

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Zsolt Czeglédi

Skaters in Budapest's City Park

UPCOMING EVENTS

Parliament's national cohesion committee meets in session

Friends of Hungary Foundation holds conference

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

EC WANTS HUNGARY 'TO LET MIGRANTS IN'

Hungary's justice minister has said the European Commission is intent on forcing the government to let migrants into the country.

The European Court of Justice and the European Commission's ruling on the "Stop Soros" law package aims to get Hungary let in migrants, but their efforts failed as "Fortress Hungary is still standing", Hungary's justice minister told Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Tuesday's ruling that Hungary's criminalisation of help given to people making their claim for asylum breaches EU law is "totally baffling", Judit Varga said in the interview. "They are attacking the law which is meant to protect Europe from illegal migration and from unlawful support for migration," she said.

While the EU's migration system is dysfunctional, Hungary used to have a "smoothly operating legal framework", involving transit zones that were open to safe third countries and closed to the Schengen region and "thus contributed to curbing illegal migration to Europe as a whole," Varga said. As the transit zones had to be closed, all rejected asylum-seekers who could not be returned home remained in Hungary, a situation that "runs counter to the principle of sovereignty laid down in the Basic Law", she said.

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VARGA: 'FORTRESS HUNGARY STILL STANDING'

Notwithstanding the European Court of Justice ruling, "we are not letting migrants in; Fortress Hungary is still standing," Justice Minister Judit Varga said in the interview to Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

Referring to the situation along Poland and Lithuania's border with Belarus, Varga welcomed the statements of European politicians "who formerly objected the idea of fences but now they support it". She called it "irrational and morally dubious" that Hungary is threatened by fines and infringement procedures for what other countries are allowed to do. Varga insisted that Hungary should get reimbursement for constructing a fence along its southern border, a 1.6 billion euro project. "Only 1% of this amount has been reimbursed to date," she said. The infringement procedures, the minister added, should be suspended as long as the EU "has no viable solution for handling migration".

Hungary's principle that the decision on allowing someone to enter the EU should be made outside the community's border is now shared by other member states, too, she said.

In response to a question, Varga said that EU law should only have primacy over national legislation in

areas that fall within EU competence. The EU Treaties have made it clear which areas belong to the EU's scope of competences and which ones are national, she said.

IT MINISTER: 'HUNGARY'S ECONOMY SHOCK RESISTANT'

Hungary's economy is "shock resistant" and though hit hard by the coronavirus crisis, it was among the first economies in Europe to return to pre-pandemic growth levels, the innovation and technology minister said in Salgótarján, in northern Hungary. László Palkovics participated in a working meeting that reviewed the complex development programme for the city and Nógrád County until 2030. He cited international analysts projecting a 7-7.5% economic growth in Hungary this year. "The government's projection is a bit more cautious, at 7%, which however puts Hungary among the best performing economies in Europe," he said. The minister also said that thanks to the government's measures, Hungary's employment rate had returned to pre-pandemic levels with more than 4.7 million people holding a job in April.

Palkovics said he visited the plant of French transport company Alstom in Mátránovák where he was briefed about plans for a large-scale expansion.

Meanwhile, Alstom said in a statement that it will introduce new industrial technologies and

expand the portfolio to enhance the competitiveness at the Mátránovák plant over the next years and presented the plans to the minister. The statement quoted Palkovics as saying that Alstom's plant at Mátránovák plays a key role in Nógrád County's economy.

MÜLLER URGES PEOPLE TO GET THIRD JOB

Hungary's chief medical officer has urged the Hungarian public to get vaccinated with a third shot, explaining that more antigens are needed in the body in light of new variants of the coronavirus. Cecília Müller, in an interview to public radio on Sunday, highlighted the national vaccination campaign in the coming week. People who want a first, second or third jab can turn up at one of many designated vaccination points from 7am to 7pm without having to register or make an appointment she said, adding that it was evident that vaccination was the best way for people to protect themselves against Covid-19. "I trust that concerns, misconceptions and misinformation will be trumped by common sense," she said. However, protection lasts for 4-6 months, she said, compared with the previous estimates of around a year, adding that the genetic makeup of the virus had changed considerably since the emergence of the original Wuhan strain, thus necessitating more intensive antigenic activity to ensure protection.

GOVT COMMISSIONER VISITS OTTAWA, PRESENTS AWARDS TO HUNGARIAN DIASPORA MEMBERS

Katalin Szili, the prime minister's commissioner in charge of minority protection and autonomy, has visited Ottawa, Montreal and Regina, the capital city of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, to meet members of the Hungarian diaspora, and present state awards to them.

Speaking to MTI by phone, Szili said that in Ottawa she met Senator Victor Oh and MP Corey Tochor, who is of Hungarian descent, as well as US, Australian and British mission heads at a gala dinner. She thanked them for their countries' integrating members of the Hungarian diaspora and briefed them about the Hungarian government's programmes aimed at unifying the nation.

