

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Balogh

Newly acquired El Greco painting inaugurated ahead of exhibition at Budapest Fine Arts Museum

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Mi Hazánk presser on multinational companies and labour

Jobbik presser on IMF, bankruptcy

TOP STORY

ORBÁN HOLDS TALKS WITH CDI HEADS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán hosted a working dinner for leading politicians of the Centrist Democrat International alliance of conservative parties on Monday, his press chief said.

The event was attended by President of CDI and former president of Colombia Andres Pastrana, CDI Executive Secretary Antonio Lopez-Isturiz White, and former Prime Minister of Slovenia Janez Jansa who, alongside Orbán, is a vice president of CDI. Additionally, former Portuguese MEP Mario David, the prime minister's political director Balázs Orbán, ruling Fidesz's deputy head Kinga Gál, head of parliament's foreign affairs committee Zsolt Németh, and chief advisor to the prime minister Zsuzsanna Rahói attended the dinner, the statement said. The meeting focused on the strategies and modes of cooperation available to right-wing, Christian and conservative parties in the current situation when countries all over the world, and especially in Europe, are affected by an energy crisis, economic decline, inflation and the consequences of sanctions resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war, the statement 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>



SZIJJÁRTÓ DECORATES JAPANESE BUSINESS FEDERATION LEADER

Hungary's minister of foreign affairs and trade decorated Yoshio Sato, head of the European committee of Japanese business federation Keidanren, with the Order of Merit of Hungary, Knight's Cross, in Budapest on Tuesday. In his address at the ceremony, Péter Szijjártó said Hungary and Japan were "entering a new era of ties with many opportunities", adding that "such reliable partnerships are especially important in the current, difficult economic situation in Europe."

The Japanese federation has been instrumental in "building a fair picture of Hungary and promoting investment opportunities" in the country, Szijjártó said in his laudation. Keidanren is an umbrella for some 1,500 Japanese companies, 108 trade federations, and all 47 regional economic organisations of Japan, Szijjártó said. Concerning the global economic situation, Szijjártó said the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine were widening the gap between East and West, "while cooperation is needed more than ever." While 15 years ago 80% of the investments worldwide were financed from western capital and 20% came from the East, the ratio has now been reversed, he insisted. "No wonder Europe is fighting for investments by large Eastern companies," the minister added. Szijjártó called the government's Eastern opening strategy one of the

most successful schemes of the past 12 years, and said Hungary's trade turnover with countries in the East had increased by 49% since 2010, adding that the largest annual FDI had come from the East in the past three years. Cooperation with Japan has largely contributed to that trend, he said.

The Hungarian government currently has six strategic partners from Japan, and Japanese companies are the seventh largest investment community in the country, Szijjártó said, adding that some 200 Japanese companies in Hungary employed a total 30,000 people. The turnover of bilateral trade increased by 20% last year, while the Hungarian state contributed to 35 investment projects, Szijjártó said. Twenty-six Japanese companies in Hungary saved 17,000 jobs through their investments during the years of the pandemic, he added.

JUSTICE MINISTER CALLS FOR ENERGY DIVERSIFICATION

Dependence on energy sources should be swapped for diversification, the Hungarian justice minister said on Tuesday, adding that the Hungarian government will support any European Union proposal aimed at ensuring diversity of supplies. Judit Varga, speaking ahead of a meeting of EU affairs ministers in Luxembourg, said that the government, however, would not back any proposal that may compromise supply security. "Now that Europe is facing a general recession, it's

important that energy and economic issues should be addressed at the highest level and on a basis of common sense," Varga said. She said dialogue was needed, while "ideological fights should be allowed no room as they would jeopardise the competitiveness and the economy of the European Union." She said diversification was an inevitable goal, but it required new pipelines because "central Europe cannot receive as much energy from the West as it needs". "It is important that Europe should have at least 4-6 offers by various energy suppliers on its table," Varga said. "We want to see such quotes rather than anything that jeopardises energy security," she added.

Concerning Hungary's commitments taken to ensure access to the EU's recovery funds, Varga said that talks with the European Commission were "progressing". It is important, she said, that EU members states had also expressed their confidence in Hungary, adding that the government was bent on delivering on its commitments. Varga said the issue of raising the salaries of Hungarian teachers was on the agenda of the talks. "If the opposition also fights for the successful outcome of the talks, education salaries can be raised by 21% on January 1," she said.

