

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Automotive Hungary exhibition of vehicle part suppliers opens in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mayor gives presser on preparations for 150th birth anniversary of Budapest

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

KOVÁCS: HUNGARY NOT TO BECOME IMMIGRANT COUNTRY

Hungary's current government, as long as it is in power, "will enforce the will of the Hungarian people and prevent Hungary from becoming an immigrant country," Zoltán Kovács said on Tuesday.

Referring to the European Court ruling that Hungary's criminalisation of help given to people in making their claim for asylum breaches EU law, the state secretary for international communications and relations said on Facebook that the "Stop Soros" law passed in 2018, which made organising and financing illegal migration punishable, had succeeded in preventing the mass influx of migrants. Citing public surveys carried out in Hungary, he said the law had the steadfast support of the Hungarian people. He said the "pro-immigration left" had savaged the law and, under pressure from the Soros Open Society Foundations, the European Commission launched infringement proceedings against Hungary. Kovács said Hungary respected the ECJ's ruling regarding the Stop Soros package of laws, but it reserved the right to take action against foreign-funded NGOs, including any activities by organisations funded by George Soros seeking political influence or promoting migration. Hungary's position on migration, he said, had not changed -- namely, that help should be given at the location of the problem.

EU COURT: HUNGARY BREAKING EU LAW BY CRIMINALISING HELP FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Hungary's criminalisation of help given to people in making their claim for asylum breaches EU law, the European Court of Justice said on Tuesday.

In June 2018, parliament passed the "Stop Soros" package, which penalised help and support for illegal immigration.

The European Commission sued Hungary at the Luxembourg court for restricting activities such as counseling and assisting asylum seekers. The Hungarian measures were contrary to EU asylum law and violated the right of asylum seekers to meet and interact with organisations engaged in such activities, the EC maintained.

The EU court ruled today that Hungary's assertion that asylum seekers are entitled to international protection in Hungary only if they arrive directly from an unsafe country breached EU law.

Hungarian legislation also fell foul of obligations arising from the Reception Directive, the court ruled, by penalising activity such as lodging an asylum application if it could be shown that the person doing so was aware that the application could not be accepted under Hungarian law.

The law, the court added, restricts rights guaranteed under EU directives, such as the right to meet and communicate with applicants for

international protection, and these restrictions could not be justified on the grounds of possible abuses of asylum procedure or combatting illegal immigration as stated in the Hungarian law.

JUSTICE MINISTER: 'WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROTECT THE BORDERS OF HUNGARY, EUROPE'

Hungary will continue to protect its own borders and the borders of Europe, the justice minister said on Tuesday, in response to the European Court ruling. In her English-language post on Facebook, Judit Varga noted that the EU Court of Justice upheld the European Commission's ruling regarding certain elements of the "Stop Soros" law package. Varga said she regretted that the EU court did not take Hungary's professional arguments into account. "We all know that to the Brussels bureaucracy, the thorn in the flesh was the fact that we criminalised the promotion and facilitation of illegal immigration, as we do not want foreign NGOs to organise illegal migration to Europe," she said.

"In today's judgment, the Court stated what we would never have thought: Hungary must practically support human trafficking," said Varga.

"What happens next? Will Member States be punished simply for protecting the continent from mass migration? We no longer have any illusions, but one thing is certain: we will continue to defend Europe.

Whether the Brussels bubble likes it or not!", she said.

FM: EU BACKS SANCTIONS FOR USE OF MIGRATION AS MODE OF MANIPULATION

Following its latest review of the situation on the Belarus-Poland border, the European Union has backed the use of sanctions against Belarus for using migration as a mode of manipulation, Hungary's foreign minister said in Brussels on Monday. Under the resolution approved at Monday's meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, the EU can impose sanctions on people and organisations who use migration as a mode of manipulation, Péter Szijjártó said on the sidelines of the meeting. The list of specific individuals and entities to be sanctioned will be decided later, he added. The EU faces "unprecedented levels of migration pressure", Szijjártó said, arguing that the bloc was "under siege from the south, the south-east and the east". He said the Visegrad Group had also held a special meeting on Monday where the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia all offered their help to Poland. When Hungary found itself in a similar situation in 2015, the other V4 countries all came to its aid, the minister said.

