

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Hungarian kayaker Péter Pál Kiss wins gold at the Tokyo Paralympics

UPCOMING EVENTS

52nd International Eucharistic Congress opens

Groundbreaking of Hungary's vaccine plant in Debrecen

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

FOREIGN MINISTER BLASTS EU'S HANDLING OF AFGHANISTAN

At a "serious and at times tough" debate on the situation in Afghanistan, the Brussels institutions and certain member states reverted to the "2015 track" in handling migration at a meeting on Friday, Hungary's foreign minister said.

Speaking on the sidelines of an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brdo Castle near Kranj, in Slovenia, Szijjártó lambasted EU leaders for "slipping back onto the path of 2015, even though there is constant talk of not repeating the mistakes of the 2015 migration crisis". The ministers also discussed calling on the Taliban to allow free passage to those who want to leave the country. This, Szijjártó insisted, was "in fact an invitation to any Afghan who wants to leave". He warned that this was a "very dangerous and irresponsible position", arguing that it could trigger another wave of mass migration, since half of Afghanistan's population of 39 million had lived on humanitarian aid even before the Taliban took over, while the country has at least 4 million domestic refugees. He added, however, that the Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia and Hungary had "rather firmly argued against migration".

Afghanistan is "one of the hotbeds of terrorism", Szijjártó said, adding that an exodus of Afghans could "provide an opportunity for hundreds or thousands of terrorists to come to Europe".

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY WON'T TAKE IN ANY AFGHAN MIGRANTS

The Hungarian government has rescued Afghans who helped Hungarian troops during the military campaign in Afghanistan but "not a single person apart from them will be accommodated", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on the sidelines of an informal meeting with his European Union counterparts in Slovenia. "The security of our country and that of the Hungarian people is of paramount importance," the minister said. Central European participants in the meeting made it clear that they would not support any mandatory migrant quotas, Szijjártó said, adding that "each country has the sovereign right to decide whom to allow in and whom to live with". "Nobody, whether Brussels or the European Commission, will force any decision concerning that matter on us," he said. Participants in the talks also discussed issues around cooperation with China, India, and the Persian Gulf on Friday.

SZÁZADVÉG: ORBÁN MORE POPULAR PM CANDIDATE THAN KARÁCSONY

The majority, 54% of Hungarian adults wants Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to remain in his post, while 34% supports Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony, who is challenging to become the opposition's prime ministerial

candidate, a survey conducted by the Századvég Foundation showed. The survey was conducted at the end of August over the phone, on a representative sample of 1,000, after analysts saw Karácsony as the likely winner of the opposition's nomination contest, Századvég said. The pollster asked respondents to pick the candidate they thought performed better in solving key issues in Hungary. Fully 69% of respondents saw Orbán as a decisive and strong leader, while 19% said the same of Karácsony. Karácsony also trailed Orbán in his perceived performance in supporting families (30% and 61%, respectively), in child protection (24% to 57%), and improving the lot of pensioners (31% to 57%).

Similarly, 57% of respondents said they saw Orbán as more competent in improving the country's economy in the wake of the pandemic, while 32% credited Karácsony with more abilities in the field. Fully 52% thought Orbán is better equipped to organise a health-care response to potential future epidemics, while 20% thought Karácsony was better suited to the task, it said. Karácsony is likely to raise taxes and introduce austerity measures according to 55% and 52% of respondents respectively, while 24% presume Orbán would raise taxes and 29% that he would tighten the belt, Századvég said. Regarding foreign policy, 59% thought Orbán was better at protecting Hungarians' interests abroad, while 30% expressed the same opinion about Karácsony, Századvég said.

JUSTICE MINISTER: PANDEMICS, MASS MIGRATION POSE BIGGEST THREATS TO EUROPE

Pandemics and mass migration are the two biggest threats facing Europe today, Justice Minister Judit Varga said on Facebook from an international forum in Austria's Alpbach, where she participated in a panel discussion on the challenges facing the continent. The migration crisis of 2015 proved that the European Union's existing rules are inadequate to address such crises, the minister said. "We should not believe that 2015 was a unique case," she said in her English-language post. "Due to the situation in Afghanistan, we are on the verge of another crisis. In the future, in addition, such events will be more frequent and severe."

While Hungary was busy addressing the migration crisis and trying to fulfil its legal obligation to protect the EU's external borders, the European Commission launched a number of infringement procedures against the country, Varga said. "In 2015, we provided effective responses and solutions to the whole of Europe, yet the only thing we received was criticism," the minister said. "Today, however, more and more people agree with us that the problem of migration must be addressed locally, at the point of departure and not within the Union." However, talks on the EU's pact on migration have stalled for years and the bloc has failed to

agree on new regulations despite the intentions of member state leaders, she added. "Hungary's message is clear: if working on that issue doesn't work together, let's address it individually," the minister said. "We should give the authority over asylum procedures back to the Member States!"

