

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVI/Tamás Vasvári

Siberian tiger in Veszprém Zoo with the facility undergoing large-scale revamp

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hungarian-Serbian joint government session

Eucharistic Congress

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

GOVT APPROVES PROPOSALS ON REBOOTING ECONOMY

The government has approved four proposals made by the body responsible for working out ways to revive Hungary's economy, with a view to boosting the competitiveness of enterprises and developing infrastructure, the foreign and trade minister said.

Péter Szijjártó, who is also in charge of rebooting the economy, said that the pot of subsidised loans that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises can draw on for investments is growing to 300 billion forints (EUR 864m) from 150 billion, giving 900 companies the chance to enhance their competitiveness. Also, 4 billion forints will go towards infrastructure developments in Göd, on the periphery of Budapest, to help Samsung SDI further expand one of the world's largest electric battery plants. The minister said that given the importance of the car industry to Hungary's economy, it was vital to have as many big international electrical producers as possible located here.

Szijjártó also announced that a road connecting Páty to the M1 motorway and a bypass will be built, making it easier for locals in the Zsámbék Basin to reach transport networks. The new road is also expected to attract investments to the new industrial area there.

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JUSTICE MIN: STRONG NATIONS HAVE STRONG EXTERNAL BORDERS

“There is no strong nation without strong external borders,” Justice Minister Judit Varga said, after meeting Jeff Sessions, the former US Attorney General. In her English-language post, Varga wrote that the former Alabama senator had played “a key role in shaping the Trump administration’s immigration policy” and had been “an advocate for reform of US immigration law in the previous 20 years”.

“Although the two countries differ in many respects due to their size and location, one common point is obvious: an unprecedented level of migratory pressure reached our southern borders in recent years,” she wrote.

“We agreed that illegal immigration shouldn’t be regarded as a solution to demographic and labour market challenges, such issues must be addressed through effective family policy instruments. We should not give up our security and Christian culture by bringing the problem here, help must be brought where it is most needed,” she added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, POLAND COOPERATE IN HANDLING MIGRATION

Hungary and Poland are closely cooperating in preventing some western European states from imposing on the European Union

the “flawed and dangerous” migration policy whose consequences have been felt since 2015, Péter Szijjártó, Hungary’s foreign minister, said after talks with his Polish counterpart Zbigniew Rau in Karpacz, Poland.

The situation in Afghanistan, he said, keeps deteriorating, with reports on a forthcoming civil war emerging but half of the population of that country had lived on welfare even before the Islamist Taliban rebels came to power.

“The western European statements that can be interpreted as invitations to all Afghans are particularly irresponsible,” Szijjártó said.

Europe is exposed to migratory pressures not only from Africa and the Middle East, but even from the east, through Belarus, he said, adding that another wave from Afghanistan would entail “incalculable consequences”, he said.

Hungary and Poland’s migration policies “are based on common sense”, Szijjártó said, recalling that Hungary had built a fence along its southern border in 2015, and Poland is doing the same along its eastern border.

The two governments are not only talking about the need to help where needs arise, the minister said, citing a Hungarian-Polish project to grant 1 million euros’ worth of aid to Jordanian hospitals caring for Syrian refugees.

Szijjártó qualified Western Europe’s current migration policy as a “huge threat” to European security and

identity, adding that a massive wave of refugees would increase the risk of the spread of the coronavirus.

OFFICIAL: HUNGARY AIMS TO BE CLIMATE NEUTRAL BY 2050

Hungary aims to be climate neutral by 2050, and the government is examining ways to reduce carbon emissions to the level that Hungarian forests can absorb by that time, the state secretary for climate, energy policy and the development of the circular economy said. Attila Steiner told Portfolio’s Sustainable World 2021 conference that the government launched its National Clean Development Strategy to achieve those goals. The 2050 deadline has also been enshrined in law, he noted. Making the green transition is an economically viable strategy where widespread social support is also crucially important, Steiner said. Hungary reduced carbon emissions by 32% between 1990 and 2019 -- putting Hungary in the top third of European Union emission slashers -- while its economic performance skyrocketed, Steiner said. “Hungary successfully decoupled emissions reduction from its economic trajectory,” he said. Regarding funding of the green transition in Hungary, Steiner noted that government’s green bonds are oversubscribed multiple times. Profits from the bonds will go towards green projects, among other resources, he added.