Concerning the migration pressure from the south, Szijjártó emphasised the importance of improving living conditions instead of supporting emigration in troubled African

countries. Hungary does its fair share when it comes to such efforts, he said, noting that by end of 2023 the country will have contributed a maximum of 80 soldiers to Europe's Takuba Task Force fighting Islamic State-linked militants in Mali. Szijjártó also urged speeding up the EU integration of the Western Balkans, saying Hungary expected the bloc to begin accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia and to open at least two accession chapters with Serbia before the end of the year.

"Anyone who blocks this must bear the responsibility for the historic levels of damage that will cause in this region," he said.

Meanwhile, the minister said Hungary would support an Eastern Partnership country deepening its ties with the EU only if its leadership respected the rights of national minorities like those of Ukraine's ethnic Hungarian community.

On another subject, he said Azerbaijan could become a key player when it comes to Europe's gas supply, but this required investments in infrastructure and increased extraction rates.

"If we can't make that work, then no one will have the right ... to criticise us for having to sign a long-term gas supply deal with Russia," he said.

JUSTICE MIN CALLS FOR 'STRONG EUROPEAN ALLIANCE OF STRONG NATION STATES'

"Our greatest European vision is to create a strong alliance of strong nation

states" based on cooperation and mutual respect, rather than building a "supra-national state in which Europe's colours are lost", Justice Minister Judit Varga said in Madrid. Giving a talk at a conference held at the Saint Paul Catholic university on the future of Europe, the minister said current disputes over European values were regrettable and "often presented as an opposition between right and wrong". "However, we share the same values. Moreover, we have shed blood in the fight for those values to make Europe's diversity even richer." The minister said respect must be shown for the freedom of member states in areas such as national identity, family-related issues, and welfare policy with special regard to setting the minimum wage. She insisted that member states "know their own situation best and have the way to meet their goals". "Forcing them from above could harm many countries' competitiveness and work against actual market trends," Varga said, referring to plans to introduce a single European minimum wage.

Answering a question, Varga said that while the EU had launched infringement proceedings against Hungary "over its handling the migration crisis", Lithuania and Poland were getting support and financing to build a fence along their border to stop illegal migration. She insisted that the Hungarian government's position on migration was increasingly popular in the EU, adding that procedures against Hungary should be terminated and the EU should reimburse Hungary for its fence which protects Europe's borders.

During her visit, Varga met Pablo Zapatero Miguel, state secretary at the Spanish justice ministry, for talks on the digitalisation of the judiciary, and discussed the EU's enlargement policy with Juan Gonzalez Barba, state secretary for EU affairs.

GULYÁS : RULING PARTIES 'THE ONLY HEIR TO FREEDOM' IN HUNGARY

The stakes in next year's general election are especially high because Hungary's ruling parties are "the only heir to freedom" in the country and the only ones with "unquestionable democratic convictions", the prime minister's chief of staff said on Tuesday.

European Union leaders from the western part of the bloc have been fortunate enough to be able to speak about the importance of freedom and democracy in democratic countries their whole lives, Gergely Gulyás said at an international conference marking the 10th anniversary of Hungary's constitution. Hungary's leaders, on the other hand -- including the prime minister, the president and the speaker of parliament -- all emphasised the importance of the rule of law while living under a dictatorship, he added.

In the 1980s, Hungary's current leaders stood up for freedom and democracy while facing physical oppression and risking personal existential ruin, Gulyás said.

"This is an obvious difference in the commitment to democracy between western and central Europe," he said.

"Our commitment to the rule of law is not an empty platitude ... but is based on true conviction."

Gulyás said he was proud of the fundamental law, which responded to "social questions of the modern age". Hungary was the last country in the region to adopt a post-communist constitution, but the delay also offered an opportunity to "reflect on the legal developments, as well as the social and political changes of the two decades that had passed," he said. Hungary's constitution, he added, followed the example of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the two documents bore much resemblance.

Concerning the political situation in Hungary, Gulyás said the government's opponents had "extremely weak democratic convictions and no democratic traditions at all". Stipulations in the constitution preventing an excessive public debt "in themselves are a reason for them not to like the government ... the public debt having dramatically increased under their rule," he added.

