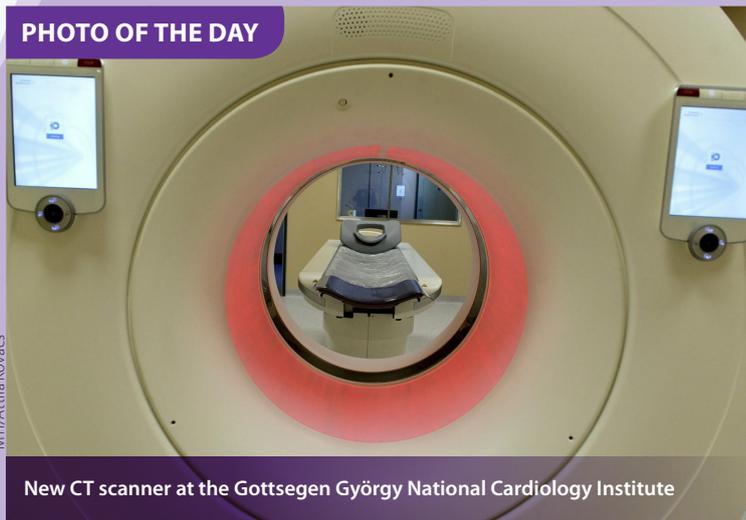


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Attila Kovács

New CT scanner at the Gottsegen György National Cardiology Institute

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office reports on Jan construction figures, industrial output

EU health ministers meet in Brussels

Events related to the war in Ukraine

European Parliament holds plenary session

Events marking anniversary of 1848/49 revolution

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ URGES PRAGMATIC TIES WITH EAST

Cutting trade cooperation between the European Union and China for ideological reasons would only deepen the economic crisis, Hungary's minister of foreign affairs and trade said, underlining the need to maintain pragmatic relations.

Whether or not Europe can overcome the current period of serious challenges will mainly depend on whether decision-makers will be capable of "acting on the basis of common sense", Péter Szijjártó said after meeting OECD Secretary General Mathias Cormann in Paris on Monday. If decisions on economic policy remain ideologically driven then the world and Europe will not be able to overcome the challenges, the minister said. "Common sense is needed to put the global economic crisis behind us," he added. Szijjártó welcomed that the OECD and its secretary general "are one of the few organisations and leaders in the world that aren't trapped by ideology" but instead pursue "rational and realistic economic policies based on common sense". He said recovery from the current crisis would depend greatly on whether "the ideological approach aimed at cutting cooperation between the EU and China will be successful". Europe has a fundamental interest in maintaining pragmatic and mutually beneficial economic cooperation with China, he added.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: CUTTING COOPERATION WITH EAST WOULD JEOPARDISE MILLIONS OF EUROPEAN JOBS

The need to maintain pragmatic economic cooperation with China is also made clear by the example of Hungary, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said after meeting OECD Secretary General Mathias Cormann in Paris on Monday. He argued that Hungary was a meeting point for the German auto industry and Chinese electric battery manufacturers and that the EU's "political decision" requiring all new vehicles sold in the bloc to be electric by 2035 meant that the continent needed enough batteries. Of the ten largest battery manufacturers in the world, 7 are Chinese and 3 South Korean, Szijjártó said. This, he added, made it obvious that if Europe were to cut cooperation with the East, the European auto industry and its electromobility strategy would fail, jeopardising millions of jobs. Hungary in recent years has regularly seen new investment records, Szijjártó said, adding this was critical to protecting jobs. "The reason why we've been able to constantly set new investment records is because Hungary is an excellent meeting point for Eastern and Western businesses," he said.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said his meeting with Cormann had also touched on the fight against inflation, which, he added,

"isn't helped by Brussels's sanctions". They also discussed the potential future expansion of the OECD as well as the organisation's upcoming report on Hungary, he said. Szijjártó said cooperation between Hungary and the OECD was beneficial and based on mutual respect. The OECD represents the approach which says economic decisions must be based on common sense, "otherwise it will be very difficult to recover from the global economic crisis", the minister said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: FRANCE'S FRAMATOME TO HAVE BIGGER ROLE IN PAKS EXPANSION

Hungary is in talks on increasing the role of France's Framatome in the expansion of the Paks nuclear power plant with a view to preventing the German government from being able to block the delivery of control technology required for the project, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said in Flamanville on Monday. The expansion of the Paks plant cannot succeed without cooperation with France, given that the control system for the new reactor blocks is being supplied by a French-German consortium, Péter Szijjártó said after inspecting Framatome's nuclear plant being built in Flamanville, according to a ministry statement. Szijjártó said it was "unfair" that the German government had yet to approve delivery of the system to Hungary by Siemens Energy, arguing that decisions

concerning the energy mix fell under national competences and that energy security was a matter of sovereignty. The government is therefore in talks on further increasing the role of France's Framatome in the project so that Berlin cannot continue to block the delivery of control technology, Szijjártó said. Hungary is expanding nuclear cooperation with France with a view to ensuring that the Paks plant uses western European control technology, he said.

Meanwhile, the minister said the war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed in response to the conflict had resulted in a global energy supply crisis, while the world is under increasing pressure to act on climate change. The world will need safe, cheap and long-term energy supplies that also take into consideration environmental protection aspects, he said, adding that these goals could only be met by nuclear energy. Hungary is a European leader in the area of nuclear energy and a member of the nuclear coalition that is "clearly led by France, which pursues a rational energy policy", Szijjártó said. He welcomed the cooperation between France and Hungary which he said would have "practical impacts".

