

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Finnish Santa Claus Joulupukki in Szerencs, NE Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Orbán meets French President Macron in Paris

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

KSH report on agricultural output 2023

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: INSTABILITY IN AFRICA COULD TRIGGER NEW WAVES OF MIGRATION

Instability and a lack of security in African countries could send off further waves of migration to Europe, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook on Wednesday.

Hungary has a vested interest in having security and stability in Africa, and the government works together with other governments firmly committed against terrorism, Szijjártó said, noting the support of "Kenya and Defence Minister Aden Duale, as well as the United Nations and Special Envoy Hanna Serwaa Tetteh". "The goal is to achieve peace in as many African countries as possible and prevent further waves of migration," he said. He said "the pressure of migration (on Hungary) is on the increase primarily due to armed conflicts spreading in the world, that is why the UN peace keeping missions are especially crucial in preventing new waves of migration." Hungary and Serbia share a challenge of "the migration situation along the Western Balkans route, where people smugglers operate in a military system and use weapons," the minister said. "We must be clear: illegal migration must be rejected," he said, adding that he had discussed the subject with Serbian defence state secretary Nemanja Starovic, in Accra.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE TO BOLSTERING UN PEACEKEEPING WORK

Hungary is prepared to contribute to bolstering the United Nations' peacekeeping capacities, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said at the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Accra on Wednesday, adding that bringing more and more armed conflicts under control would reduce the risk of a third world war. In his address, Szijjártó said global security was in its worst shape since the end of the Cold War, arguing that there were more than 30 serious armed conflicts going on in the world, and the threat of terrorism was at an all-time high. Europe was no exception, he said, noting the ongoing war on the continent and the conflict in the Middle East. Szijjártó also warned of the threat of instability in the Sahel region and the danger of this triggering more mass migration waves towards Europe, which posed another security challenge. "So therefore ... it is the core security interest of Hungary, of Europe, and, I do believe, that of the global community to end the most possible armed conflicts in the world," the minister said. Hungary, he said, argued in favour of ceasefires and direct negotiations between opposing sides in the interest of ensuring the safety of the people living in conflict zones. Szijjártó said the UN should step up its peacemaking and peacekeeping

efforts. He noted that the organisation had not been established "as a group of like-minded countries", but as a platform to offer the possibility of dialogue even among those hostile towards each other.

Hungary, he said, supported the UN in fulfilling this original goal of the organisation. Szijjártó said that without greater UN peacekeeping capacities, several armed conflicts could spiral out of control, and the more that happened, the greater the risk of a third world war would become. The minister noted that Hungarian troops and police officers were also serving in UN peacekeeping missions, adding that the government was prepared to contribute to enhancing the efficiency of the organisation's peacekeeping capacities. Hungary is supporting the development of technologies used in peacekeeping operations with 110,000 dollars, Szijjártó said. It is also prepared to offer its airlift capabilities with a view to improving the mobility of peacekeeping missions and is prepared to host peacekeepers in military training programmes, he said.

ORBÁN TO DISCUSS UKRAINE, MIDDLE EAST, EU ENLARGEMENT WITH MACRON

French President Emmanuel Macron will meet Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for a working dinner in Paris on Thursday, Orbán's press chief confirmed. According to information released by the French

president's office, the two leaders will discuss issues on the agenda of the European Council meeting on December 14 and 15, including European support to Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East, and matters concerning European Union enlargement. EU security and defence, and the review of the 2021-2027 financial framework will also be discussed.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: BAERBOCK 'MISUNDERSTANDS' HUNGARY STANCE ON UKRAINE

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock "misunderstands" Hungary's stance on Ukraine's accession to the European Union, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook late on Tuesday. Responding to Baerbock's statements in Ljubljana, Szijjártó said Hungary's stance had been carefully considered and well-founded, "without intentions to blackmail, let alone to play games". "The Hungarian people, parliament and government still fail to see any advantages to starting premature accession talks with Ukraine." As the country is "very far from" being ready for such talks, a strategic partnership would be much more adequate, he said. Szijjártó warned Baerbock that Hungary would not change its stance on the matter "no matter the pressure", and called for the proposal on starting accession talks with Ukraine to be taken off the agenda of next week's meetings in Brussels, "to preserve European unity".

