

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Autumn in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

First Lady meets with families of Covid victims in Debrecen

Stats office releases Aug construction figures

Coronavirus updates

World Hunting Expo

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: BORDER PROTECTION IN EGYPT KEY

Enabling Egypt to protect its land and maritime borders is “essential” for Europe and Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after a meeting of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

In a joint press release, Orbán said: “The security of Brussels does not start in its suburbs but at the Hungarian-Serbian border, and in a wider sense, at the Egyptian maritime and land borders.” Egypt “has not allowed a single ship transporting migrants to leave its shores” since 2016, he said, praising the feat as a “huge contribution to our security and to that of the whole of Europe”. Egypt and Hungary have no outstanding issues, and are both looking to boost cooperation, Orbán said. He thanked el-Sisi for offering Hungarian economic players a role in developing Egypt’s economy. Hungary and Egypt’s bilateral ties are rooted in the “internationally unparalleled development Egypt has undergone in the past seven years,” he said. Orbán said that at a meeting in 2015 el-Sisi had briefed him on a plan to “turn Egypt into an economic superpower” based on its 100 million-strong population and key geographical location. The subsequent “100-million-scale” development “has changed our picture of Egypt fundamentally ... and convinced us that it would be a fantastic partner for Hungary.”

HUNGARY, EGYPT TO EXPLORE PROJECTS FOR MUTUAL COOPERATION

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Wednesday agreed to appoint commissioners to pinpoint projects for mutual cooperation. Orbán said Hungary had a "great reputation" in Egypt as a farming country, and some of that cooperation was sure to focus on livestock husbandry and crop and seed production, both bilaterally and between the V4 and Egypt. In addition to the large order of railway carriages Hungary is delivering to Egypt, plans are to relocate maintenance and manufacturing units too, Orbán said. Also, it was agreed that the number of Egyptian students given a chance to study in Hungary will increase, he said.

Meanwhile, the two leaders discussed gas supply in the eastern Mediterranean. Hungary's recent decision to source more gas from the south provides an opportunity to involve Egypt in Europe's future LNG supplies via Hungary, he said. Orbán underlined Hungary's commitment to lobbying the EU to come to a swift decision regarding support for Egypt's efforts to contain migration at its borders by lifting the bloc's ban on exports to the country of border protection equipment and financing.

El-Sisi said Orbán had an understanding of the issues that affect the region of Egypt and knew

how to handle them. He thanked Hungary for its "steadfast support" and for the trust which he said would help Egypt overcome "the difficulties originating from 2011-2013". El-Sisi said he had agreed with Orbán to give impetus to agricultural cooperation and enhance cooperation in tourism and various industries. The president praised Orbán as a "great leader" and invited him to the celebrations at "the inauguration of the new capital".

HUNGARY TAKING 50 COVID PATIENTS FROM ROMANIA INTO INTENSIVE CARE

Hungary has decided to take 50 coronavirus patients from Romania into its intensive care facilities, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Wednesday. Szijjártó noted Romania's "extremely serious challenges" mounting in recent days. Hungary's government has kept in contact with Romanian Deputy Prime Minister Hunor Kelemen and Minister of Health Attila Cseke regarding how Hungary can help Romania, he added. The minister noted that Hungary has already donated ventilators and favipiravir, and now Hungary has agreed to accept gravely ill Covid patients for intensive treatment in Szeged and Debrecen, in southern and eastern Hungary respectively. The technicalities of the arrangement are under discussion between the two sides, he added.

FOUR NEW BRIDGES LINKING HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA TO BE FINISHED BY 2024

Four new bridges spanning border rivers between Hungary and Slovakia are slated to be finished by the end of 2023, a government official said on Wednesday. Road bridges planned between Órhalom and Vrbovka (Ipolyvarbó), and Drégelypalánk and Ipeľské Predmostie (Ipolyhídvég) will cost 1.7 billion forints (EUR 4.7m) each, while the bicycle bridge between Dunakiliti and Doborgaz is expected to come to 1.9 billion, Tamás Schanda, a state secretary of the innovation and technology ministry, said in a statement. An amendment proposal on a Hungarian-Slovak bilateral agreement regulating the sharing of maintenance and operational tasks between the two countries is currently before parliament, Schanda said. Construction of a bridge between Ipolydamásd and Helemba is already under way, he said.

Schanda noted that cooperation with Slovakia had "changed gears in the past few years". The upgrade of the Budapest-Bratislava road opened a highway connection between the two cities, and a new bridge between Komárom and Komarno for freight transport has opened, eliminating a 100km detour lorries needed to take earlier, he said. The M30 road between Miskolc and Kosice (Kassa) will be opened this year, five years ahead of

schedule, completing the Hungarian stretch of the central European high-speed road system Via Carpathia, he said.