The opposition now includes officials that "used to trample on the right to assembly, and apply physical violence against those expressing disagreement within legal bounds", Gulyás said.

The constitution also stipulates that Hungary has the right to self-determination with regard to its citizens. "Since the opposition is for migration, that constitutes a barrier to their endeavours," Gulyás said.

The minister said that the government also had a conflict with the European Union: "according to the Hungarian constitution, a father is a man and a mother woman, while the European Parliament has passed a decision under which men could give birth."

JUSTICE MIN MARKS 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF CONSTITUTION

Hungary's fundamental law is "not just a document but a charter that establishes an alliance linking the past and future, spanning the history of our thousand-year-old statehood," Justice Minister Judit Varga said at an international conference marking the 10th anniversary of Hungary's constitution on Tuesday. Addressing the conference Ten Years of Hungary's Constitution - roots, values, and sovereignty, the minister said the values therein "must not be questioned in our globalist world". She said that is why it was important to take stock from time to time "and remind ourselves where we came from, and also set a course for where you want to get to".

Concerning the creation of the fundamental law, Varga said that the post-1990 one had been intended as a temporary document. It had been drawn up "in line with political deals and merely contained a summary of rights ...". It lacked cohesion or a moral

dimension guaranteeing society's operability, she added.

The new constitution was also intended as a reference for the whole community as a document "defining national identity, world view, and sovereignty", Varga said. "We believe that our national culture is a rich contribution to the diversity in a united Europe."

"Nowadays there are two conflicting forces in Europe, strong nation states on one side and a federalist endeavour on the other; a united nations of Europe," she said. Proponents of the latter, she insisted, were using "ideological pressure" under the label "rule of law". "Anyone that says no to illegal migration or defends their sovereignty face ruthless attacks," she said. The constitution stipulates that Hungary's European Union membership "cannot restrict the country's inalienable right to self-determination concerning its territorial integrity, population, or its form of state and government," Varga said. "We believe in the motto of the European Union -- Unity in Diversity," she said, adding that that principle was not compatible with "homogeneity" required by certain forces within the EU.

"We believe in a policy that can question mainstream thinking," she said. Demographic challenges, she added, should not be resolved through immigration, "which is not just an economic aspect but an issue of national identity, too".

FIDESZ MEP: 'EP GROUPS' LETTER TO WITHHOLD EU FUNDS STAB IN THE BACK FOR POLAND'

The recent letter by five European parliamentary groups calling on European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to withhold post-pandemic economic recovery funds from Poland is a "stab in the back for Poland", MEP of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party Kinga Gál said in Brussels on Tuesday. The five left-wing groups -- the Socialists, the Greens, Renew Europe, the radical left GUE-NGL and the European People's Party shifting to the left -- have published the letter just when there would be a pressing need to express solidarity with Poland that is facing enormous migrant pressure along its eastern border, she told Hungarian reporters. "Instead of expressing solidarity, they are blackmailing Poland," she said.

Gál called the letter "unacceptable" and the procedure "highly objectionable". She added that withholding the EU funds had no legal footing as the recovery funds are not alms, but ones the member states are entitled to. Gál noted that Hungary was exposed to similar blackmail whenever it took a stand against the European mainstream. "There is not a single European parliamentary session where this issue is not raised in terms of Poland or Hungary," she said.

BUDAPEST MAYOR FILES CHARGES IN CONNECTION WITH CITY HALL TAPE RECORDINGS

Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, has said he is filing a report with police in connection with "slandrous" tape recordings that were allegedly made when municipal officials were discussing property deals. The mayor insisted at a press conference on Tuesday that the recordings were made with the aim of deposing the city administration. He insisted that the recordings had been released "unlawfully".

Deputy Mayor Ambrus Kiss told the press conference that the voices on the recording were unknown to him, and he denied the related allegations.

Earlier, Fidesz group leader in Budapest, Zsolt Láng, called for a "meaningful investigation" to be carried out by a special committee, saying that "more and more audio recordings and documents are turning up" concerning plans to sell property owned by the municipality.

On Tuesday, the Fidesz-KDNP group in the Budapest assembly repeated its call on Karácsony to convene an extraordinary session of the city assembly for Thursday or Friday to discuss the affair. On its Facebook page, the group issued a statement accusing Karácsony of refusing to "face the facts" regarding the discussions in connection with

municipal property, and it called on the mayor to commence proper fact-finding regarding the "City Hall case".