PRESIDENT HELPS CHARITY PREPARE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR HOMELESS

President Katalin Novák on Wednesday helped the Hungarian Reformed Charity with packing Christmas presents for the homeless. The packages, to be distributed by the Reformed Church's homeless mission, contain food, snacks, chocolate, Christmas candy and health food supplements. The president also visited a homeless shelter. The charity said it aimed to reach out to tens of thousands of needy people in the Carpathian Basin in the Christmas season, with special regard to 4,000 "shoe box" presents to children in foster care and with poor families in ethnic Hungarian communities, as well as 6,000 packages of food to families and elderly people. The charity provides firewood to 125 families in the winter season and offers meals, tea, and food packages to rough sleepers.

RULING PARTIES SUBMIT DRAFT RESOLUTION OPPOSING START OF EU ACCESSION TALKS WITH UKRAINE

Hungary's ruling Fidesz and Christian Democrat parties have submitted to parliament a draft resolution expressing their

opposition to Ukraine starting talks on its accession to the European Union, Fidesz's group leader said on Wednesday. The European Commission cannot apply double standards, Máte Kocsis said in a post on Facebook, arguing that candidate countries had always had to meet all of the EU's accession criteria. "There can't be any exceptions because of current political or ideological considerations this time, either," he said. "We can't have Ukraine overtake the northern Balkan countries awaiting membership, especially without having met the conditions for starting accession talks, including those concerning the situation of minorities and the use of their mother tongue," Kocsis said. He said it was unclear how Ukraine's EU membership would affect the bloc's budget or its cohesion and common agricultural policies, so EU leaders would have to discuss this "as a step zero". Member states need to reach a consensus on this issue, but they aren't there yet, he added. Kocsis said that because it was impossible to take a responsible decision on the start of Ukraine's EU accession talks, the ruling parties were asking the government to represent this stance in the European Council and EU institutions. The proposed resolution published on parliament's website says the

European Commission's proposal for starting accession talks with Ukraine is not well-prepared, inconsistent and does not take into consideration Hungary's fundamental interests. It says parliament considers it necessary to hold a strategic debate on the EU's Ukraine policy, adding that accession talks are "untimely" before this debate is settled. The draft resolution adds that Hungary's parliament rejects all forms of political and financial pressure attempting to force Hungary to change its sovereign position.

BÓKA DISCUSSES HUNGARY-SERBIA TIES, EU PRESIDENCY IN BELGRADE

Hungary's minister for European Union affairs met his counterpart and other government officials in Belgrade on Tuesday and discussed the state of bilateral ties and Hungary's upcoming EU presidency. At a meeting with presidential counsellor Tatjana Jović, János Bóka discussed issues pertinent to the two countries' bilateral ties, the minister said on Facebook. Bóka also briefed Jović on the goals of Hungary's EU presidency in the second half of 2024, and discussed the EU-Western Balkans summit to be held next week. The EU must recognise the efforts and results of Serbia and the region, he said. Bóka and Tanja

Miščević, Serbia's minister for EU integration, reviewed Hungary's main tasks during the presidency, especially enlargement policy. They agreed that the integration of the Western Balkans must receive special emphasis, he said. At a meeting with Gojko Stanivuković, a state secretary of Serbia's finance ministry, Bóka discussed regional financial cooperation.