DEF MIN: MODERN ARMY REQUIRES COOPERATION WITH DEFENCE INDUSTRY, IT SECTOR

Cooperation between the military, the national defence industry and

the IT sector will result in modern army meeting requirements of the 21st century, the defence minister told a conference on Tuesday. Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky, speaking on the first day of the Info Space Conference held in Balatonfüred, in western Hungary, said that while the defence industry had a leading role in innovation, its discoveries spreading to the civilian world, the opposite also happened with “startups breaking into the world of the military” thanks to opportunities offered by digitalisation. At the conference organised by the Informatics for Society Association, the minister said the task of rebuilding a strong and effective military had started from scratch after the Fidesz government assumed power in 2010, with developments based on the European defense industry making the Hungarian army NATO-compatible.

Hungary, he noted, is already among NATO countries spending 2% of GDP on defence. But given the war in Hungary’s neighbourhood and the pressure of illegal migration, more than 2% must be spent on defence-related tasks, he added. On the subject of equipment procurement, he noted that the production capacity of the country’s defence industry was being expanded, and military development also included a unified system of digital integration. The minister said innovation tasks included creating new integrated drone and communication technologies, adding that space technologies for earth surveillance were also important aspects of

development. Hungary’s Defence Innovation Research Institute is being set up as a support arm of the defence ministry, and will focus on the innovation ecosystem from the military point of view, Szalay-Bobrovniczky announced.

RÉTVÁRI: HUNGARY EFFORTS IN STOPPING ILLEGAL MIGRANTS ‘EXEMPLARY’

The efforts of Hungarian border protection authorities in stopping illegal migrants is exemplary, the interior ministry’s state secretary said in Budapest on Tuesday, at a farewell ceremony to a new police unit leaving for a mission to North Macedonia. Illegal migration is picking up at Hungary’s border with 214,000 illegal entry attempts made so far this year, Bence Rétvári said at the event. The number is up from 122,000 last year and 46,000 recorded in 2020, he said. The method has recently become more common that first unaccompanied minors get registered as migrants after entering EU territory and they are later “followed by tens of thousands” family members applying for a family reunion, Rétvári. People smugglers are becoming increasingly aggressive, the state secretary said, adding that they attempt to cross the border in large armed groups. Hungarian authorities have detained 1,531 human smugglers this year, a number much higher than in 2021 or in 2015 when the migration crisis was

most serious, he said. Hungary has so far spent 600 billion forints (EUR 1.46bn) on protecting EU borders of which amount Brussels has reimbursed only 2%, Rétvári said, adding that “a just distribution of costs would be 50-50%”.

GOVT SETS ASIDE HUF 71 BN FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The government plans to spend 71 billion forints (EUR 172m) between 2021 and 2027 for environmentally conscious green and blue infrastructure developments in small settlements, a cabinet official announced on Tuesday. Such nature-based solutions are cost-effective, enabling localities to improve their resilience and handle problems exacerbated by climate change, Csaba Latorcai, parliamentary state secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office responsible for regional development, said at the opening event of the Hungarian network of Nature-based solutions.

Miklós Dukai, the local government state secretary of the interior ministry, said small-scale and low-cost nature-based solutions made for a greener environment while offering residents a more livable surroundings.

ROADPOL ELECTS HUNGARIAN OFFICER HEAD

The executive board of RoadPol, the umbrella organisation for the traffic police of 26 European countries, has unanimously elected Hungary’s Elvira

Zsinkai as the network's president, the daily Magyar Nemzet reported on Tuesday. Zsinkai told the paper she would promote adopting best practices from other countries to improve traffic safety. She said Sweden, Denmark and Norway had managed to reduce the number of fatal road accidents to nearly zero, which she said could be achieved in other countries. Zsinkai said the foundations had been laid by adopting the 3E principle of enforcement, education and engineering, and made a special mention of Hungary's "traffic boxes" as a best practice. The boxes placed by busy roads may contain a camera recording speeding drivers, but "drivers will not know if there is indeed a camera in the box, so they will slow down," she said. Zsinkai also mentioned the practice of the United Kingdom and Netherlands, where cyclists are required to take an exam and obtain a licence, whereas in Hungary "anyone without any training could take to the road". As for engineering, Zsinkai said the Scandinavian police routinely informed road managers if technical aspects of the road could contribute to accidents, and the manager could make repairs or even redesign the given section. The system could be introduced in all countries "but this also has financial considerations," Zsinkai said.

