

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

Common cranes flying over Hajdúnánás in eastern Hungary

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**PM Orbán attends EU-Western Balkan Summit**

**Stats office releases Aug industrial output data, retail figures**

**Commemoration of 1849 Arad martyrs**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU INTEGRATION OF W BALKANS KEY

The Western Balkans must not be viewed as the backyard of Europe but as a key region without which neither transatlantic nor European integration can proceed, Hungary's foreign minister said at the Warsaw Security Forum.

Péter Szijjártó told a panel discussion focusing on NATO's next strategic concept that he was not certain that western European countries were fully aware of the significance of the region's security and stability, the ministry said in a statement. He added that one of the reasons might be that they are not sufficiently familiar with the region because they are geographically far from it. Szijjártó said it was controversial that while the European Union did not make progress with integration, western ministers often complained that external players, such as Russia, China, Turkey and Saudi Arabia were trying to exert influence in the region. "How can we win the game if we don't take the field?" he asked. "If the EU cannot integrate the region, others will definitely do it." Szijjártó praised the fact that NATO had enlisted three countries from the region which he said was a great achievement. "The EU is unfortunately much slower in this regard," he said. Szijjártó reiterated that Hungary supported the "open door policy" and backed the enlargement of both the EU and NATO.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: ETHNIC KIN TO BENEFIT FROM GOOD HUNGARY-SLOVAKIA TIES**

Meeting Hungarian Slovak politicians in Bratislava, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó welcomed the establishment of Aliancia-Szövetség, a new Hungarian party alliance in Slovakia, saying that Hungarians there would benefit all the more from cooperation between the two countries. The strong presence of Hungarians in the Slovak parliament is expected to contribute towards strengthening that cooperation, Szijjártó added. The minister noted the Hungarian government's commitment to building strong cooperation within central Europe, encompassing the interests of Hungarian communities in neighbouring countries. The government is ready to build close ties with the new party, he said.

"It's in the interest of the Hungarian government that Slovak Hungarians constitute a strong and important link between the two countries," he said.

The government, he added, will continue pursuing its programmes in support of ethnic Hungarian businesses in southern Slovakia as well as church renovations there. Infrastructure developments for Hungarians on both sides of the Hungary-Slovakia border are a top priority for the government, the minister said.

Three parties, the Party of the Hungarian Community (MKP), Most-Híd and Spolupatričnosť

(Togetherness) movement, formed Aliancia-Szövetség and held its inaugural congress on Saturday. Krisztián Forró, MKP's leader, is now also head of Alliance.

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## **JUSTICE MINISTER: DIGITALISATION, AI PRESENT CHALLENGES TO JUDICIAL SYSTEMS**

Whereas digitalisation and artificial intelligence offer "the greatest opportunities of our time", they also present huge challenges to judicial systems, Justice Minister Judit Varga said on Tuesday ahead of a conference of her Council of Europe counterparts. Both private individuals and businesses rightly expect the authorities to provide fast and efficient services, the minister told journalists in Gödöllő, outside Budapest, ahead of the meeting held as part of Hungary's presidency of the Council of Europe, adding that this is why electronic services must be expanded. Varga said Hungary was "at the forefront" of the European Union in terms of digitalising its judiciary, as reflected by the European Commission's judicial scoreboard. Each EU member has its own solutions to challenges posed by digitalisation and artificial intelligence, she said. "But it's important to establish minimum standards that will help when it comes to linking those systems" in order to ensure smoothness for citizens doing business in another country, Varga added.

Regarding controls over artificial intelligence in the judiciary, the minister emphasised the importance of data protection and fair treatment while "observing all high human rights guarantees". Areas in which "the human element must be retained" need to be identified, she added. The Hungarian justice ministry is working to build a uniform registry of legal entities in order to improve the country's judicial competitiveness while developing services available through mobile applications -- "a certain m-government rather than e-government", the minister said.

The conference is being attended by delegations of 38 countries and Marija Pejčinović Burić, the CoE's secretary general within the framework of the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe which lasts until Nov. 17.

