

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Szegedváry

Oeuvre of painter Pál Szinyei Merse on show in Hungarian National Gallery

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

### EU NEEDS ALLIES 'TO PROTECT LINES OF DEFENCE'

Europe is in need of allies who can expand the continent's lines of defence, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara.

Without them, Europe would crumble, Orbán told a joint press conference after a meeting of the Hungarian-Turkish high-level strategic cooperation council, adding that Turkey was one of the countries contributing to Europe's defence. Hungary is asking Brussels to provide more direct financial support to Turkey in its fight against migration, he said, noting that Europe was facing migration waves from the directions of the Mediterranean, the Western Balkans and Belarus. The prime minister called on the European Union to support the construction of Turkey's border walls on the country's southern and eastern borders and help stabilise northern Syria.

## **GOVT TO CAP FUEL PRICES AT HUF 480**

The government has decided to cap the price of petrol and diesel at 480 forints (EUR 1.3) per litre from Nov. 15, the prime minister's chief of staff has said. Putting a cap on fuel prices may boost the economy and help to reduce inflation, Gergely Gulyás told a regular government press briefing. Gulyás noted that fuel prices had shot up during the past year, adding that Hungary had the sixth or seventh cheapest fuel in the EU. In four countries petrol is cheaper, while in Malta and Cyprus the current prices are similar, he said, adding that Croatia was the only other EU country to cap its fuel prices, at the equivalent of 550 forints. Concerning utility bills, Gulyás said Europe was facing an energy crisis, with the price of natural gas having increased by an average of 400% in European markets. This has had a knock-on effect on the price of electricity, which has doubled over the past year. He added that household bills had increased in every European country except for Hungary, which maintains a cap on utility fees. He slammed the leftist opposition for suggesting that the government's scheme to cut utility bills was unsustainable, and he confirmed the government's commitment to keeping consumer utility prices at the same level.

## **GULYÁS: EU FACES IMMIGRATION CRISIS**

The humanitarian impact of the "unfortunate pull-out" of international forces from Afghanistan, as well as developments at the Belarus-Poland border, are elements of a migration crisis facing the bloc, the prime minister's chief of staff, Gergely Gulyás, said. "It is important that Poland receives all assistance that Hungary was denied in 2015, when it started protecting the EU's southern borders". The EU must reimburse countries protecting its external borders, Gulyás insisted. Hungary requested a reimbursement of 580 billion forints, but has not yet received a response from the European Commission, he noted. The minister called protection of the EU's borders a "patriotic duty", adding that the government would ensure that the necessary resources are in place. The interior ministry is planning to reinforce border controls and recruit volunteers, who would be deployed after a fast-track course, he added. Gulyás also noted that the number of illegal entry attempts had shot up, from a daily 350 in 2020 to more than 1,000 at present.

Meanwhile, on the topic of Covid, Gulyás noted that the level of antibodies begins to wane six months after a second shot of a Covid vaccine, and may drop drastically after 7-8 months, which is why the government advises Hungarians to get a booster jab. The fourth wave of the

pandemic is different from previous waves because "this time we have a weapon to fight the virus in the form of vaccination," Gulyás said. One in 100 people inoculated against Covid gets ill, but with much milder symptoms than those who have not received any shots at all, he said.

Gulyás advised Hungarians to get a third jab, citing a study released by Pfizer last week which said that the vaccine starts losing its effect after six months. "Anyone who has been vaccinated is still in a better position after the eighth and the ninth month than one who has not received a jab," he added. The government is launching a week-long nationwide vaccination drive on Nov. 22, with 101 vaccination points administering a first, or a second or a booster shot without preliminary registration, Gulyás said. "It is particularly important that a substantially high number of people get a booster jab with a focus on immunocompromised people in the older age group," Gulyás said. In terms of health services, Gulyás said Hungary has sufficient resources and supplies available, adding that "no disruption or emergency is expected to emerge".

Gulyás said the government has no plans to make vaccination mandatory, but would leave the option of ordering workers to get inoculated open to employers. But state employees who come into contact with a great number of people should certainly get vaccinated, he said, noting that this is why staff working in regional government administration offices

overseen by the Prime Minister's Office are required to get vaccinated by no later than Dec. 15. Staff working in positions where they meet a fewer number of clients on a daily basis are required to receive a first jab by no later than Jan. 31, he said.