HUNGARY RECORDS 165 CORONAVIRUS DEATHS, 5,323 NEW INFECTIONS

Altogether 165 patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 5,323 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Tuesday. So far 6,003,414 people have received a first jab, while 5,777,331 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 1,629,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 106,594, while hospitals are treating 5,811 Covid-19 patients, 545 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 966,167 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 32,336. Fully 827,237 people have made a recovery. There are 41,353 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 7,876,457.

ORBÁN DISCUSSES DIGITALISATION WITH DEUTSCHE TELEKOM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán discussed the challenges and achievements related to digital developments in Hungary with Timotheus Hoettges, chief executive of German telecommunications giant

Deutsche Telekom, in Budapest on Tuesday, his press chief said. Orbán and Hoettges were in agreement that Hungary's ability to capitalise on the opportunities offered by digitalisation was critical to its future, Bertalan Havasi said. Hungary and Deutsche Telekom continue to consider each other strategic partners in advancing digitalisation, they said. Deutsche Telekom's local unit Magyar Telekom has speeded up its developments in recent years, with its gigabit wired network now available at 2.9 million endpoints, Hoettges said, adding that some 1 million people have already used the company's 5G network launched last year. Modern telecommunications networks and free and discount services offered by service providers have contributed greatly to the management of the situation caused by the pandemic, he said. The "hunger for data" has continued to grow after the end of the lockdowns, Hoettges said. Some content providers, however, were failing to contribute to the development of networks, while telecommunications companies were not only bearing the costs of those developments but also their tax burdens, he said. Though Hungary ranks well on the European Union's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) in terms of network services, more developments, investments and a

supporting tax policy are needed for it to move further up, he said.

ÁDER: FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE WILL BE WON OR LOST IN CITIES

The fight against climate change "will be won or lost in cities", President János Áder said after meeting Károly Szita, head of the Association of Cities with County Rights (MJVSZ), on Tuesday. Cities are the main battleground of the fight against climate change, the president told a joint press conference. More than 50% of the world's population now lives in cities, and by 2050 this will be three out of four people, he said, adding that cities were therefore a key actor when it came to energy consumption and emissions. He noted that Budapest joined the international climate protection cooperation scheme Under2 in 2015, followed by Hungary's cities with county rights in 2018.

Meanwhile, the president said certain exhibitors at the Planet Budapest sustainability expo beginning at the end of the month will be presenting on how to build smart cities, operate the existing infrastructure more efficiently and in a more eco-friendly way, and improve energy efficiency. Szita said Hungary's 23 cities with county rights accounted for 24% of the country's harmful emissions. According to a study compiled in coordination with the Blue Planet Foundation, the energy sector is responsible for most

of the harmful emissions, followed by industry, the transport sector, waste management and agriculture, he said. Szita said the cities of Pécs, Salgótarján and Kaposvár had reduced their harmful emissions by 55%, a goal they were originally set to achieve by 2030. Szeged, Zalaegerszeg, Érd and Sopron are also "very close" to meeting this target, he added.

Turning to the future, Szita said Hungary's major cities will take sustainability and energy efficiency into account in their investments. This will entail the use of biomass in district heating systems, electric buses in public transport and the establishment of an energy community comprising multiple cities, he said

Asked by MTI what Budapest had achieved as part of the Under2 initiative over the past two years, Szita said he had "no knowledge" of any measure implemented in the capital during that period apart from the declaration of a climate emergency. "That's either because the press didn't cover it ... or because nothing happened," he said.

MÁRKI-ZAY, LMP CO-LEADER SIGN JOINT STATEMENT ON GREEN POLICY GOALS

Péter Márki-Zay, the opposition alliance's prime ministerial candidate, and Máté Kanász-Nagy, co-leader of opposition LMP, on Tuesday signed a joint statement



on the pursuit of several green policy goals. LMP's mission is to have as many of its green policies as possible recognised on the joint opposition election platform, Kanász-Nagy told a joint press conference. Those policies include the establishment of a sustainable way of life aimed at preserving the present quality of life, he said, arguing that "we are currently exhausting our future." Another goal is to put Hungary on a path of sustainability, Kanász-Nagy said. He added that if the opposition alliance wins next year's general election, the new government would commit to implementing the European Union's strict climate policy goals and increasing the use of sustainable energy sources.

