

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

New cave discovered at Mátraverebély-Szentkút

UPCOMING EVENTS

KSH releases investment figures for Q3

Coronavirus updates

Hungary-Russia economic inter-govt committee meets in Obninsk

TOP STORY

HUNGARY, SERBIA TO SIMPLIFY BORDER CROSSING

Hungary and Serbia will simplify border crossing for persons respecting regulations but they will continue to act together against those that intend to cross the border illegally, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Thursday.

The minister told a joint press conference with Serbian counterpart Nikola Selaković that the two countries were fighting together against migration, all the more so because the Western Balkan route is getting full again. He added that daily 30,000-35,000 people were leaving Afghanistan and Hungary had so far registered 100,000 illegal border crossing attempts this year. With the European Union being under migratory pressure from three directions, some two hundred Hungarian police officers have been participating in the protection of Serbia's southern border this year in an effort to stop the wave of migrants as far away as possible. A new border crossing will be permanently opened at Kübekháza next year, to simplify transport between Hungary and Serbia, he said.

The two countries' respective embassies will allow entry to each other's diplomats at locations where one of them does not have diplomatic representation, he said. Hungarian diplomats will thus be working in Serbia's embassies in Zambia and Congo and Serbian diplomats in Hungary's embassies in Malta and Chile, he added.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI's real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



ORBÁN CALLS FOR 'PROTECTION OF TAXATION SYSTEM'

Hungary's current taxation system ensures the resources for development, and therefore needs to be "protected", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Thursday, in his address to the Active Hungary conference.

The functioning tax system "is the heart and soul of our dynamic economy which produces money rather than swallowing it up", Orbán told the conference in Siófok, in western Hungary. "It is important that this functioning economy, which was so hard to build, will not be messed up," he said. The government commissioner's office for an active Hungary, which was set up two years ago, has boosted activity in the sector, Orbán said. The network of institutions can now channel any proposals on further development to political decision makers, he said. "The race of nations will be decided by which country loves their homeland most," Orbán said. Strengthening Hungarians' love and knowledge for their country and nation will be key to them "winning the race of nations in the next 10-20 years", he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY ECONOMY BACK AT PRE- PANDEMIC LEVELS

A year and a half after the first outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Hungary's economic output has returned to pre-

pandemic levels, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Thursday. Getting the economy back to normal by the summer required Hungary's government to find allies that were prepared to expand their capacities even in such a difficult period, the foreign ministry cited Szijjártó as saying at the Business Services Hungary 2021 conference. Whereas during the global economic crisis of 2008-09 the Socialist government relied on providing welfare and taking out loans, the current government decided to tackle the crisis caused by the pandemic by concentrating on job protection and protecting people's health, the minister said. While the Hungarian economy needed five years to recover from the global financial crisis, this time it only needed a year and a half, he added.

Szijjártó said the emerging new era of the global economy was characterised by a redistribution of production capacities, adding that countries that have been successful in developing their economies would be the winners of the new era. The record employment, investment and quarterly growth rates seen in Hungary over the past two years are a reflection of the strength of the economy, Szijjártó said. Hungary's GDP grew by a record 18% in the second and by 6% in the third quarter of this year, he noted. Over the past two decades Hungary has become a regional hub for business services, Szijjártó said, underlining the growing importance of that sector in the "dimensional shift" of the Hungarian economy. He added that

the government was prepared to cut payroll taxes by another 4%.

Citing fresh data, Szijjártó said there were 156 business service centres employing more than 70,000 people in Hungary, a 50% increase in five years. Some 40% of these service centres operate on a global scale, he added. Szijjártó said certain Hungarian foreign missions will be organising events together with these companies with the aim of persuading Hungarian professionals working abroad to return home. Szijjártó also highlighted the role of Hungary's investment promotion system in the rapid development of the business service sector, saying that the sector saw a record 14 investments in 2019 that created 2,500 new jobs. Last year, a total of nine investment projects were greenlit in the sector, creating another 2,000 jobs, he added. The sector's future prospects are also good, he said, noting that five business service investment projects were currently in preparation. The Business Services Hungary conference was organised by the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA) and the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham).