HUNGARY RECORDS ONE CORONAVIRUS DEATH, 247 NEW INFECTIONS

One Covid patient died over the past 24 hours, while 247 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Friday. So far 5,799,584 people have received a first jab, while 5,512,118 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 379,000 Hungarians have already received booster jabs. The number of active infections stands at 4,991, while hospitals are treating 149 Covid patients, 19 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 813,040 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,061. Fully 777,988 people have made a recovery. There are 1,874 people in official quarantine, while 6,606,051 tests have been officially carried out.

BRITAIN'S FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION TURNS TO FIFA OVER RACIST INCIDENTS IN BUDAPEST

The British Football Association has asked international federation

FIFA to launch an investigation into racist behaviours by Hungarian supporters during a Hungary-England World Cup qualifier played in Budapest on Thursday night. After the match, which England won 4-0, the British players complained about being loudly booed when they took the knee as a gesture against racism before starting, and said that after each goal plastic cups and other objects were thrown into the field, while racist slogans were chanted. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Facebook that it was "completely unacceptable that England football team players were racially abused in Hungary" and called on FIFA to "take strong action against those responsible to ensure that this kind of disgraceful behaviour is eradicated from the game for good".

In response to the critical remarks, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó posted on Facebook footage taken in London's Wembley Stadium, in which British supporters are heard whistling during Italy's national anthem. "Were similar remarks made at that time?" the minister asked.

FIFA rejected all forms of racism and violence in a statement, and pledged zero tolerance for such behaviours. The federation also pledged to take appropriate action once they received reports on the events. Hungarian association MLSZ said in a statement that "most of the 60,000 supporters stayed sportsmanlike even when the [Hungarian] team was losing".

They said that the perpetrators were being identified and would be "strictly punished". MLSZ also said that it would sue the perpetrators for compensation should the federation be fined, and they would be banned from sporting events for two years.

European federation UEFA condemned Hungarian fans for "discriminative behaviours" in July and ruled that the Hungarian team should play three European matches behind closed doors, with one of them suspended for two years.

RETAIL SALES AT 3.0% IN JULY

Retail sales in Hungary rose by an annual 2.5% in July, or 3.0% when adjusted for calendar year effects, preliminary data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) show. The increase slowed from 6.2% in the previous month. Retail sales have risen for four consecutive months after eight months of decline, KSH said. Adjusted food sales increased by 3.7% and non-food sales were up by 2.6%. Vehicle fuel sales rose by 1.9%. In January-July, retail sales were up by a calendar-year-adjusted 2.1%, KSH said.

Commenting on the data, a government official said the Hungarian retail sector is starting to recover from pandemic-related lockdowns. Péter Cseresnyés, a state secretary of the innovation and technology ministry, said that government measures resulting in 4.7 million jobholders, wages averaging above 400,000

forints (EUR 1,100) and higher minimum wages left money with Hungarians to spend on themselves. Barring another strong wave of the pandemic, the current moderate growth is expected to reach pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year, he said. Growing vaccine acceptance is key to that process too, he added.

ING Bank chief analyst Péter Virováczi said the modest rise in retail sales could be attributed to households' preference to spend on services during the summer months. ING is standing by its projection for full-year GDP growth of 7.7%, he added. Takarékbank senior analyst Gergely Suppan also said consumers likely spent more on recreation during the month, but added that "dynamic" wage growth and a growth-linked year-end pensioners premium could boost retail turnover. He put full-year retail sales growth around 3%.

FASHION AND DESIGN AUTUMN TO LAUNCH IN BUDAPEST

The Fashion and Design Autumn series of events will soon launch in Budapest with fashion shows, exhibitions, performances and roundtable discussions, the organiser said. The Hungarian Fashion and Design Agency (MDDÜ) said Hungarian designers will be showcased at the international event, as well as designers from the Visegrad Group of countries and beyond. Also, the event presents an opportunity for creative industry thinkers and experts to share their thoughts and experiences.

Whereas Paris and Milan are prominent international creative capitals, programmes in Budapest and online are also expected to capture the interest of fashion and design industry heavyweights as well as the general

public, the agency said. From Sept. 9 to 13 ten Hungarian designers selected by a professional jury will present their works at the Maison and Objet design fair in Paris, and the MDDÜ's highly successful design LAB programme will also be held as part of Paris Design Week. Meanwhile, from Sept. 21 to 27 Milan Fashion Week will provide yet another platform to showcase Hungarian brands in cooperation with MDDÜ. From Oct. 4 to 10 MDDÜ will organise the 360 Design Budapest exhibition at the Whale building on the Pest embankment. The event last year was hugely successful, winning four international awards. Its aim is to boost the name recognition of newcomer Hungarian designers and support Hungarian design brands entering the international market. Also, for the fourth year in a row, MDDÜ is organising Budapest Central European Fashion Week, central Europe's main fashion event, from Oct. 16 to 17.