On November 16, she presented Hungarian state awards to Anna Szenthe, the Canadian President of the Hungarian Diaspora Council, and János Szőke, the president of the Árpád Park Hungarian Hall in Niagara Falls, in recognition of their work for the Hungarian community.

In her capacity as curator of Pécs University, Szili held talks with leaders of the Carleton University, the Saint Paul Catholic University and the University of Ottawa.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: FIDESZ YOUTH 'REBELS AGAINST LIBERAL MAINSTREAM'

Péter Szijjártó has said in a speech to members of the ruling party's youth arm, Fidelitas, that they represented constant values, and as such were rebels against the liberal mainstream "which wants to take over Europe and even the entire world".

During Fidelitas's 25 years in existence "entire political organisations and parties have come and gone", the foreign minister said on Saturday. "But just as Fidesz represents political stability, security and predictability, so does Fidelitas as a political youth organisation."

He called Fidelitas members "patriots" who adhered to Christian values and based their politics on such values, according to a statement issued by his ministry.

On the topic of Covid and its economic fallout, he said that in the past year and a half, people's lives and jobs had had to be saved simultaneously. Even in the toughest times, the government stuck to its values, he said. As a political family, it made the right decisions and dealt with the waves of pandemic successfully, he insisted.

Correspondingly, investments were at a record high and 270,000 jobs were saved, he said. Also, economic growth topping 6% will be achieved this year.

LMP CALLS FOR POLLUTERS TO FINANCE TRANSITION TO GREEN ECONOMY

The opposition LMP party, unlike Viktor Orbán's government, would get the biggest polluters to finance the transition to a pro-environment, green economy, MP Péter Ungár said. In Hungary, ordinary people are paying large companies that are the most responsible for climate change, not the other way round, Ungár told an online press briefing. Ungár protested against the government granting state subsidies and tax reliefs to Coca-Cola and ExxonMobil under the pretext of a strategic partnership, calling the latter company "one of the biggest climate killers". He noted that the oil company had analysed the connections between fossil fuels and climate change in an internal report back in 1982 but failed to publish its conclusions. Last year, he said, ExxonMobil spent 40 million US dollars on supporting climate deniers in the public sphere. Once in government, LMP, Ungár said, would enforce the "polluters pay" principle which, he added, most people supported.

HUNGARY'S CYCLE PATH NETWORK CLOSE TO 15,000 KM BY END-DECADE

Hungary's cycle path network will add up to almost 15,000kms by 2030, a Ministry of Innovation and Technology (ITM) official said on Saturday.

The ITM is steadily improving cycling infrastructure within and between localities, as well as financing the 50 billion forint (EUR 136.7m) construction of 850kms of bicycle paths nationwide, state secretary for transport development, László Mosóczy, said in Écs, in north-western Hungary, inaugurating the cycle path connecting Győr and Pannonhalma as part of the government's Modern Cities scheme. The 18.4km cycle path cost a net 1.7 billion forints to build.

He noted that the entire cycle path network around Lake Balaton is being revamped and a cycle route between Budapest and Lake Balaton will be built.

Hungary, he added, is the third most important cycling nation in Europe. The government has achieved much to integrate isolated "islands" of cycle systems into a national network, he added. National road company Magyar Közút Nonprofit took over the maintenance of more than a 1,000kms of cycle paths from the local governments, he noted.

UNICEF HUNGARY TO CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

To mark World Children's Day, UNICEF Hungary has launched a campaign entitled Face the Problem to help children struggling with depression and other mental problems.

Children experiencing difficulties can be helped if their problems are not treated as taboos and asking for help is not regarded as something to be ashamed of, the organisation said in a statement on Saturday.

One out of seven in the 10-19 age group reports frequent anxiety, while almost one in five reported persistent depression and a lack of motivation. In Europe alone 9 million young people are affected by such problems, it said, adding that the pandemic has put the mental health of an entire generation at risk.

UNICEF Hungary has launched a free online course to help teachers recognise and prevent the mental problems of children under their care. Landmark buildings and monuments in twenty localities were being floodlit on Saturday evening to mark the day. In Budapest the Palace of Arts, the Duna Arena and the Puskás Arena were all specially illuminated.

HERCZEGH DRAWS ATTENTION TO FOUNDATION THAT HELPS CHILDREN ORPHANED BY COVID

Hungary's First Lady has drawn attention to the fact that the proceeds of a fair held at the InterContinental hotel in Budapest will go to the Regőczy Foundation that helps children orphaned by Covid. Anita Herczegh, who heads the foundation's board of trustees, noted that the embassies of 25 countries are selling the specialties, handicrafts, food, drinks and souvenirs of their nation at the fair organised by the Budapest Association of Diplomatic Spouses. Also, traditional dances will be performed at the event.

President János Áder and his wife established the Regőczy Foundation in 2021. It provides long-term care for children who have lost one or both parents in the pandemic. The foundation is also supported by a public media charity campaign to be held for the 10th time this year. By dialling 1357 or sending an SMS to the same number, the foundation will receive 500 forints per call.