

PHOTO OF THE DAY



The newly inaugurated national centre of Caritas Hungary, the aid organisation of the Hungarian Catholic Church, in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Top govt officials address conference commemorating Rákóczi Federation honorary president

Ruling Fidesz congress

MTV EMA awards gala hosted by Budapest

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ PRAISES TURKIC COUNCIL COOPERATION

Cooperation among the members of the Turkic Council is based on mutual respect rather than countries lecturing each other, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Istanbul.

This approach is becoming increasingly rare in global politics, even though it could be helpful in managing major challenges, the minister said after a summit of Turkic Council members. "Global politics is riddled with conflicts and attacks at a time when the coronavirus pandemic could have brought about a return of the culture of mutual respect in international political relations, but that didn't happen," Szijjártó said. He said the Turkic Council was an excellent example of how geographically distant countries can interact with each other when their cooperation is based on mutual respect. Szijjártó noted that the Turkic countries had sent medical equipment, face masks, raw materials and disinfectants to Hungary during the first wave of the pandemic. "And when we were the ones who were in a position to help, we supported the countries of the Turkic Council by repatriating their citizens and sending them ventilators," he said. He also noted that Hungary had signed agreements with Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan on the mutual recognition of Covid vaccination certificates.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: EUROPE FACING 'UNPRECEDENTED' CHALLENGES

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Istanbul that Europe had never before faced such a complex set of challenges when it came to the issue of migration. "In fact, the situation is expected to get worse, now that 30,000-35,000 people are fleeing Afghanistan on a daily basis," the minister said, adding that this figure was expected to rise. Hungary and Europe's interests lie in stopping the illegal migration waves as far away from the continent as possible, and this requires the help of the countries in the region and those countries situated along potential migration routes, Szijjártó said. The latter group, he said, therefore should not be encouraged to open their borders but should be supported in protecting them. Forcing the countries of the region to take in Afghan migrants would have seen a repeat of the mistakes made during the 2015 migration crisis, Szijjártó said, adding that these countries had to have a say in the decisions that impacted them.

JUSTICE MIN: HUNGARY JUDICIARY ATTENTIVE TO ECtHR PRACTICES

Hungary's judiciary gives proper consideration to criteria set out by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), Justice Minister Judit

Varga told a conference in Budapest. Hungarian judges are aware of and well prepared when it comes to the characteristics of the Strasbourg court, Varga told the conference on the implementation of the legal practices of the ECtHR in Hungary's judicial system. She said Hungary's system of procedural norms helped keep judges up to date on the Strasbourg court's practices.

If the Hungarian judiciary acts appropriately, it means fewer cases will be referred to the ECtHR, the minister said. She pointed out as an example that there had been 1,406 pending cases against Hungary before the court in 2009, which later increased to 8,962 but was reduced to just 516 by Jan 1, 2021. Thanks to the government's efforts, Hungary is no longer among the countries with the most ECtHR cases, Varga added. She said Hungary took an active role in the process of improving the implementation of verdicts.

She said compliance with the criteria set out by the Strasbourg court was an important factor when it came to drafting legislation in Hungary, and that both regular courts and the Constitutional Court were increasingly using the ECtHR's legal practices as points of reference. The minister added, at the same time, that it was important that the court's decisions were "clear and consistent, and shouldn't go beyond the given state's commitments stemming from international treaties". The ECtHR's function is to interpret the

provisions laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights and to ensure the enforcement of human rights norms, Varga said, adding that this needed to be in balance with the sovereignty and human rights obligations of the Council of Europe's member states. As regards ECtHR rulings Hungary has complied with through legislative action, Varga mentioned the issue of prison overcrowding and the administrative backlog of lawsuits. Hungary made room for legal remedy in the case of poor prison conditions in 2017 and will do the same when it comes to the duration of court proceedings from Jan 2022, she said.

ECtHR judge Péter Paczolay said there were eight so-called impact cases pending against Hungary on issues including real-life sentences, the treatment of migrants and gender reassignment.

KÖVÉR IN TALKS WITH ESTONIAN COUNTERPART

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér has held talks with Estonian Speaker Juri Ratas, who is paying an official visit to Hungary, Parliament's press office said in a statement. Kövér said Estonia-Hungary economic, cultural and defence-security ties had functioned well over the past three decades, and both countries were bound by language ties and "our struggles of thirty years ago, when Estonia and Hungary fought for their freedom and independence".

