

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Paintings at Rome-Hungary 1800-1948 exhibition in Virág Judit Gallery

MTI/Zoltán Balogh

UPCOMING EVENTS

V4 agricultural chambers hold demo against Ukrainian imports

LMP presser on battery plants

Events related to the wars in Middle East, Ukraine

Stats office publishes data on wages in Dec 2023

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: COOPERATION WITH INDIA IN HUNGARY'S 'FUNDAMENTAL INTEREST'

Hungary has a fundamental interest in forging the strongest possible cooperation with India, the foreign minister said after talks with counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Already the world's most populous country, India is expected to become the world's third largest economy within years, and its weight in global politics is growing, Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook. Therefore, the closest possible cooperation with India "is in Hungary's fundamental interest", he said. "That's made all the easier as we see the urgent issues of world politics similarly," he said, adding that India was pro-peace, opposed the politisation of international organisations and promoted ending armed conflicts through negotiation.

Bilateral trade between Hungary and India came to one billion euros last year, and large Indian corporations such as Tata Consultancy Services and car industry suppliers Motherson and Apollo have launched "enormous investments" in Hungary, he said. The number of Indian students vying to study in Hungary hit a record in 2023, with 2,400 students applying for 200 government grants, he added. Szijjártó said establishing a direct flight between the two countries was an "important task" and would smooth economic cooperation.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ MEETS INDIA OIL AND GAS MINISTER

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó had talks with Hardeep Singh Puri, India's minister for petroleum and natural gas, and agreed that issues of energy cooperation "must not be regarded as political or ideological issues as they are a matter of physical reality." Szijjártó said the "failed and harmful" EU sanctions against Russia posed serious challenges to energy supply and security. He said Russian energy resources now made their way to Europe through third countries, "at higher prices than before". "So everyone except Europe benefits from the sanctions, which is also showing up in our falling competitiveness."

Hungary and India had similarly "realistic" views on energy, he said. "We see supply security and reasonable prices as equally important, and so neither countries have given up energy cooperation with Russia... The loudest critics [of Russia] on the world stage are also buying Russian energy resources in secret or in work-around ways," he said.

On the subject of Hungary's upcoming EU presidency, Szijjártó said Hungary would "restart talks on free trade between the EU and India, and start coordination on investment protection and on protecting designation of origin". "During the six months of our presidency, we will

also convene a meeting of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council," he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY BACKS GREEN TRANSITION, REJECTS 'EXTREME IDEOLOGIES'

Hungary approves of the green transition as a way to "preserve the planet for our descendants", but it objects to green ideologies that kowtow to "fanatical climate activists", Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said in a speech to the India-Europe Business and Sustainability Conclave in New Delhi on Wednesday. Economic development and environmental protection should coincide, he said, adding that tipping this balance either way was harmful. Hungary is among twenty countries that has managed to raise its economic game while reducing harmful emissions; by 32% compared with the 1990 level, the minister said. Szijjártó highlighted Hungary's "pragmatic approach and common sense" to environmental considerations. At a panel discussion on the circular economy, he said the green transition must be shepherded in a way that does not imperil the security of energy supply. Szijjártó said European demand for electricity was set to increase by 50% by 2030, with heating, cooling and transport taking up more and more electricity resources. So, producing cheap

electricity in large quantities in a sustainable way, he said, was vitally important, and only nuclear energy was up to the task.

With the expansion of Hungary's sole nuclear power plant in Paks, around 70% of Hungary's electricity needs will be met by Paks, while 17 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions would be cut each year, 1.5 times the emissions of the domestic transport sector. The circular economy is a strategic goal, he said, adding that storage as well as production of green energy was a key issue. Electric battery production, he added, was therefore crucial. Hungary, the minister said, was without exaggeration "a global leader", ranked fourth in the world in this respect, and would soon rise to second place now that five of the world's ten largest manufacturers have committed themselves to investments in Hungary. When it comes to sustainable management of natural and mineral resources, Hungary is ready for closer cooperation with Indian partners, he said.

Speaking at a panel discussion later on Wednesday, Szijjártó warned of the "gaping abyss" between political communication and reality, and said that closing that gap was a condition of "true connectivity". He said that after economic hardships wrought by the coronavirus pandemic, when supply lines were broken and factories closed, "the war in Ukraine and the resulting regime of sanctions has

made European-Asian cooperation impossible and eliminated the growth model based on a cooperation of cheap Russian energy resources and Western technology." As a result, several European states were now buying energy from alternative resources or from Russia through third parties, he said.