EU ALLOWS HUNGARY TO MAINTAIN TWO TAX MEASURES UNTIL 2024

Hungary has been granted a derogation from European Union rules for two tax measures until the end of 2024, state secretary for tax affairs Norbert Izer said in a statement. Businesses will still be able to deduct half of VAT on rented cars, while buyers rather than suppliers will continue to pay VAT on purchases over 100,000 forints (EUR 277) if the supplier is under liquidation or undergoing bankruptcy, Izer said. "The government has successfully defended Hungarian interests in Brussels," he added.

ÁDER: PLASTIC COULD OUTWEIGH FISH IN OCEANS BY 2050

Every ten seconds the equivalent of a lorry full of plastic waste makes its way into the oceans, President János Áder said in an interview on Wednesday in connection with the upcoming sustainability expo dubbed Planet Budapest 2021. United Nations forecasts show that, combined with the effects of overfishing, this could result in plastic outweighing fish by 2050, he said. Áder told public radio that a third of the Earth's population receives their

protein supplies from the oceans, and the volume of fish is therefore vitally important for feeding a growing population.

Protecting seas and oceans is also crucial because the phytoplankton in the water absorb more carbon dioxide than all the world's forests, he added. Plastic waste that ends up in the oceans is not a cosmetic problem, he said. It breaks up into microplastic which then gets into the food chain and sooner or later ends up in humans, he added. Áder also said that overfishing must be stopped and the proportion of protected maritime areas should be increased from currently under 10% to 30%. In Hungary, seafood consumption could be replaced by fresh water fish, he said, calling on Hungarians to "go back to the old recipes". Hungary can best contribute to international efforts to protect oceans by keeping its rivers clean and producing quality fish, he added.

OFFICIAL: GOVT READY TO CUT SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION TAX BY 4 PP

In an effort to ease the burden on businesses in light of its policy of raising the minimum wage to a monthly 200,000 forints (EUR 555), the government is proposing a 4 percentage point reduction in the social contribution tax, an official of the innovation and technology

ministry said after wage talks on Wednesday. State secretary for employment policy Sándor Bodó told a press conference that the proposed reduction from 15.5% to 11.5% would leave a total of 500 billion forints with businesses. The Hungarian government is dedicated to its policy of cutting taxes, he added.

ENERGY AUTHORITY: HUNGARY'S WINTER GAS NEEDS GUARANTEED

By the end of September, Hungary had reserves of over 5.28 billion cubic meters of natural gas, more than enough to cater to the country's needs throughout the winter, the Hungarian energy and public utility authority (MEKH) said on Wednesday. Following its annual review of winter preparedness, MEKH said gas storage facilities were 83% full, guaranteeing the needs of private consumers and industry as well as emergency reserves in case of supply interruptions, MEKH said. Natural gas for domestic consumption is supplied jointly by imports, domestic gas production and from reserves, MEKH said.

SZIJÁRTÓ: STRONG COMPETITION AUTHORITIES KEY TO 'TRUE COMPETITION'

Hungary, as a promoter of free and fair world trade, wants to ensure "real competition" in which strong and

expert competition authorities are key players, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told a conference of the International Competition Network (ICN) in Budapest on Wednesday. The three-day conference hosted by the Hungarian competition authority GVH has drawn some 100 speakers and 1,700 attendees from 130 countries. GVH head Csaba Balázs Rigó said the conference was a "great opportunity" for the Hungarian authority to keep abreast of cutting-edge knowhow and analytical tools. The conference focuses on current issues such as warding off cross-border anti-competition measures, "crisis cartels during the pandemic", and issues regarding digitalisation and innovation, he said.

SOCIALISTS DEMAND CUT TO VAT ON FOOD

The Socialists on Wednesday called on the government to cut VAT on basic foodstuffs to 5% and of other food products to 18%, saying ruling "Fidesz has unleashed brutal price hikes in the country". Socialist lawmaker László Varju told an online press conference that due to nine-year record inflation, the price rises of basic foodstuffs were double the minimum wage hike, while pensioners were hit especially hard. Varju insisted that the government had "weakened the forint on purpose", yielding hundreds of billions of forints of profits for the central bank, while driving up

the price of imports. Meanwhile, Hungary's 27% VAT is the highest in the European Union, he said. Varju called on the government to "stop profiteering" on food prices and scrap the "extra tax". VAT on or food products should not be higher than 18%, with VAT for basic foodstuffs cut to 5% "immediately", he said. The Socialists expect the winner of the opposition primary election to include the measure in their election manifesto, he said.