GULYÁS: HUNGARY 'FREER THAN WESTERN EUROPE'

Hungary is "considerably freer than countries in Western Europe", the head of the Prime Minister's Office told a conference on Monday, citing

conditions in the Hungarian media as “clear evidence”. Gergely Gulyás insisted that mainstream media in Hungary covered “very different values from the extreme left to the radical right”. Every ideology is present and “everybody has an opportunity to participate in discussions about topics of public interest”, he added. In Western Europe, by comparison, “the press that branded itself conservative before has by now given up its positions on all important issues,” Gulyás said. “Press freedom in Hungary cannot be questioned, everybody can publish in line with their own orientation and nobody will be stigmatised for their opinion,” he added. The 21st century is “threatening with left-liberal themes becoming exclusive” and “those that won’t accept that could be excluded from politics”, Gulyás said. “But central Europe has some strong resistance from this point of view... Hungary has not given up the goal that ‘normalcy’ should continue to be promoted,” he said.

“Inevitable” social changes now under way in Western Europe “do not favour the conservative world”, Gulyás said, and raised concern if “principles and foundation that can make society operational in the long run, and which are accepted by everyone as right and undisputable could be maintained”. Gulyás said the European Union “tries to amplify the voice of forces that failed to win a majority at the general election in a member state”. He insisted that “political objectives” not supported by

the majority “are promoted through blackmail, cutting funds, threats and removing [a member’s] voting rights”, adding that it was an “anti-democratic experiment”. The Hungarian government must participate in Europe’s debates on issues of public interest, and Hungary’s think tanks should follow suit, Gulyás said. “The more forums for putting one’s position forward, the more chance for success for the government’s policy aimed at preserving the national character,” he insisted.

PARLT SPEAKER HOLDS TALKS IN SLOVENIA

“Slovenia is a neighbour with which Hungary has not had unresolved issues for a very long time,” Speaker of Parliament László Kövér said in Ljubljana on Monday. “Each time, talks with Slovenia could focus on opportunities to make even more progress and how to ensure the survival of our ethnic communities,” Kövér told reporters after meeting Urška Klakočar Zupančič, his Slovenian counterpart, to discuss bilateral issues with special regard to ethnic Slovenes in Hungary and Slovenia Hungarians. Concerning the European Union, the two speakers agreed that the bloc’s enlargement in the Western Balkans must be accelerated. “We live in central Europe, in a small community of states, with share security and economic interests,” Kövér said. Slovenia is “not only a good neighbour and friend, an

equal partner, but a member of the central European community that has contributed to the region’s increased weight in the EU,” he said. In terms of bilateral economic cooperation, Kövér highlighted the cross-border Pince-Cirkovce electric transmission line, adding that the recently inaugurated interconnector “is a symbol of cooperative efforts to link the region’s infrastructure”. Kövér also met State Council President Marko Lotrica and was also scheduled to hold talks with President Nataša Pirc Musar.

INTEGRITY AUTHORITY’S ANTI-CORRUPTION TEAM ADOPTS 2022 REPORT

The anti-corruption working group of the newly established Integrity Authority has adopted its first report on 2022 and will submit it to the government after March 15, the authority said on Monday. The team, composed of representatives of civil organisations and the government, highlights in its report the importance of “educating the players of the economic sector, members of the whole of society and those involved in public procurement about conflict of interest and graft prevention issues”, the authority said in a statement. The working group in addition proposes launching asset probes in cases of suspected bribery and fraud, it said. Parliament passed the law on establishing the Integrity Authority as an autonomous public

institution to investigate fraud, conflict of interest, corruption and other crimes in connection with the use of European Union funds in Hungary on October 4 last year.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINISTER HOLDS TALKS WITH LOCAL MERCEDES EXECUTIVES

Economic Development Minister Márton Nagy met with executives of Mercedes-Benz Manufacturing Hungary in his office on Monday, the ministry said. Nagy met with Mercedes-Benz Manufacturing Hungary CEO Christian Wolff, CFO Karsten Twele and PR director Sándor Dávid, the statement said. The sides discussed economic trends and the situation of the automotive industry, including issues of competitiveness. Nagy said vehicle manufacturing was a pillar for Hungary's economic performance, next to battery production. The new industry strategy currently being developed handles the sector as a priority area, he added. Mercedes has been present in Hungary for nearly 15 years, producing some 135,000 vehicles annually. The company's turnover exceeds 3 billion

euros in Hungary and it employs nearly 5,000 people, the ministry said. The sides were in agreement that economic cooperation must be further increased, and innovation and research must be encouraged, the ministry said.

LMP PROPOSES REINFORCING CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

The opposition LMP party is proposing a pay rise for staff in child-care institutions as well as increased per capita funding for those facilities, deputy group leader Máté Kanász-Nagy told a press conference on Monday. "Reinforcing the welfare and child-care systems will do more towards the protection of children than propaganda," he said. LMP advocates Hungary's earlier child protection law adopted in 1997, because "that serves to protect children rather than the government's propaganda legislation," said Kanász-Nagy. He also called for reinforcing signal mechanisms in child protection, adding that "it applies to not only institutions but to all of us". The party will submit to parliament a draft decree on their proposals, the deputy group leader said.

AIR SERBIA LAUNCHES REGULAR BELGRADE-BUDAPEST FLIGHTS

Air Serbia now operates 17 flights per week between Belgrade and Budapest under its summer timetable introduced on Monday, the company said. Depending on demand, additional flights may be launched between the two capitals, Boško Rupić, Air Serbia's strategic director, was quoted as saying in a statement. The new flights will allow passengers to reach destinations in Spain, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, the western Balkans and the United States, he said.

OVER 9,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON SUNDAY

Fully 4,696 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Sunday, while 4,546 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 64 people, ORFK said on Monday. Budapest received 61 people, 18 children among them, who arrived by train.