GOVT OFFICIAL: PHILIPPINES KEY PARTNER IN SE ASIA

The Philippines remains one of Hungary's key partners in Southeast Asia, Levente Magyar, the deputy foreign minister, said in Budapest on Tuesday. The Hungarian government sees the Philippines as a country that will be taking on an increasingly larger role on the global economic and political stage, Magyar said after a business forum and the fifth meeting of the Hungarian-Philippine economic mixed committee, noting that the archipelagic country has seen annual economic growth of around 8% in recent years and had a young population. Hungary and the Philippines established their diplomatic relations 50 years ago, and though a previous government had closed down the embassy in Manila in 1995, the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán reopened it in 2017, he said. In the spirit of the two countries' shared values, Hungary sent emergency assistance to the

families of those killed and those injured in last Sunday's terrorist attack at a Catholic mass, Magyar said. He said that the meeting of the mixed committee identified water management and agriculture as the key areas of bilateral economic cooperation. Hungary continues to export a considerable amount of meat to the Southeast Asian country, and more Hungarian suppliers are expected to enter the Philippine market, Magyar said, adding that the Philippines favoured Hungarian meat products because of their premium quality. The third pillar of cooperation, he said, was scientific research, noting the role of the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE). In addition to its partner universities, MATE also works together with several Philippine state institutions in research and development, he said. Also, Hungary offers scholarships to 55 Philippine students each year to study at Hungarian universities, Magyar said, adding that the government wanted to welcome even more students from the Southeast Asian country. Allan B. Gepty, the assistant secretary for international trade at the Philippines' Department of Trade and Industry, thanked Hungary for the aid it provided to those affected by the terrorist attack. He said Hungary was the Philippines seventh most important export market in the European Union, adding that the tourism sector also offered opportunities for cooperation.

HUNGARY TAKES DELIVERY OF LEOPARD 2A7 TANKS

Hungary has taken delivery of the first of 44 Leopard 2A7 battle tanks it has procured, the defence ministry said in a statement on Wednesday. The first five Leopard 2A7s are expected to be delivered to Hungary in the coming days, the statement quoted Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky as saying. He called the delivery of the new tanks a milestone in Hungary's military upgrade programme that would "propel the Hungarian Armed Forces into the 21st century". The Leopard fleet will be completed by 2025 and will also include Leguan bridge-laying tanks and armoured recovery vehicles, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said. The replacement of Hungary's Soviet-made vehicles with more modern ones is aided by cooperation with Germany's KNDS Group, the minister said, noting that Hungary and the company's leadership on additional services, simulations and maintenance. This cooperation, he said, guaranteed that the Hungarian Armed Forces were not just getting new equipment "but an excellent quality fleet" which the German manufacturer will be supporting with important services. The new Leopard tanks will be officially inaugurated on Dec 14 in Tata, in northern Hungary.

GOVT TO ESTABLISH WORKING GROUP FOR FISCAL DISCIPLINE

The finance ministry has announced the establishment of a budget working group for fiscal discipline. The body will be headed by the finance minister and comprise the head of the Prime Minister's Office, the head of the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office and the prime minister's political director. It will have veto rights over the cabinet's budget decisions. The working group is tasked with the "strict defence of the budget balance", the ministry said.

SOCIALISTS: STRONG NETWORK OF ALLIES, ARMED FORCES DEVELOPMENT 'NATIONAL ISSUE'

The development of Hungary's Armed Forces is an "issue of national importance", Socialist lawmaker Tamás Harangozó said on Wednesday, as he called for "a safe, peaceful country and a strong network of allies". Harangozó, the deputy head of parliament's defence and law enforcement committee, told a press conference that the wars worldwide had shown the importance of strong allies who would be able to protect Hungary's security. The Socialists would enshrine into law the "institutional protection" of servicemen, and would guarantee "tax-exempt pension-like

provisions" for them, linked to their time of service, he said. The party would also continue procuring defence equipment, "but only NATO-compatible devices deemed acceptable by professionals, procured with the utmost transparency and accountability, while striving for political consensus", Harangozó said. Taking an active role in international crisis management could make the Armed Forces an important tool in representing national interests, he said. The military should also continue to develop its capability to protect civilians in case of disasters, he said. Harangozó slammed the government's defence development scheme as riddled by "institutional corruption, waste of money, failed organisational measures and contra-selection". The development programme started in 2018 "has created a mostly dysfunctional mini mass army barely compatible with our network of allies", he said. "Hungary fulfilled only the bare minimum of its NATO commitments and is becoming a spoke in the wheel of EU integration, while its strong ties with Russia have remained despite the aggression against Ukraine," he said.