He also referred to “problematic issues” which presented challenges to both countries and to Europe, such as illegal migration, the energy crisis, the coronavirus epidemic and climate change.

Ratas noted “smooth” relations thanks to constant contact and dialogue, and he also praised the role of the two countries’ respective legislatures in maintaining good relations. He thanked Hungary for its contribution to the protection of the Baltic airspace and its support for the Three Seas Initiative.

The speaker added that there was room to strengthen cooperation between the Visegrad Group and the three Baltic States in tourism, the economy, and person-to-person contacts.

Regarding the future of Europe, Kövér said related consultations would be successful only with strong parliamentary participation, as this was the only way to guarantee their democratic legitimacy. President János Áder also received Ratas and his delegation, the statement added.

REYNDERS: PERSONS OF DIFFERING SEXUAL ORIENTATION SUFFER DISCRIMINATION IN HUNGARY

Persons of differing sexual orientation clearly suffer discrimination in Hungary, European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders said in

Budapest on Friday. Reynders said he was convinced that Hungarian regulations contradicted European Union principles of freedom, and added that he wanted to see an amendment to the relevant law. Reynders has been in Hungary since Wednesday consulting representatives of parliament, government, judges and the civil sector concerning the findings of the EU 2021 rule-of-law report. He noted the functioning of the judiciary, corruption, the situation of the media and checks and balances have been under review. The commission’s opinion has not changed significantly, he added.

Reynders insisted that various parliamentary groups and civilians had confirmed the statement of facts described in the EC report, adding that ways to improve the situation would be assessed. Ensuring the independence of the public prosecutor’s office and the courts was highly important, he said. The commissioner also criticised the “lack of transparency” in state advertising which, he said, had a major influence on the economic circumstances of media organisations. Also, the Media Council should be composed of a multiplicity of party representatives, he said.

Reynders said his report was an analysis of the situation and not a tool for introducing sanctions. The aim was open dialogue and assessing which areas of cooperation

could be improved, he added. At the same time, EU principles must be protected, he said. EU law has primacy in certain areas and the rulings of the European Court are binding, he added. He said the EC was not in favour of identical systems in every member state, given different historical traditions. But certain basic principles must be guaranteed, including the independence of the judiciary enshrined in EU treaties, he added. Reynders said he had listened to the opinions of “both sides” in Hungary. He added that he had met Justice Minister Judit Varga, as well as opposition representatives, including prime ministerial candidate Péter Márki-Zay and Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony. Recommendations will be submitted to Hungary, he said. He encouraged Hungary to join the European Public Prosecutor’s Office, adding, however, that this was not compulsory.

RÉTVÁRI: GOVT HELPING PEOPLE WHO WANT CHILDREN

The government aims to ensure that people who want to have children are given all possible support, not just financial, but aid for health interventions for people struggling to conceive, too, a government official said on Friday. Bence Rétvári, parliamentary deputy state secretary of the ministry of human resources, told a press conference held ahead

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of the “Natural Child Blessing” conference in Budapest that many potential parents faced not only financial obstacles to conception but health barriers, too. This is why the government is providing 70 million forints each year in support of the Catholic Charity’s “natural conception” project, he said. The methods involved have been tried and tested in other European countries and the United States, and the project provides similar spiritual and lifestyle guidance to help infertile couples, he added.

Bishop Zsolt Márton of Vác County, who is chairman of the family committee of the Hungarian Catholic Episcopal Conference, noted the charity has been coordinating the project that provides a mix of family planning and medical aid for infertile couples since 2018.

Norbert Vajda, the Catholic Charity’s head, said the aim was to bring planned children into the world. Much of the problems and stresses of modern-day living can be addressed through health awareness and by ensuring proper professional help is made available, he said.