FIDESZ MEP BLASTS 'IMMORAL' EU PROPOSAL FOR NEW LEGAL MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Balázs Hidvéghi, an MEP of ruling Fidesz, on Wednesday criticised what he called "an immoral new push by pro-migration forces to

promote legal migration” after a European parliamentary debate on the creation of new legal channels for labour migration into the bloc. Hidvéghi told Hungarian reporters in Strasbourg that the proposals contained in the report at the centre of the debate would attract the most talented people to Europe, resulting in a brain drain in areas that are already in a difficult situation. As the EU struggles with one of its gravest migration crises, the European Parliament is debating a report that would institutionalise migration with active collaboration from the European Commission, he said.

The report calls for promoting legal labour migration and the import of low and medium-skilled workers from the Middle East and Africa, Hidvéghi said. It also urges easing their movement within the bloc and making them eligible for benefits, he added. But in Hungary’s experience, aid should be exported to where it is needed, the MEP said. The goal is not to empty out those areas but rather to create better living conditions for those living there, he added. “There’s no need for Brussels to decide who should be admitted and what we should do with them,” Hidvéghi said, adding this decision should remain in the hands of member states. Demographic and labour challenges should be addressed by implementing the kind of family policies introduced by the Hungarian government, he said.

JUSTICE MIN: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS NOT WITHOUT HELP

Hungary’s government is committed to taking a tough stand against violent crime and devotes special attention to helping victims of domestic violence, Justice Minister Judit Varga said on Thursday, the UN’s International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The government has implemented a support system offering domestic violence victims psychological assistance, legal support, general information or immediate financial assistance in a time of crisis, Varga said on Facebook. Hungary has also recently set up a network of victim support centres and the goal is to have such an institution in every county seat by 2025, Varga said. A 24-hour hotline is also available to those in need, she added. Varga encouraged people to speak out and seek professional help if they are victims of a crime or know someone who is.

Meanwhile, Katalin Novák, the family affairs minister, said domestic violence was not a private affair, and that it was “our common duty” to raise awareness in the matter. “All forms of violence, including domestic violence, are unacceptable, and perpetrators are always the ones responsible, not the victims,” Novák said in her video message posted on Facebook. “It is our duty to call attention to the issue and tell people that there is help and there are institutions anyone can turn

to,” she said. Novák said that over the past decade, Hungary’s government has worked with civil organisations on setting up a well-working victim support network. The number of protected victim shelters has grown to eight, and several crisis centres have been set up, she said. Teachers, social workers and police officers are being trained to detect signs of domestic violence that can be otherwise hard to recognise, she said. The United Nations General Assembly has declared November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, in remembrance of the human rights activist Mirabal sisters, whom Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo had murdered on this day in 1960.

HUNGARY MEP ADDRESSES EP PLENARY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The European Commission will put forward a draft directive on combatting violence against women early next year, based on the objectives of the Istanbul Convention, Helena Dalli, the EU commissioner for equality, said at the European Parliament’s plenary session on Thursday. The debate focused on women’s rights on the occasion of the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women designated by the United Nations in 2000.

Addressing the debate, Lívía Járóka, vice president of the European

Parliament, said that while eliminating violence against women is a common goal, requiring from member states a mandatory application of the Istanbul Convention will be divisive as it contains ideologically driven elements that are unacceptable to conservative Christian communities. Járóka, an MEP of ruling Fidesz, said in a press release that “Hungary ratified in May 2011 all the provisions of the Council of Europe’s convention on combating and preventing violence against women and domestic violence that truly concern women and are for women”. “Hungary is fighting for the elimination of violence! We believe in deeds, rather than in the ratification of documents,” she said.