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DOWN 3.2% Y/Y IN OCTOBER

Headline industrial output fell by 3.2% year-on-year in October, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Wednesday. Output

dropped 2.8% when adjusted for the number of workdays, KSH said. Month-on-month, output edged down by a seasonally and workday-adjusted 0.6%. Output rose in the automotive industry, Hungary's biggest manufacturing sector, but fell in electronic, optical products, and in food, drink and tobacco production, KSH said.

Commenting on the data, a state secretary of the economic development ministry noted the connection between industrial output and domestic consumption. Industry would rally again once consumption levels are back up, Gergely Fábián said. Single-digit inflation, the consolidation of real wages in September, and the fact that the minimum wage and degree holders' minimum wage have grown by 10% and 15%, respectively, in December, will aid that trend, he said. "The output of future-oriented sectors such as vehicle manufacturing and high-tech battery production is constantly growing, and that is promising," Fábián said.

RETAIL SALES DOWN 6.5% Y/Y IN OCTOBER

Retail sales in Hungary dropped by an annual 6.5% in October, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Wednesday. When adjusted for calendar year effects, the fall remained 6.5%. Adjusted food sales

fell by 1.9%, non-food sales dropped by 5.1% and vehicle fuel sales were down 21.1%. Month on month, retail sales edged down by an adjusted 0.3%. Between January and October, retail volume fell by an adjusted 9% compared with the same period last year.

GUEST NIGHTS UP 5.1% Y/Y IN OCT

Guest nights at commercial and private accommodations in Hungary rose by an annual 5.1% to 3.1 million in October from the same period a year earlier, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) on Wednesday show. The number of guest nights spent by domestic travellers rose by 1.2% to 1.5 million, while guest nights spent by foreign visitors rose by 9.1% to 1.6 million. In January-October, guest nights spent by domestic travellers fell by an annual 6.4%, while foreigners' guest nights rose by 12%, KSH said.

NEARLY 8,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON TUESDAY

Fully 4,256 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Tuesday, while 3,521 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 36 people, ORFK said on Wednesday.

1929 HUNGARIAN SILENT FILM RECOVERED, REMASTERED TO BE SHOWN UNDER EU PROGRAMME

Prisoner Number Seven, a 1929 silent film believed to have been lost, will be screened in Budapest's Uránia cinema on December 15 as part of this year's Season of Classics Films programme supported by an EU cultural scheme, the National Film Institute (NFI) said on Tuesday. The only, incomplete copy of the film was obtained from a Dutch collector by the National Film Archives of Austria. A remastering based

on the only copy began in Budapest and was completed in 2023 after the missing parts emerged, NFI said in a statement. The eventful thriller-romance is about the adventures of a young woman who is taken off to jail by mistake. Censors at the time banned screening the film in Hungary which was later shown to the public after its success abroad, NFI said. The film was co-directed by Paul Sugar, who became well-known in Berlin, and Lajos Lázár, who travelled to Budapest from Vienna for the film shoot. It stars German actress Lissy Arna in the main role as well as Hans Adalbert Schlettow, Charlotte Susa and native Creole actress and revue dancer El' Dura in the role of an exotic dancer. The film also features Hungarian rising stars Ida Turay and Szidi Rákosi along with renowned Hungarian poet and journalist Lőrinc Szabó. The Season of Classics Films is a series of free film screenings across Europe aimed at drawing attention to the work of film archives and the significance of film preservation. The programme is an initiative of the Association des Cinémathèques Européennes (ACE) and is supported by the EU Creative Europe MEDIA scheme.