The policy goals also include the protection of green areas, waters and Hungary's drinking water supply as well as the improvement of air quality, he said. Kanász-Nagy also promised to set up a separate ministry for green policy.

Márki-Zay, the mayor of Hódmezővásárhely, said the protection of the environment was in everyone's interest. He said all of the opposition parties agreed on a "green minimum" which they considered their shared responsibility. "LMP and Párbeszéd devote special attention to green matters but the other parties and independents also want Hungary to be a sustainable and healthy place," he said.

HUNGARY CBANK RAISES KEY RATE BY 30 BASIS POINTS

Hungary rate-setters at a regular policy meeting on Tuesday raised the base rate by 30 basis points to 2.10% while also raising both sides of the interest rate corridor by 30 basis points. The policymakers accelerated the tightening cycle following 15 basis point hikes in the previous two months after inflation in October hit 6.5%. Besides the hike to the base rate today, the Monetary Council raised the O/N deposit rate by 30bp to 1.15% and the O/N and one-week collateralised loan rates by 30bp to 3.05%. The O/N deposit rate and the collateralised loan rate mark the bottom and the top, respectively, of the central bank's "interest rate corridor".

"A persistent rise in external inflationary pressures and increasing second-round inflation risks have necessitated more extensive and longer lasting monetary policy tightening," the Council said in a statement released after the meeting.

The policy makers also signalled a continuation of monthly hikes, while noting that the central bank's next quarterly Inflation Report, due out in December, "will be decisive in determining the further extent of interest rate hikes".

"The Monetary Council will continue the cycle of interest rate hikes until the outlook for inflation stabilises around the central bank target in a sustainable

manner and inflation risks become evenly balanced on the horizon of monetary policy," the rate-setters said, reiterating their earlier policy stand.

The Council said CPI is "expected to rise above 7%" in November and "decline only slowly" from the end of 2021, adding that inflation in 2022 is expected to be "substantially higher" than the projection in the September Inflation Report.

"Higher-than-expected and sustained increases in commodity prices are rapidly being incorporated into consumer prices in a buoyant domestic demand environment, leading to rising inflation in general," the Council said.

"Persistently high commodity and energy prices, rises in international freight costs and increasingly wider supply disruptions continue to point to a higher and more persistent external inflation environment. The tight labour market, coupled with strong wage growth and a higher inflation environment, may lead to increases in inflation expectations and to strengthen second-round inflation risks," the Council added.

The Council noted that the base rate tightening cycle is its response to "longer-term internal fundamental changes in the outlook for domestic inflation" and said it intends to "shape [inflation] expectations appropriately" by continuing to raise the key rate.

The Council also said the NBH must respond to a recent increase in short-term risks in financial and commodity markets "quickly and flexibly", adding

that it “must be ready to set the interest rate on the one-week deposit above the base rate”.

HUNGARY'S ECONOMY GROWS 6.1% IN Q3

Hungary's economy grew by an annual 6.1% in the third quarter, slowing from 17.8% in Q2, according to a first reading of data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) on Tuesday. Adjusted for calendar year and seasonal effects, GDP in the third quarter increased at the same rate.

Quarter on quarter, GDP edged up 0.7%, KSH said, while in Q1-Q3, growth was an annual 7.1%. Finance Minister Mihály Varga welcomed the growth figure, saying it indicated the economy was on a dynamic growth path. With a record growth of almost 18% in Q2, the economy has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, he said, adding that Hungary's growth rate was above the EU average.

“All this shows that a supportive budgetary policy is now bearing fruit and the government's measures are contributing to the economy's relaunch while mitigating negative

external impacts,” he said. The minister also noted that the government was expecting a record 6.8% growth for the full year.

Analysts told MTI the data surprised on the downside. Gábor Regős of Századvég Economic Research said the slowdown outpaced expectations, and the weakening of industry likely had a big role to play accordingly.

Péter Virovác of ING Bank said the 0.7% increase compared with the previous quarter was lower than the market consensus of 1% growth.