FIDESZ ‘FULLY COMMITTED’ TO CHILD PROTECTION

Hungary’s ruling Fidesz is “fully committed” to the issue of child protection, the party’s group leader said on Thursday. The future of children is considered a critical issue in Hungary, with more and more people risking criticism from the liberal press and social media to stand up for it, Máté Kocsis told a conference organised by the Centre for Fundamental Rights, the Batthyány Lajos Foundation and the Szent István Institute. “LGBTQ propaganda and gender ideology are going to great lengths to weaken the institution of the family, to tear down the cohesive fabric of society and to question things that are self-

evident,” he said. “Now the supporters of this trend are targeting the minds of children at their most sensitive age,” Kocsis insisted. “This is no longer about freedom, but about restricting other people’s freedom and silencing dissenting voices.”

“With few blood heirs to speak of, they are trying to raise ideological heirs for the LGBTQ movement,” Kocsis said. Citing “warning signs” of the spread of “gender ideology”, he said that in Scotland, for instance, children aged four and above can now undergo gender reassignment without requiring parental consent. Kocsis said it was the loosening of family ties and the loss of respect within families that had led to the fall of the Roman Empire. This phenomenon, he said, had also made its way to Hungary and was gaining momentum. The debate around the issue, he added, was heating up because “many believe that sexual propaganda has crossed a red line”. He cited as examples the introduction of sex education classes in kindergarten and school, the publication of children’s books with sexual content and the intention of excluding parents from the education of their children. “The LGBTQ movement has broken the consensus that sexuality has no place in the lives of children,” he said.

As regards the impact of Hungary’s anti-paedophile and child protection law passed in the summer, Kocsis said a register of paedophile offenders will become accessible from Feb. 1, 2022. Under the law, convicted

paedophiles can no longer be released on parole and there is no longer a statute of limitations for the sexual abuse of children, he said. The law strengthens the rights of parents and shields children from pornography and content that promotes sexuality for its own sake, homosexuality and gender change, Kocsis added.

LMP CALLS FOR RATIFICATION OF ISTANBUL CONVENTION

The opposition LMP party has submitted a proposal to parliament, calling for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention against violence against women. LMP lawmaker Krisztina Hohn told an online press conference marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women that Hungary’s parliament had for years “failed to incorporate the convention into the Hungarian legal system, despite its important elements on prevention of domestic violence and victim protection.” More stringent punishments for such cases, as enshrined in criminal law, fail to meet their mark, as domestic violence often remains undisclosed, she said. The lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic have exacerbated the problem, Hohn said, and called on politicians to strengthen the social signalling systems, as well as on private citizens to come forward if they witness domestic violence.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.



SCHANDA: HUNGARY TO BE AMONG EUROPE'S FIVE MOST COMPETITIVE COUNTRIES BY 2030

It is the government's top priority that Hungary should belong in the top five most liveable and competitive countries in Europe by 2030, an official of the ministry of innovation and technology said on Thursday. Spending on research and development was 1.61% of GDP last year, a record high since 1990, he said on Facebook. The government has introduced support schemes and improved work conditions for Hungarian researchers, as a result of which their number was over 62,000 last year as against 31,000 in 2010, he said. The crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic has not prevented an increase in high value added, knowledge-based employment in Hungary, he added. Most new jobs have been created in sectors that boost long-term competitiveness, including the IT sector, he said.

Universities play a key role in improving innovation and the government has placed higher education institutions in the focus of the researcher network, he said. Universities' research and development spending has exceeded 100 billion forints (EUR 270m) for the first time, he added. The government's strategy is to

increase the proportion of research and development resources to 3% of GDP by 2030, Schanda said.

AIR QUALITY WORSENS ACROSS HUNGARY

Air quality has deteriorated across Hungary due to a high concentration of airborne particles, the National Public Health Centre (NNK) said on Thursday. NNK declared air quality to be "dangerous" in Nyíregyháza, Sajószentpéter, Kazincbarcika and Putnok. Air quality has deteriorated to unhealthy levels in Miskolc and Várpalota. Concentrations of particles are also considered to be too high in twelve other cities and towns, including Budapest, NNK said. Forecasts show air quality is expected to improve in most parts of the country over the weekend. NNK advised vulnerable groups such as people suffering from respiratory problems in those cities to spend less time outdoors as the effects of the air pollution level can be dangerous for them.

