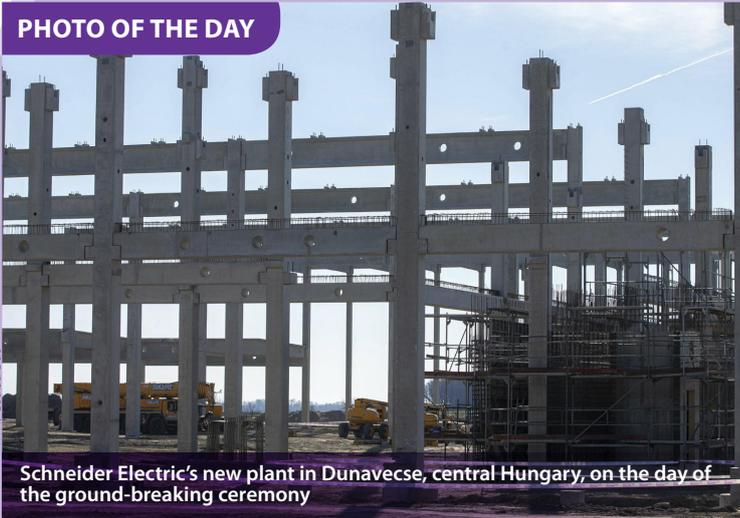


PHOTO OF THE DAY



Schneider Electric's new plant in Dunavecse, central Hungary, on the day of the ground-breaking ceremony

MTI/Csaba Bús

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

VARGA CALLS FOR 'DEMOCRACY OF EQUAL NATIONS'

Europe should not be an empire but a democracy of equal nations based on consensus-seeking, Judit Varga, the justice minister, said on Thursday.

Taking part in a roundtable discussion entitled "Hungary in the midst of European challenges", Varga said European conservatives who believe in a Europe of sovereign nations had a chance of changing the composition of the European Parliament in the 2024 EP elections.

The minister said Brussels had tried to force the views of internationally funded NGOs on Hungary, and the European Commission outsourced European democracy to such NGOs. In Hungary, she added, there was a direct link between the legislature and the people through the National Consultation public surveys. Brussels, however, was only interested in whether an issue chimed with the views of large international NGOs. The rule-of-law procedure against Hungary, she said, was a "bureaucratic quagmire" which "we have to wade through". Noting "attacks" against Hungary's law on child protection, Varga said Hungary had been accused of "violating freedom of services" by barring the provision of information related to gender LGBTQ in schools. The procedure, she added, was politicised.

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GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY STANDS BY PEACE

Hungary stands by peace in the face of external efforts to “push it into the war in Ukraine”, a state secretary of the foreign ministry told public news channel M1 on Friday. Responding to the European Parliament’s criticism of Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó’s visit to Belarus, Tamás Menczer said Szijjártó had used the visit to highlight the importance of dialogue and to encourage all warring parties to negotiate. “Once again, it’s become clear who is pro-war and who pro-peace,” he said. Russia, a nuclear power, should be negotiated with, he said. “Talk of a third world war ... [and] conflict between nuclear powers is becoming increasingly frequent.” Conflict between NATO and Russia should be avoided at all cost because “that would mean the end of us all”. This can only be avoided through negotiations, he said. “Those against negotiations, like the MEPs criticising the Hungarian foreign minister, are pro-war as they don’t really want peace and a ceasefire,” he said.

AGMIN: GOVT TAKES SIDE OF HUNGARIAN FARMERS ON LOCAL LAND TAX

The government will introduce legislation to ensure that farmland is not taxed locally, the minister of agriculture said on Friday. Some 120,000 signatories, including the

minister, have joined a petition against a land tax introduced in Hódmezővásárhely, southern Hungary, launched by farmer associations. “If the dollar-left introduces land tax in a town, then it will be ready to introduce it in any other left-wing town, threatening the interests of Hungarians farmers and the Hungarian farm sector,” István Nagy said in a statement. He said the coronavirus pandemic, a massive draught and damaging Brussels sanctions had placed huge burdens on farmers. The government is on the side of Hungarian farmers when it comes to taxes on land, and opposes all such local taxes, he added.