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## **TURKEY-HUNGARY STRATEGIC COOPERATION COUNCIL TO MEET IN ISTANBUL IN NOV**

The next meeting of the Turkey-Hungary Strategic Cooperation Council will be held in Istanbul in November, with the participation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said. Szijjártó said on Facebook after a meeting with Turkish counterpart Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in Warsaw that cooperation between the two countries had become a success story, with "trade turnover

up by 40% this year, likely to reach 4 billion dollars by the end of the year.” “More than 1,800 people have applied for some 150 scholarships available for Turkish students in Hungary,” he added. “We will join forces with Turkey to ensure that people get vaccinated even in the poorest parts of the world and we will therefore together donate 300,000 doses of vaccine to Africa,” he said. Thanks to the modernisation of the Turkish gas pipeline network, Hungary’s gas supplies are secure from the south since last week, he added. “We were also in agreement that encouraging Afghans to leave their country is extremely irresponsible and dangerous,” Szijjártó said. “It could result in further, more serious migratory waves which we must prevent by all means.”

### **JUSTICE MINISTER: NO STATE CAN HANDLE CHALLENGES OF DIGITALISATION ALONE**

No state can handle the challenges of digitalisation alone, Judit Varga, the justice minister, said at a conference on Tuesday. Citizens, she noted, have an ever greater need to access documents online, and the Covid pandemic has heightened this need, Varga said in her speech to the ministerial conference on digital technology and artificial intelligence entitled New Challenges of Justice in Europe, organised by the Ministry of Justice and the Council of Europe (CoE) under the Hungarian presidency of the Committee of

Ministers, in Gödöllő, near Budapest. In her English-language speech posted on Facebook, the minister said any initiative that increased the efficacy of judicial cooperation between CoE member states should be welcomed.

With mobile phones, people can access the legal system at the touch of a button, Varga noted, adding that no one should be digitally excluded. Also, the associated risks should not outweigh their benefits, she added. Even before the pandemic, IT played a big role in Hungary’s legal system, she said. Hungary’s courts already provide electronic access to proceedings, while judges and registered clients can access important information and documents online, saving time and money, Varga added. With remote testimony, people can testify in a separate room, even from abroad, she noted.

Marija Pejčinović Burić, the CoE’s secretary general, said the CoE had been helping member states apply IT effectively in their judicial systems and introduce electronic procedures since 2000. She noted that the coronavirus pandemic had accelerated the introduction of electronic services, leading to the development of more efficient and transparent judicial systems.

### **ORBÁN TO ATTEND EU-WESTERN BALKAN SUMMIT**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán will attend the EU-Western Balkan Summit on

Wednesday, the prime minister’s press chief has said. At the summit, the leaders will have an opportunity to discuss their commitments to the Western Balkans, given the strategic importance of the region, and how to ensure its stability and resolve regional conflicts, the press chief said. Also, the European Union’s role on the international stage, Afghanistan, the AUKUS security partnership and relations with China are on the agenda of the summit, according to European Council President Charles Michel. In his invitation to the leaders, he wrote that relations with the bloc’s transatlantic allies and emerging powers were a key element of the EU’s foreign policy.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: MIGRATION POLICY ‘NATIONAL COMPETENCE’**

Addressing a UNHCR meeting in Geneva on Monday, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó called for migration and asylum policies to resolutely remain a national competence. The minister called for countries to show mutual respect for their varying standpoints on immigration. “As far as migration and asylum policies are concerned, Hungary has no wish to give up any of its national powers, but it nevertheless strives for constructive dialogue with international partners,” he added.

Preparations are needed for further waves of migration following the exit of international forces from Afghanistan, he said, adding that health as well as security risks arose

in light of the Covid pandemic. Referring to the migration wave of 2015, he noted that around 400,000 people had crossed Hungary's borders illegally. "Attempts at social integration in Western Europe have totally failed and parallel societies have emerged in various places," Szijjártó said.

Hungary, the minister said, fully abides by international law while observing the principle that aid should be exported to where it is needed rather than importing problems. Szijjártó said that international law was clear on the point that people who are forced to flee have the right to temporary safe haven where this is first available. "Asylum is not something we allow to anyone who breaches our borders, from whichever direction."