Meanwhile, the war in the Middle East has hobbled passage through the Suez Canal, which made the movement of goods between East and West unreliable, long and expensive, he said. Those factors were pushing the world toward the new establishment of blocs, he warned. "Hungary continues to promote connectivity, which can be achieved by re-introducing mutual respect into international politics and by replacing hypocrisy and the politicising of practical issues with common sense and rationality," he said. Szijjártó insisted that European politicians spoke of decoupling Eastern and Western economies "even as the largest European carmakers have become completely dependent on Eastern suppliers." The EU has also banned imports of Russian crude oil, he said, resulting in the ratio of Russian oil in India growing to 30% from 0.2%, and Europe emerging as the largest buyer of Indian crude. Meanwhile, Russia had become the largest Uranium supplier of the US even as other countries were under pressure to end nuclear cooperation with Russia, he said.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS INSTITUTE: STRENGTHENING NATO IMPORTANT TO GOVT, BUT DEMANDS MUTUAL RESPECT

The government considers strengthening NATO an important aim but expects mutual respect from old and prospective member states, the Hungarian Institute of Foreign Affairs (MKI) said in an analysis of Sweden's NATO accession. This is why Hungary has invited Sweden's prime minister to Budapest, and his visit is expected to pave the way for Hungarian lawmakers to ratify the accession document, the think-tank said, adding that Hungary's strategy had ended up strengthening NATO while also enhancing its national interests, with an improvement seen in bilateral ties. During Sweden's EU presidency, attacks against Hungary were blunted, resulting in the transfer of EU funds withheld from Hungary, it said. One outcome of Hungary's imminent ratification could be the signing of "an extremely favourable military deal" for Hungary which includes Gripen fighter jets. The MKI also emphasised that in parliamentary democracy such as Hungary's, it was normal for elected members of parliament to consider a momentous ratification request for months before debates and a final vote.

The institute also referred to "misleading and baseless information"

in the Swedish media that the Swedish government did little to counter as a further reason for Hungary's initially "cool" attitude to the matter. The think-tank said "intense negotiations" were under way between Sweden and Hungary regarding the accession, and, noting that the current Hungarian Gripen contract will soon expire, the talks also cover an arms and military industrial deal which includes renewal of the Gripen programme.

GOVT TAKES STRICT ACTION AGAINST ANY FOREIGNER WORKING IN HUNGARY ILLEGALLY

Following the mass issuance of fake work permits in an eastern Hungarian county, the national economy ministry issued a statement on Wednesday vowing to take the strictest possible action against any foreigner working illegally in the country. In Hajdú-Bihar, the county in question, the local authorities informed the police about the illegal employment of third-country nationals involving the falsification of official documents, a crime which carries a three-year prison sentence. The ministry emphasised that Hungarian workers enjoyed priority, noting that MPs recently tightened up immigration rules. It is up to the state to decide whether conditions have been met before foreigners can take up temporary residence and work in Hungary, the statement said. Further, foreigners can only

be employed in a particular job if a Hungarian worker is not available to fill it, the ministry added.

GOVT OFFICIAL MARKS INTL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

A state secretary of the ministry for European Union affairs marked International Mother Language Day, saying that the issue was especially important to Hungarians as “the life and future of Hungarians across the border hinges on their homeland’s regulations on the use of their mother tongue”. “We must do everything in our power to ensure that the laws and practices are adequate everywhere in the Carpathian Basin,” Barna Pál Zsigmond said in a video posted on Facebook on Wednesday. The situation was “the most worrying” in Ukraine, he said, calling on Kyiv to restore the 2015 state of affairs, and adhere to the recommendations of the Venice Commission. Zsigmond insisted that the EU was not taking

the protection of ethnic minorities seriously enough. “Leftist politicians playing from Soros’s playbook and bureaucrats don’t think it is important at all... The protection of national minorities should be a European minimum.” Hungary insists that Ukraine cannot join the EU before it has restored and strengthened the rights of Transcarpathian Hungarians, he said.

MINISTER ISSUES DESIGNATIONS FOR 18 MORE LOGISTICS PARKS IN HUNGARY

Another 18 logistics parks have been officially designated, the national economy ministry said on Tuesday. The new designations bring the total number of logistics parks in Hungary to 57, the ministry said in a statement.

The government rolled out the system of official designation for logistics parks a year ago with the aim of achieving uniformity and boosting competitiveness.

Logistics parks that operate on an area of at least three hectares and have 3,000sqm of warehouse space may apply for designation as an intermodal, regional or local logistics park. Applications are weighed by a Logistics Park Council which makes a recommendation to the minister in charge of industry, who issues the designations. The logistics sector is one of the pillars of Hungary’s economic growth with 2,500 companies employing 300,000 people. It accounts for 5% of the country’s GDP, the ministry said, adding that the government planned to increase the ratio to 10%. It is an important goal for Hungary to further strengthen its investments and exports-based economy, which requires developing the infrastructure used by industrial companies, the ministry said. Relevant development projects in the logistics sector will be carried out on 340 hectares and will be worth around 370 billion forints (EUR 951m), the ministry said.