a decision will be made on possible purchases on the basis of these tests, he added. At the same time, the Hungarian government has signed a cooperation agreement with a Chinese vaccine manufacturer and is also participating in a European procurement project, he said. "We are trying to acquire vaccination from as many sources as possible", he said. He also said that four main considerations were behind the economic decisions made in response to the epidemic: job protection, investment stimulation, and supporting strategic industries as well as securing business liquidity. He added that encouraging investment was also one of the best ways to protect jobs, and the government was fighting against unemployment instead of

financing it. Szijjártó also said that the government was dedicated to keeping taxes low and simplifying the tax system. Since the start of 2014, some 80 US companies have carried out investments worth 1.1 billion euros with the help of government incentives, he said. Talks are currently under way on investments with nine companies, he added. In recent years, Hungarian exports to the US have increased by 80%, which means that the US has become Hungary's number-one export partner outside the EU, Szijjártó said.

99 CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES, INFECTIONS UP 4,290

Fully 99 Covid patients, mostly elderly and suffering from an underlying illness, have died in the past 24 hours and coronavirus infections have risen by 4,290 to 156,949, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday. Altogether 3,380 Covid patients have died since the appearance of coronavirus in Hungary, while 34,846 have made a recovery. There are currently 118,723 active infections and 7,499 patients are in hospital, 581 on ventilators. Fully 35,804 people are in official home quarantine, while the number of tests stands at 1,409,651. Most infections have been registered in Budapest (37,222), followed by Pest County (20,385), and the counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron (11,032), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (9,026), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (8,480) and Hajdú-Bihar (8,086). Tolna County has the fewest infections (2,093).

On November 10, lawmakers extended the government's special powers by 90 days, allowing the government to suspend the application of some legislation, diverge from legal provisions and take other extraordinary measures by decree. A major new rule is that face masks must be worn in public spaces in localities with more than 10,000 residents, though it is up to local mayors to decide which spaces the rule applies to. Among other measures recently introduced: school classes from the eighth grade as well as universities are now holding lessons and lectures online. Also, a curfew is in force between 8pm and 5am, and work carried out beyond the home must be justified. With the exception of pharmacies and petrol stations, shops can be open until 7pm. Hairdressers, masseurs and personal trainers must observe general curfew rules. Restaurants are limited to offering takeaways, while hotels are not allowed to cater to tourists, only guests arriving for business, economic or educational purposes. Sports events must be held behind closed doors. Also, leisure facilities such as fitness gyms, indoor swimming pools, museums, libraries, cinemas, zoos and skating rinks must suspend their services. Events, including cultural events and Christmas fairs, cannot be held under the special rules. Family and private events including birthday celebrations can be held with a maximum of ten people attending. Funerals can be held with not more than 50 people in attendance. The government has asked religious communities to make sure their conduct



during ceremonies aligns with general coronavirus safety rules. From Monday, soldiers are helping the police in carrying out their duties in public areas. Soldiers have also been assigned to help out staff in 93 hospitals around Hungary.

GOVT LAUNCHES INFO CAMPAIGN ON RESPONSE MEASURES

Hungary's government is launching a series of informative videos on its protective measures against coronavirus, the Government Information Centre said. The information campaign will consist of videos on curfew regulations, the ban on events as well as the rules on the wearing of face masks in public spaces, Csaba Dömötör, a state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, said in a statement. "The main message being conveyed by the government's measures and the videos is that we must look after each other because every life counts," he said. The videos will first appear on the government's Facebook page before being broadcast on television and the radio, the state secretary said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY- BRAZIL ALLIANCE BUILT ON SHARED VALUES, INTERESTS

Hungary and Brazil have built an alliance based on their shared interests and values, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said after talks with his Brazilian counterpart Ernesto Araújo.

The governments of Hungary and Brazil take similar approaches to the "most pressing issues" in international politics, with both countries facing "continued attacks by the liberal mainstream" and being "targets of a continued smear campaign and intimidation attempts", Szijjártó, who is currently in quarantine having contracted coronavirus, said in a video message on Facebook. The minister said "anti-nation, anti-religion and anti-family forces" were stepping up their "attacks" at the international level against "governments pursuing patriotic, pro-family, Christian policies". "This is why it is important that governments, such as those of Hungary and Brazil, strengthen their cooperation," Szijjártó said.

He said that both countries condemn attacks targeting Christians and strongly support efforts aimed at thwarting those attacks. Both countries also strongly oppose migration and reject policies that deem their political systems democratic on the basis of whether or not they accept to take in illegal immigrants.

As regards diplomatic issues, Szijjártó said they reaffirmed their cooperation within the United Nations. Brazil will support Hungary's bid for the presidency of the UN General Assembly in 2022 and 2023 while Hungary will back Brazil's candidacy to the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court, the minister said. Further, Hungary supports Brazil's OECD membership and is open to having a "meaningful debate" on a free trade agreement

between the European Union and Latin American countries, he said. In bilateral defence cooperation, Szijjártó called Tuesday's agreement on Hungary's purchasing two KC-390 military transport aircraft from a Brazilian aerospace manufacturer an important development.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY- ANGOLA TRADE TURNOVER UP 43% THIS YEAR

The annual trade turnover between Hungary and Angola increased by 43% this year, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook. Speaking after a phone call with Tété António, his Angolan counterpart, Szijjártó, who is currently in quarantine having contracted coronavirus, said they had discussed bilateral cooperation and the 45th anniversary of the two countries' establishment of diplomatic ties. Hungarian businesses have found significant opportunities to expand their presence in Angola's food processing and electronic public administration sectors, Szijjártó said. To protect their investments, Hungary and Angola will speed up their talks on agreements on the avoidance of double taxation and the mutual protection of investment projects, he added.