Encouragement should be given to people to stay put by establishing good conditions right where they are rather than incentivising them to leave, he said. Hungary, he noted, has helped around 250,000 Christians in the Middle East and Africa to stay in their homelands, with 70 million US dollars under the Hungary Helps programme spent on rebuilding houses, schools, and churches.

## **NOVÁK: PENSIONERS TO GET HUF 80,000 BONUS IN NOVEMBER**

Hungary's 2.5 million pensioners will each receive a bonus of 80,000 forints (EUR 222) next month in addition to their higher pensions, the family affairs minister said after a meeting of the

Council of the Elderly on Monday. Even retirees with the lowest pensions will receive the same bonus, Katalin Novák said, adding that an average pensioner will receive an additional 100,000 forints in November. The measure is costing the treasury 200 billion forints.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: 'BRUSSELS APPLYING DOUBLE STANDARDS'**

It is clear that Brussels is applying double standards when it comes to the issue of border fences used to halt migration, Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's foreign minister, said in an interview published in the Czech daily Mladá Fronta Dnes on Tuesday. Szijjártó noted that Hungary was harshly attacked in 2015 for building a fence on its southern border. "Now Lithuania and Poland are being roundly praised" for their fence-building, the minister said. "I think we made the right decision six years ago: fences have proved to be indispensable for effectively protecting borders and the European continent as a whole."

"Migration is seen in Hungary as a serious danger," Szijjártó said, adding that the appearance of terrorists among the migrants posed a threat to security. The minister also said migrants from remote cultures were unwilling to integrate themselves into European societies.

"Now Brussels is saying the same as we did six years ago," Szijjártó said, adding that disputes with Brussels were ideological rather

than political. The governments of Poland and Hungary, he said, were based on conservative, patriotic and Christian traditions incompatible with the views of the liberal mainstream in Brussels. "But we are not going to stop defending our national interests and make bad compromises. It is unacceptable that Brussels is discriminating against us for ideological reasons and blocking our access to EU funds," Szijjártó said.

"The European Union will only be strong if its member states are strong. Hungary rejects efforts to introduce federalism and establish a united states of Europe. We do not want to relinquish more powers to Brussels, and we insist on keeping migration, welfare and family policies as national competences," Szijjártó said.

## **FINANCE MINISTER: EU APPROVAL OF HUNGARIAN RECOVERY PROGRAMME HINDERED BY POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Hungary's programme for post-pandemic economic recovery meets the criteria laid down previously in all respects but its approval is being hindered by the European Commission's "politically motivated" considerations, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said after meeting his EU counterparts in Luxembourg on Tuesday. The European Commission has brought up arguments that have nothing to do with previously established criteria, he said, adding

that none of these reservations justify any delay in giving the go-ahead to the Hungarian programme. The EU has a vested interest in approving national recovery programmes as soon as possible because delays would prevent it from keeping pace with economies that are able to restart more rapidly, Varga said.

Varga called delaying decisions on the recovery programmes all the more “irresponsible” as some of the countries affected had reached their pre-pandemic performance by the second half of 2021. The Hungarian government has issued bonds to raise 4.5 billion euros so that its crucial economic, environmental, educational and health programmes should not suffer any delay, Varga said.

### **PINTÉR: EU'S EXTERNAL BORDERS MUST BE PROTECTED AGAINST ILLEGAL MIGRATION**

It is imperative that the European Union's external borders are protected against illegal migration, Sándor Pintér, the interior minister, said after a meeting of his counterparts from the Visegrad Group, Austria and Slovenia. Pintér said there was complete agreement among the ministers at the meeting that the EU's external borders needed to be protected. They signed a joint statement to that effect with the aim of asserting their standpoint within the EU, he noted. Meanwhile, Pintér said the challenge of migration as a result of the situation in

Afghanistan would apply to everyone. As yet no one knows how great the next migration wave to Europe will be or how to see to border protection obligations while also meeting asylum expectations, he added.