CHALDEAN PATRIARCH ADDRESSES EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

“The West is not aware of the fears and difficulties that Christians are facing” in the Middle East, Cardinal Luis Raphael Sako, the Patriarch of the Chaldean Catholic Church, said in his address to the International Eucharistic Congress. Sako said the years-long drama of Christians in the Middle East was ongoing. “Radicalism, terror as a political and religious ideology is growing more and more in the Middle East,” the cardinal said. “Extremists want to take advantage of the situation to mark the end of Christian presence in the Middle East,” he said. Sako said Iraqi citizens and Christian communities shared the dream to live in peace, stability and dignity. The separation of state and church is key to that goal, he said.

SEMJÉN OPENS EXHIBITION ON PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

The persecution of Christians is today’s humanitarian crisis, Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén said opening an exhibition on the persecution of Christians in warzones at the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest. One out of eight Christians is persecuted for their faith today, mainly in Islamic countries, the deputy PM in charge of Hungarian communities abroad, church policy and national and

ethnic minorities said at the event tied to the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress now under way in Budapest. However, the persecution of Christians is not unheard of in the West, either, he said, arguing that Christians in those countries often face losing their jobs.

Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, said it was impossible to celebrate the Eucharist without mentioning the trials of Christians persecuted for their faith. “In such cases, we feel a particularly close alliance and solidarity with them, and we try to help them to the best of our ability,” Erdő said. Tristan Azbej, the state secretary in charge of the Hungary Helps humanitarian scheme and aiding persecuted Christians, said Hungary will send life-saving humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and nearby safe countries. The first round of aid will help some 1,000 families, he said.

GOVT OFFICIAL: MASS MIGRATION WEAKENS EU

Mass migration will make the European Union weaker, not stronger, Balázs Orbán, state secretary at the Prime Minister’s Office, told a panel discussion. The 2015 migration crisis was a “milestone” in Europe, Orbán said at the event organised by the Danube Institute, arguing that it had led European politicians to realise that the world had changed and that they had been “unprepared” for what was happening. The laws that were being applied during the crisis had been

enacted decades before and had been meant to address the issue of political refugees fleeing communist countries at the time, Orbán said. But the world has changed, the state secretary said. The bipolar world of the Cold War is gone and has left behind unstable regions which many are trying to leave, he said. Many try to enter the European Union illegally and apply for asylum, he said, adding that many illegal migrants wanted to stay even if their asylum request is denied.

Orbán said that if the EU indicated to migrants that they had a chance to enter the bloc, they were even prepared to try to enter illegally. The Hungarian government believes that countries do have a humanitarian duty towards those in need, but this means providing them help as close to their homeland as possible, not taking them in, the state secretary said, noting the government’s Hungary Helps humanitarian scheme.

Former US attorney general Jeff Sessions said the issue of migration also became a key issue in the US in 2015. If a country says it has open borders, it will attract more and more people, the former Republican senator said. Sessions also highlighted the importance of nation states, saying they were currently the most important factors in global politics. Nation states also have a responsibility to enact laws and enforce them, he said. Most immigrants seeking entry into the US do not meet the requirements for refugee status, but are merely trying to enter the country

in hope of a better life, he added. Sessions praised Hungary's "consistent" migration policy, saying the country had set an example to the world in handling migration.

SURVEY: KARÁCSONY'S POPULARITY FALLING

Support for Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony has fallen among Hungary's adult population from 31% in June to just 20%, the daily Magyar Nemzet said citing a representative survey by pollster Real-PR 93. The daily attributed the fall to Karácsony's "weak performance as a city leader". "Endless traffic jams, growing travel times and the scrapping of one-third of public rubbish bins to save money" were likely to be the reason why the mayor's popularity has fallen by 8 percentage points among city dwellers, Magyar Nemzet said. Among respondents outside Budapest, the mayor's popularity declined by 12 percentage points to 16%, the daily said. Real-PR 93 said the biggest fall was measured among respondents critical of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. While 56% of this group said to be satisfied with Karácsony's performance earlier, now only 34% say the same, the pollster said.

MORE THAN 1.4 MILLION PEOPLE RETURN NATIONAL CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

More than 1.4 million citizens have filled in the National Consultation

questionnaire, a government official said. Fully 83% of the 1.423 million citizens who returned the questionnaire did so by post, while 17% filled it in online, Csaba Dömötör, parliamentary secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, told a news conference. So far, an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with proposals on such measures as raising the minimum wage to 200,000 forints, refunding a portion of personal income tax to parents raising children, and providing constitutional protections for family benefits. The results of the public survey will be presented on each topic over the next few days before the detailed results are published on the government's website, and the cabinet will then make decisions accordingly.