CBANK: HUNGARIAN BANKING SYSTEM 'STABLE, RESILIENT'

Hungary's banking system is "stable and resilient" in the face of challenges amid

the current crisis, a top central bank official said on Tuesday. Commenting on the bank's annual macro-prudential report, Tamás Nagy, the National Bank of Hungary's director, said its macro-prudential framework had helped the banking system to stably continue its financing role in the face of the war in Ukraine and the European energy crisis. Furthermore, it had done so on the heels of the economic shock caused by the corona epidemic, he added. Still, a strained growth outlook and financial stability risks require close monitoring, Nagy warned.

ICONIC STONE LIONS RESTORED TO CHAIN BRIDGE BRIDGEHEAD

The iconic limestone lions flanking the bridgehead of the Chain Bridge in Buda are being restored to their rightful place on Tuesday after repair work on the statues was carried out as part of the bridge's renovation. The landmark bridge is expected to be reopened to traffic by the mid-December deadline, while the entire project to upgrade the bridge and its immediate vicinity will be completed by next autumn, in time for celebrations marking the anniversary of the formation of Budapest on Nov. 17. Restorers have removed the dirt from the statues and rebuilt missing parts, including their tongue and worn teeth. At the site, further work will be carried out to cement the three sections of each statue together again before creating an outer "skin" and protective coating. The 26.75 billion forint (EUR

65m) renovation of the Chain Bridge began in spring 2021, with a central government contribution of 6 billion forints contingent on the project being completed on time. Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, who was joined by officials connected with the bridge's renovation at the Buda bridgehead, told journalists that his administration had fulfilled all the conditions necessary to receive the government's support. The statues on the Pest bridgehead will be put in place later today.

UKRAINE CRISIS - SOME 9,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON MONDAY

Fully 5,001 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Monday, while another 3,931 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 104 people, ORFK told MTI on Tuesday. Holders of such permits must contact a local immigration office near their place of residence within thirty days to apply for permanent documents, it added. Budapest received 93 people, 35 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

TRIBUTES POUR IN FOR SZAKCSI LAKATOS AT FUNERAL

Tributes poured in for Hungarian jazz pianist and composer Béla Szakcsi Lakatos at his final resting place in the Fiumei Street cemetery

on Tuesday. The Roma musician and Kossuth and Liszt laureate died on October 2 at the age of 80. State secretary for culture Péter Hoppál in his speech at the funeral ceremony called Szakcsi Lakatos a jazz legend both at home and abroad. His range extended from classical to contemporary music -- spanning the music of Bach, Mozart, Bartók, Ligeti, Eötvös and Kurtág -- to jazz improvisations based on Gypsy music, Hoppál said. President Katalin Novák, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and former President Pál Schmitt also bid farewell to Szakcsi Lakatos at his final resting place.

BUDAPEST FINE ARTS MUSEUM ADDS ONCE HUNGARIAN-OWNED EL GRECO TO UPCOMING EXHIBITION

Budapest's Museum of Fine Arts has added to its El Greco collection a newly acquired piece which was presented to the press on Tuesday. "Portrait of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga", one of the first pictures El Greco painted after arriving in Spain, is the sixth autographed work in the museum's exceptional Spanish collection, the director of the museum said. The collection preserves the

largest number of El Greco paintings in Europe after Spain, László Baán said.

The oil-on-canvas was acquired by the MOL New Europe Foundation at a Christie's auction in June for 3.6 million dollars and has been placed on long-term deposit at the museum, Baán said. He noted that the portrait was once owned by Hungarian art collector Marcell Nemes, but was sold at an auction in Paris in 1913, after the state of Hungary and the city of Budapest had turned down offers to purchase the painting. "Portrait of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga" will be among the 50 works to be featured at a large-scale El Greco exhibition opening in the Fine Arts Museum on October 28, said Baán.