### **OFFICIAL: HUNGARIAN COE PRESIDENCY PRIORITISES MINORITY PROTECTION**

Hungary's presidency of the Council of Europe (CoE) prioritises minority protections, a foreign ministry official said on Tuesday. Péter Sztáray, the state secretary for security policy, noted that Hungary is surrounded by countries where there are large ethnic Hungarian minorities, and the country regards support for these communities in cooperation with neighbouring states as its responsibility. But minority protection is important for all countries, he added, given that minorities make up a significant part of societies, and it is important that the issue is dealt with at European level. Among the multitude of good solutions and practices, each country must find its own effective way to protect minorities, he added.

Katalin Szili, the prime minister's commissioner for autonomy, said every seventh citizen in Europe is affected as a member of a minority. Various kinds of autonomy exist, depending on why they were established and what kind of rights are involved, she said, adding that various forms of autonomy were not mutually exclusive and could

coexist. They are important because they enhance stability and help minorities, she said.

### **HUNGARY RECORDS SIXTEEN COVID DEATHS, 294 NEW INFECTIONS**

Sixteen patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 294 new coronavirus infections were registered, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Tuesday. So far 5,897,432 people have received a first jab, while 5,661,324 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 816,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 8,041, while hospitals are treating 585 Covid patients, 86 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 825,170 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,246. Fully 786,883 people have made a recovery. There are 5,715 people in official quarantine, while 6,988,310 tests have been officially carried out.

### **TEACHER UNIONS SET UP JOINT STRIKE COMMITTEE**

Hungary's two largest trade unions of teachers are setting up a joint strike committee in support of their demands for an immediate pay hike and a reduction in their workload, union leaders announced on Tuesday. Zsuzsa Szabó, head of the Trade Union of Teachers (PSZ), and Erzsébet Nagy, a board member of the Democratic Trade Union of Teachers (PDSZ), said

that they would inform the prime minister of their demands later in the day. They added that under the law the government had five days to name their negotiating partners for the strike talks. Ferenc Kalmár, ministerial commissioner for the development of Hungary's neighbourhood policy, noted that Hungary has broad experience in terms of minority protection, adding that the protection of minorities in Europe was important for maintaining peace and stability.

### **PRO-GOVT CIVIL ORG CÖF-CÖKA TO ORGANISE 9TH PEACE MARCH ON OCT 23**

The pro-government Civic Union Forum (CÖF) and associated CÖKA foundation is organising its 9th Peace March on Oct. 23, the day marking the 65th anniversary of the outbreak of Hungary's 1956 anti-Soviet uprising, "for the cause of Hungarian sovereignty", the chief organiser said. László Csizmadia, the founder of CÖF, said the aim of the march was "to

send a message to Brussels", as well as to the Hungarian opposition. The message to Brussels is that "the rule of law in Hungary rests on Hungarian democracy", he said, adding that "democracy is where people are free to express their opinion about matters affecting their future and can live their lives the way they want to". Referring to a police crackdown on protesters in 2006, during the previous Socialist-led administration, he spoke of "state terror" and "a republic tainted with blood". The march will proceed along the route where the crackdown unfolded on Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Road and the Astoria junction, Csizmadia said.

### **HUNGARIAN PAVILION AT DUBAI EXPO DRAWS NEARLY 10,000 VISITORS IN FIRST DAYS**

Hungary's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, a world fair that opened last week, has attracted nearly 10,000 visitors over the first few days of the event, the managing director of project company

Expo 2020 Hungary Nonprofit told public media in Dubai on Tuesday. Andrea Tóth said the pavilion was special both for having been built from wood and for its digital exhibition. "Hungary can be proud of its pavilion, as we have been open for four and a half days here at the Dubai Expo and we've had close to 10,000 visitors during this time," Tóth said. "And it's not just our exhibition that's popular with visitors, but our restaurant is also full." The pavilion showcases Hungary's mineral, medicinal and thermal waters and its structure draws inspiration from the works of renowned architect Imre Makovecz. It was constructed without using a single drop of water, in line with the expo's theme of sustainability.

Károly Pintér, executive chef of the pavilion's restaurant, said that although getting hold of the ingredients needed to replicate the flavours of Hungarian cuisine had been a challenge, the kitchen had managed to put together a menu that is a true reflection of Hungarian gastronomy. Expo 2020 Dubai runs until March 31, 2022.