KARÁCSONY ISSUES REPRIMAND TO HEAD OF BUDAPEST CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT CENTRE

Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, has issued a written reprimand to Balázs J. Barts, the

chief executive of Budapest Capital City Property Management Centre (BVFK), in connection with reports of the possible sale of City Hall. Karácsony said Barts had been wrong to discuss with real estate investors a preparatory study that presented possible long-term scenarios with regard to the sale of City Hall after 2030, as these had been rejected by the mayor’s cabinet. Karácsony has made clear that he does not want to sell City Hall, according to a statement on Friday by the Mayor’s Office. The statement said Barts’s duties included receiving inquiries from real estate investors and gauging the intentions of investors. Meeting such people and briefing them was a part of the job, it added. But he made a serious mistake when he presented an old study in connection with the City Hall property that no longer had any relevance, having been rejected by Karácsony’s administration. Also, he should not have informally conveyed his personal opinion that may have cast doubt on the city administration’s decision, the statement said. As an official, he must not express his personal views on such a sensitive issue, it added.

At the same time, Barts, who was appointed by the former mayor István Tarlós in 2014, was otherwise carrying out his duties satisfactorily, the statement said. Barts, it added, had been untainted by corruption and had spearheaded the introduction of an anonymous electronic bidding system as well as a unified municipal

real estate database. He also helped to maximise the value of municipal properties by carrying out preparatory work for the development over various plots of land owned by the Budapest city council, and opened up opportunities for urban development, it added. Barts, however, is now prohibited from communicating with external parties in his official capacity concerning the City Hall site, the statement said.

Meanwhile, Fidesz lawmaker Gyula Budai said on Friday he had filed a complaint to police regarding the sale of a property in the capital and the suspicion of influence peddling as indicated in press reports covering the City Hall story. The complaint relates to reports of a secret recording of two men discussing the purchase of a plot of land in the 12th district, which was purchased by Grebics Ingtatlan for 101 million forints from the Budapest Metropolitan Council.

HUNGARY RECORDS 116 CORONAVIRUS DEATHS, 8,370 NEW INFECTIONS

Altogether 116 patients died of a Covid-related illness over the past 24 hours, while 8,370 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Friday. So far 5,992,142 people have received a first jab, while 5,768,941 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 1,527,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 89,581, while hospitals are treating 5,147 Covid-19 patients, 509 of whom

need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 939,784 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 31,867. Fully 818,336 people have made a recovery. There are 47,575 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 7,752,519.

HUNGARY INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT FALLS 2.3% YR/YR IN SEPT

Industrial output in Hungary fell by an annual 2.3% in September, and the output of automotive manufacturers, the biggest segment of Hungary's industrial sector, dropped by an annual 25.9% as the global chip shortage impacted the local automotive industry, a detailed reading of data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) on Friday shows. The decline in output of automotive industry companies, which accounted for 23% of total manufacturing output in September, slowed from a drop of 34.1% in August. Output of the computer, electronics and optical equipment segment, accounting for

12% of manufacturing, slipped 11.4% in September.

Output of the food, drinks and tobacco segment, which made up 13% of manufacturing sector output, increased by 11.1%. Adjusted for the number of work days, headline industrial output dropped by 1.7%. Month on month, output edged down a seasonally and working day-adjusted 0.3%.

CONSTRUCTION SECTOR OUTPUT GROWTH QUICKENS TO 14.2% IN SEPT

Output of Hungary's construction sector grew by an annual 14.2% in September, quickening from 10.1% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. Output of the building segment increased by 21.2% and civil engineering output grew by 6.7%. Month on month, construction sector output rose by 4.2%, adjusted for seasonal and working-day effects. In absolute terms, output was 544.7 billion forints in September, with the building segment accounting for 59% of the total.

PROSECUTOR PRESSES CHARGES AGAINST TWO IRANIAN MEN FOR ROWDY BEHAVIOUR IN HOSPITAL

Charges have been pressed against two male Iranian citizens for shouting and acting violently last March when they were forced to stay in a hospital as a result of suspected Covid infection, the chief public prosecutor's office said on Friday. Several Iranian citizens were taken under epidemiological supervision in a Budapest hospital on March 7, 2020, the office said. The two suspects, aged 24 and 23, were taken to the hospital for testing in the afternoon. After being told that they were not allowed to leave, they shouted and refused to cooperate with hospital staff before climbing out of a window to a terrace and going to other rooms in the hospital, despite being told to stay in their room. When staff refused to open their terrace door, they kicked it repeatedly. The 9th district prosecutor's office submitted an indictment to the Pest County district court for rowdy behaviour and initiated a suspended prison sentence.