FINMIN: HUNGARIAN BANKING SYSTEM ‘ROBUST, FUNCTIONAL’ DESPITE FAILING INTL ENVIRONMENT

The Hungarian banking system is stable, and remains robust and functional amid the deteriorating international environment, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said on Friday. In a Facebook post on “Facts on the stability of the Hungarian banking system in 5 points”, Varga said Hungary’s average capital adequacy ratio outperformed Europe’s two-fold. Its profitability was 1.5 times the European average, and its non-performing portfolio was 3.4%, low despite the war-related crisis, he said. Its financing is stable, and has significant reserves, Varga said. “Hungary’s banking system

remains robust and functional amid the deteriorating international environment, as also shown in ratings agencies’ latest evaluations,” he said.

LMP: GOVT DECISION STRIPS GYŐR OF FARMLAND FOR BATTERY PLANT

A government decision reclassifying the utilisation of an area of 400 hectares will take away all farmland around the city of Győr, in north-west Hungary, paving the way for the construction of a battery plant, a spokesperson of opposition LMP said on Friday. Anna Süveg told a press conference that her party was protesting against the decision together with locals. She said that hundreds of lorries would be crossing an area next to the Győrszentiván district of the city every day instead of its current use of growing plants. The new regulations would allow the establishment of an industrial area with considerable noise and odour pollution, as well as the risk of fire, explosions and contamination hazards, she added.

The party is organising a protest with local civilians in front of the city hall on Monday, she said. Locals have already expressed dissatisfaction at various forums because the hazardous investment project was planned to be carried out without any consultations with them, she added. Süveg said the plant is likely to operate 24/7 with machinery generating noise even during holidays.

HUNGARY RECEIVES 10,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ON THURSDAY

Fully 5,221 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Thursday, while 4,780 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 60 people, ORFK said on Friday. Budapest received 35 people, 18 children among them, who arrived by train.

SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC LAYS CORNERSTONE FOR HUF 16 BN PLANT IN HUNGARY

French-owned Schneider Electric on Friday laid the cornerstone for a 16 billion forint (EUR 40.3m) plant it is building in Dunavecse, in central Hungary. The investment creating 500 jobs is supported by a 2.3 billion forint government grant, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said at the ceremony.

The plant, Schneider Electric's fifth in the country, will make medium-voltage equipment for electrical distribution systems, the minister said. Szijjártó noted that French businesses form the sixth largest group of foreign investors

in Hungary, and bilateral trade was worth 10 billion forints last year, with Hungarian exports accounting for 6 billion euros. Schneider Electric employs around 2,000 people in the country at four plants, a logistics base and two shared service centres. Executive Vice President Frederic Godemel said the factory dubbed Duna Smart Power Systems will have zero carbon emission, will use geothermal and solar energy and its energy-efficient operation will be controlled by Schneider's own digital monitoring system. The plant is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

Public records show Schneider Electric Hungária Villamossági had revenue of 81 billion forints last year. Exports accounted for around 50%. SE-CEE Schneider Electric Közép-Kelet Európai had revenue of 244 billion forints in 2021, the company said earlier. Exports accounted for more than 90%.

CIVITA GROUP INAUGURATES HUF 2.5 BN PASTA PLANT

Family-owned Civita Group inaugurated a 2.5 billion forint (EUR 6.3m) gluten-free pasta and edible tableware plant in Monostorpályi, in north-eastern Hungary, on Friday. Civita Group was awarded 1 billion forints in European Union and state support for the investment, CEO Gábor Vaszkó said.

HUNGARIAN PAVILION AT VENICE BIENNALE TO PRESENT PAINTER MÁRTON NEMES

The Venice Biennale international cultural exhibition will showcase artist Márton Nemes in the Hungarian pavilion next year, the Ludwig Museum said on Friday. Hungary's national commissioner for the Venice Biennale Júlia Fabényi, the director of Ludwig Museum, has selected the curator and the exhibit for the 60th Venice Art Biennale through competition, based on the decision of a panel, the museum said.

The winning bid dubbed Techno Zen was picked from 9 applicants, its curator will be Róna Kopeczky. The jury said Nemes was one of the most innovative and successful representatives of a new generation of artists, and his large multimedia work for the Biennale will also utilise the spatial characteristics of the Hungarian pavilion. The 60th Venice Art Biennale will be held between Apr. 20 and Nov. 24 next year, and the Hungarian exhibit will go on display at the Ludwig Museum in Budapest after the Biennale.