KSH: DEATHS OUTSTRIP BIRTHS IN OCT

The rate of natural decline in the population decreased by 34% in October, with the number of births increasing by 3.1% and deaths decreasing by 10% compared with the previous year, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on

Thursday. In October, 8,289 children were born, 248 more than in the same month in the previous year, while 11,252 people died, 1,252 fewer than during the same month in 2020. In the Jan-Oct period, there were 77,687 births, down 21 from the same period a year earlier. The number of deaths was 122,622, up 14% from the same period in 2020. The rise in deaths and the drop in the birth rate means that the rate of natural population decline was up by 52% compared with the same period last year, KSH said. The number of marriages fell, with 5,293 couples tying the knot, 19% less than during the same period in 2020, it said.

HUNGARY PREPARED TO VACCINATE UNDER-12S AGAINST COVID AFTER EMA APPROVAL OF PFIZER JAB

Hungary is prepared to inoculate children aged 5-11 against Covid after the European drug regulator approved the use of Pfizer's vaccine for this age group, the government website koronavirus.gov.hu said on Thursday. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) on Thursday gave the go-ahead for the vaccination of children between the ages of 5 and 11 using the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid jab. Hungary has enough Pfizer vaccines in stock to organise the inoculation of this age group, and the government has set aside more jabs for the vaccination of

children, the website said. Hungary began vaccinating teens aged 16-17 against Covid in May, the site said, adding that 56% of this age group was now inoculated. Children between the ages of 12 and 15 began receiving the shots a month later, and now have a 36% inoculation rate, it said. The website noted that parental consent is required for the vaccination of those under the age of 18. Meanwhile, the website said that some 6,000 children between the ages of 12 and 17 have received a jab since the start of this week's national vaccination campaign, with most of them getting their first shot.

HUNGARY RECORDS 12,165 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 185 DEATHS

Altogether 185 patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 12,165 new coronavirus infections were registered, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://www.koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Thursday. So far 6,072,192 people have received a first jab, while 5,816,050 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 2,153,117 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 165,862, while hospitals are treating 6,858 Covid-19 patients, 680 of whom

need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 1,057,017 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 33,704. Fully 857,451 people have made a recovery. There are 64,002 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 8,249,524.

KARÁCSONY CALLS ON GOVT TO TRANSFER TRANSPORT SUBSIDY

The municipal council of Budapest demands that the government should transfer 12 billion forints (EUR 32.7m), which, under the budget law, is due to the city as a public transport subsidy, Mayor Gergely Karácsony told a press conference on Thursday.

"Today is the day" when the government should reimburse the municipality for the difference between ticket sales revenues and the costs of operation of the city's public transport system, the mayor said.

The capital "cannot and does not want to scrape together the 12 billion from various pockets... we demand that the government should fork out what it owes to the city" Karácsony said.

The city's management "has done everything" so that the level of services should not be lowered because of "the

government's punishing Budapest" Karácsony said, but added that "there is a point when we have no more resources".

HOUSE SPEAKER EXPRESSES CONDOLENCES TO N MACEDONIAN COUNTERPART OVER BUS ACCIDENT

László Kövér, the speaker of Hungarian parliament, on Thursday expressed his condolences to his North Macedonian counterpart, over the bus accident which killed 46 people in the early hours of Tuesday. In the cable sent to Talat Xhaferi, Kövér said he was "shaken" over the news of the North Macedonian tourist bus, which caught fire in an accident on a Bulgarian highway, killing 46 North Macedonian nationals, 12 children among them. "Unexpected and tragic loss of life is always almost unbearable pain for the families, and a great loss to all the citizens of the country. Hungary shares the grief of the North Macedonian nation in these dark hours," Kövér said. In the name of members of the Hungarian parliament, Kövér expressed sympathies with the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.