Szijjártó noted that Angola is set to assume the presidency of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). Close cooperation within the organisation -- in which Hungary has observer status -- will

help open the doors to even more countries, he said. The minister also said Hungary will increase the number of scholarships it offers to Angolan university students to 50 a year.

OPPOSITION PARTIES TURN TO EU IN JOINT PROCLAMATION

Hungary's opposition parties have sent a joint letter to the European leaders, criticising the government's policies. The letter signed by the Democratic Coalition (DK), Jobbik, LMP, Momentum, the Socialist and Párbeszéd parties said: "The Hungarian democratic opposition, in view of the grave situation created by the Hungarian government's destructive practices, feels the need to declare before all member states and citizens of the EU, as well as its leadership, that [Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán and his government are not synonymous with Hungary." In the letter sent to Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, and the German presidency, the signatories said the Orbán government was hindering European and Hungarian crisis-management efforts and acting against the interests and "justified expectations" of European and Hungarian citizens. "We Hungarians have not ended the one-party [communist] regime and joined ...the community of European states only for a corrupt, anti-democratic regime to hold Europe and Hungary to ransom,

stripping their citizens of the rights and support they are entitled to," the letter said. It added that the Hungarian opposition parties were bound by respect for democracy, the rule of law and European values, adding that they had joined forces so that the rule of law in the country may be restored as soon as possible. Hungarian citizens and companies are in dire need of the EU's recovery package due to the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic, the letter said. "The funding should go to the Hungarian people rather than to the Orbán government, which has put its own power interests before the economic interests of the country. We call on the institutions and national governments of the EU to stop Orbán's government from hobbling European and Hungarian crisis management and to help Hungarian citizens ... access EU funding as soon as possible," it added. The signatories have also called on their supporters to back its declaration that the Hungarian government did not have their assent to "disrupt European cooperation and strip European and Hungarian citizens of European funding".

ITM: HUNGARY JOINING EUR 250 BN EUROPEAN BATTERY MARKET

Hungary is joining Europe's battery industry with a view to advancing the transition to green transport, vehicle manufacturing and energy, the innovation and technology ministry (ITM) has said. The ministry,

in cooperation with EU-supported EIT InnoEnergy, has launched consultations in the sector with the aim of drawing up a national battery strategy by the end of the year. The ITM statement said Hungary must pay heed to large-scale trends so as to sustain its domestic automotive industry and international competitiveness in the long run. Top quality energy storage is key to this goal, it added. Noting Europe's aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, the ministry said Hungary has undertaken to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 compared with 1990 levels. Péter Kaderják, ITM state secretary for energy and climate policy, said the cooperation EIT InnoEnergy would help boost Hungarian economic growth and embed the country deeper into Europe's supply chain. Diego Pavia, CEO of EIT InnoEnergy, said developments in central Europe would play a key role in greening Europe's energy sector. The action plan will involve enterprises and the authorities, as well as representatives of science and finance, in workshops and consultations, the statement said, adding that Hungary's battery strategy will enable it to form an integral part of the European Battery Association through the expansion of international cooperation.

BUDAPEST AIRPORT SUSTAINABILITY SCHEME GETS INTERNATIONAL AWARD

The Airports Council International Europe (ACI Europe) has granted

its ACI Eco-Innovation Award to Budapest Airport, recognising a sustainability scheme that the operator of Liszt Ferenc International has maintained, Budapest Airport said. The award was granted to Budapest Airport at an online ceremony in recognition of its scheme and developments focusing on sustainable transport and e-mobility, the statement said. Budapest Airport managing director Rolf Schnitzler said sustainability had been made a strategic principle of the company and added that the optimisation of ground passenger transport had great potential for more environmentally friendly operations.

PHOTO EXHIBITION IN BEIJING SHOWS EMPTY V4 CAPITALS DUE TO EPIDEMIC

An exhibition opened at the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Beijing presenting photographs of the empty capitals of the Visegrad Group countries in the midst of the coronavirus epidemic. The ambassadors of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia attended the opening of the month-long exhibition. Hungary's ambassador, Máté Pesti, noted in his address that the epidemic had dealt a severe blow to the tourism, small businesses and the societies of the V4 countries, but art could provide

“comfort in the midst of hardship and grief”. The show relates the story of 2020 by showing the emptied streets and squares as well as details such as people wearing masks or waiting for virus tests. The ambassador said he felt lucky to be in China, where life had returned to normal after the epidemic was suppressed and precautionary measures were eased. Andrea Szonja Buslig, the embassy's cultural attaché and director of the cultural institute, told MTI another V4 exhibition is in the pipeline for December as part of the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes series. The institute hosted the first part of the exhibition in September and due to great interest, a second part will be held in December together with Hungary's V4 partners.