INVESTMENTS IN HUNGARY IN RUDE HEALTH DESPITE PANDEMIC

The investment rate in Hungary of 27% in the second quarter is the highest level for many years, a finance ministry official said on Wednesday, adding that investors in the country were undeterred by the pandemic-related crisis. Speaking at the 10th Macroeconomic Conference of the Joint Venture Association (JVSZ) on Wednesday, Gábor Gion, the state secretary for finance, noted that an investment worth 6,700 billion forints (EUR 18.6bn) is currently under way, which is expected to add 25 percentage points to GDP once it is handed over. High levels of public and private investment will enhance future GDP, he said, adding that sustained economic growth of an annual 4% could be achieved as a result. Gion noted that growth was expected at around 7.5% this year and 5% in 2022.

FIDESZ EP GROUP VOWS TO DEFEND NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONS

The European parliamentary group of Hungary's ruling Fidesz will defend the constitutions of European Union member states, MEP László Trócsányi said on Wednesday, expressing his party's concern over "political attacks" against Poland concerning its recent court ruling saying that certain EU laws were incompatible with the country's constitution. Trócsányi said in a statement that Poland's Constitutional Tribunal was not questioning the supremacy of EU law in matters in which the bloc has power, but simply declared that in all other matters the national constitution was the supreme law of the country. He emphasised that national constitutions based on the sovereignty, democratic legitimacy and constitutional order of member states served to limit the EU's competences. "It was this that the Polish Constitutional Tribunal's decision on the relationship between national and EU law defended," Trócsányi said.

The MEP said the Polish court's decision was the latest in a series of constitutional court rulings resulting from EU institutions' disregard for the principle of the conferral of competences enshrined in the bloc's founding treaties. The EU, he said, wanted to take powers away from member states which EU institutions had not been empowered to exercise

jointly. "The European Union and European law exist and are applicable because national constitutions make this possible," Trócsányi said. "EU institutions are required to respect the sovereignty and constitutional identity of member states even when exercising their powers."

Trócsányi said it was also concerning that the EU was "applying double standards" to the central European member states and was "far more lenient" when dealing with the western European countries. "We emphasise that European integration only works if the member states are sovereign and equal states," he said. "We consider justice, including judicial independence, an important shared value, but member states cannot be denied the right to enact judicial reforms in the interest of an effective judiciary."

**HUNGARY RECORDS
814 NEW CORONAVIRUS
INFECTIONS, TEN DEATHS**

Ten patients died of a Covid-related illness over the past 24 hours, while 814 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday. So far 5,913,862 people have received a first jab, while 5,685,596 have been fully vaccinated.

Fully 928,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 10,690, while hospitals are treating 737 Covid patients, 116 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 830,725 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 30,330. Fully 789,705 people have made a recovery. There are 8,112 people in official quarantine, while 7,093,879 tests have been officially carried out.

PRO-GOVT CIVIL ORG CÖF-CÖKA: OCT 23 MARCH TO PROCEED ALONG 'ROUTE OF GYURCSÁNY'S TERROR'

The pro-government Civic Union Forum (CÖF) and associated CÖKA foundation is organising its 9th Peace March on Oct. 23, and the organisers say it will proceed along "the route of Gyurcsány's terror" -- referring to a police crackdown on protesters in 2006 during the previous Socialist-led administration. The participants of the march will commemorate the victims of Hungary's 1956 anti-Soviet uprising which started on October 23, as well as "the victims" of the then prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's "police terror", László Cszizmadia, CÖF's founder, told a press conference on Wednesday. András

Bencsik, the march's chief organiser, said the event would be held "in the spirit of love and care". "Evil must be defeated again" in order to prevent a return to events in 2006 when "the government attacked its own people", he added.

**INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT
GROWS BY 2.6% IN AUG**

Industrial output in Hungary rose by an annual 2.6% in August, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Wednesday. Adjusted for the number of working days, output edged up by 0.6%, staying slightly above the output in 2019, the second reading of data showed. Month on month, output fell 2.7% based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. Output of vehicle manufacturing fell by an annual 33.7% in August as the global semiconductor shortage impacted factories. The decline in output of automotive industry companies, which accounted for 17% of total manufacturing output in August, accelerated from a 6.7% drop in July. Output of the computer, electronics and optical equipment segment, accounting for 12% of manufacturing, slipped 3.7% in August. The volume of industrial exports edged up 0.2%.