HUNGARY RECORDS 130 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 4 DEATHS

Four Covid patients died over the past 24 hours of a Covid-related illness, while 130 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said. So far 5,821,254 people have received a first jab, while 5,524,203 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 418,000 Hungarians have already received booster jabs. The number of active infections stands at 5,486, while hospitals are treating 210 Covid patients, 24 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 813,818 infections have been registered, while fatalities have

risen to 30,074. Fully 778,258 people have made a recovery. There are 1,955 people in official quarantine, while 6,640,890 tests have been officially carried out. Most Covid cases so far have been recorded in Budapest and Pest County, followed by Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Hajdú-Bihar counties. The county least affected is Tolna.

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP 8% IN JULY

Output of Hungary's industrial sector rose by an annual 8% in July, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. KSH said "most branches of manufacturing" contributed to the increase, although output of the automotive sector declined because of shutdowns. Output of the computer, electronics and optical equipment segment also declined, but output of the food, drink and tobacco products segment rose "by a small degree". Adjusted for the effect of working days, industrial output increased by 10.2%. In a month-on-month comparison, output edged down by 0.5% based on a seasonally and working day-adjusted data.

JEWISH COMMUNAL RECORDS GO IN PUBLIC OWNERSHIP IN ISRAELI- HUNGARIAN COOPERATION

The National Library of Israel and the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives have purchased and will

put on display Hungarian Jewish communal records that had been planned to be auctioned off by a private owner, the National Library of Israel said. The Israeli and Hungarian public collections jointly acquired the documents after protests by activists and organisations dedicated to the preservation of Jewish heritage. The seven rare ledgers from the 19th and 20th centuries containing birth, death, marriage and other communal records from six different Jewish communities in what is now Hungary have been removed from auction by a private individual and acquired by the public collections. The Israeli and Hungarian public collections have committed themselves to digitising the documents and making them available in high resolution online.

UKRAINIAN ARRESTED IN BUDAPEST AFTER USING US BANKCARD DATA

A Ukrainian man has been arrested in Budapest for allegedly ordering electronic devices to Hungary from abroad, using fraudulently obtained US bankcard data, the Budapest Police Headquarters said. The arrest came after a report from a Hungarian bank raising suspicion that electronic devices had been ordered at the end of August under a pseudonym, and data

from 26 US bank cards had been used, causing damages of several million forints. Budapest police arrested the suspect in the 5th district of the capital while he assumed possession of a package, and detectives searching his apartment found unopened packages of mobile phones and other wireless electronic devices that police believe are connected to crime. The 28-year-old Ukrainian citizen has been detained and questioned on suspicion of fraudulently using an IT system. He denies the criminal charges. An investigation is under way as to how the man may have obtained other people's credit card details, the police said in a statement.

BUDAPEST CLASSIC FILM MARATHON TO PAY TRIBUTE TO HUNGARY'S JANCSÓ, TÖRŐCSIK, JANKOVICS

The Budapest Classic Film Marathon, the capital city's largest international film event, will pay tribute to renowned director Miklós Jancsó, and legendary actress Mari Törőcsik and eminent animation director Marcell Jankovics, both of whom died this year, the organiser said.

The event running between September 21 and 26 will feature several classic films restored recently by

Hungary's National Film Institute (NFI) and foreign films with a Hungarian connection in a free open-air cinema set up at the square in front of Saint Stephen's Basilica and other venues, NFI told MTI in a statement.

Commemorating the birth anniversary of multi-award winning Jancsó, the film festival will show his digitally restored iconic titles *The Round-Up* (1966), *Cantata* (1963), *Winter Wind* (1969), *Electra, My Love* (1974) and *God Walks Backward* (1991) at the square and in the Uránia and Toldi cinemas and in the French Institute.

Mari Törőcsik, who died this spring, will be commemorated with the screening of *Our Kid* showing her as a teenager, as well as in *Mrs. Déry, Where Are You?* with her in the role of a diva and in *Anna* as a young maid, among other iconic films.

The festival will also pay tribute to Marcell Jankovics, one of the most significant Hungarian animation artists who died in May. The 1973 colour animation *Johnny Corncob* Jankovics made to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Hungarian poet-revolutionary Sándor Petőfi, the poem's author, will be shown at the Basilica square. The restored version of his classic animation of the Hungarian mythology legend *Song of the Miraculous Hind* will premiere on September 25.