Gulyás welcomed that the full vaccination rate among health-care sector employees is high at almost 100%, though he cautioned the sector's workers to receive a booster jab. Concerning Covid jabs, Gulyás said the government will approve the vaccination of 5-11-year-olds once it is approved by either the Hungarian or European drug regulator. Hungary has more than 3 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine in stock in addition to 1 million doses of the Moderna and Janssen jabs, and more than 2 million doses of Sinopharm, he said, adding that the Pfizer vaccine accounted for about two-thirds of all Covid jabs being administered at present. Gulyás said the National Public Health Centre (NNK) had carried out a study on the efficacy of the Sputnik jab at the request of Russia. He said the government had ordered the same for all vaccines.

Asked about the possible need to administer a fourth jab, Gulyás said the question needed to be studied by medical professionals, but Hungary had enough vaccines in stock if more inoculations became necessary. He said some people may require a fourth jab and there was no rule against administering one.

Asked about the potential epidemiological risks posed by Friday's FIFA World Cup qualifier at Budapest's Puskás Arena, Gulyás there was minimal risk involved for any spectator who had received three vaccine doses, but he would "not talk anyone out of wearing a mask".

As regards European politics, Gulyás said Hungary welcomed European People's Party group leader Manfred Weber "joining the chorus of those emphasising the importance of border protection". "It appears he is in favour of Poland's border protection efforts, not just from a political, but also from a financial point of view," he added. Gulyás insisted that the EPP had ceased to be a "major political force" in western Europe. The conservative grouping's policies of the last ten years, he said, had led to there being no EPP member party in power to the west of Austria.

Meanwhile, he said remarks from the three parties working to form Germany's next governing coalition indicated that they intended to "encourage all forms of migration", which he said could also impact Brussels's migration policy.

Asked about a statement by Lajos Kósa concerning the Pegasus spyware, and whether his statement fell foul of official secrets rules, Gulyás said it was up to the authorities to decide whether the statement amounted to a criminal offence. He added that no state gave information on the technology or technical means used to collect information in the secret

domain. The issue, he said, had turned into a political football because the left wing and Hungarian left-wing journalists had made it into one. Gulyás insisted that no illegal secret information gathering had taken place in Hungary since 2010. The way in which secret information is handled is strictly regulated, he said.

On the subject of climate change, Gulyás said Hungary was among the few countries that had kept to its emission reduction targets, and this would have been impossible without nuclear energy. He said the issue within the EU was controversial, but Hungary was not the sole operator of nuclear energy in the bloc. Ten member states, led by France, have turned to EU institutions with the aim of recognising nuclear energy as climate friendly, he said.

**JUSTICE MINISTER: 'RULE-OF-LAW REPORTS HAVE NO LEGAL GROUNDS'**

The European Commission's rule-of-law reports have no legal footing, Justice Minister Judit Varga said after talks with European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders in Budapest. In addition to outlining the Hungarian government's position, she told a press conference that Hungary would always engage with the EC in diplomatic and legal dialogue. Varga noted that in the General Affairs Council both the Polish and the Hungarian government had vetoed the decision on drafting rule-of-law



reports, citing the absence of legal grounding for such a procedure. Given the lack of a legal basis, it follows no action can be taken from the reports, she added.

Varga told the commissioner that the report in question regarding Hungary was based on the opinion of civil organisations that are critical of the government and biased against it, and this amounted to “the most drastic example for double standards”.

Concerning the law on child protection, Varga said that in Hungary the right to determine how a child is raised would continue to be in the hands of parents, and related legislation was the business of member states.

Concerning migration, the minister said the Hungarian government, since 2015, had represented its standpoint consistently, and its position was increasingly shared in Europe. Varga insisted that the European Union should have reimbursed Hungary for the cost of building the fence along its southern border. Further, it should suspend infringement procedures launched against Hungary, she said, adding that the measures were designed to protect not only the Hungarian border but Europe’s external border from illegal migration, she said. Varga said the “double standards shouting” from the rule-of-law reports had broken the mutual and sensitive confidence that kept the EU together and encouraged its member states to cooperate.

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## **GOVT OFFICIAL: MEDIA BECOMING POLITICAL PLAYER**

The press has lost its role of keeping the public informed and instead is turning into a political player amid today’s technology-driven media landscape, a government official told an international conference. Hungary’s right-wing government “is often falsely accused” of having eliminated media plurality, the free press and the diversity of opinion, Balázs Orbán told the conference on freedom of expression organised by Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC), adding, however, that “nothing could be further from the truth”. Orbán said this “grim picture of Hungary depicted mainly by the left-liberal wing” was a “typical symptom of the press’s growing political role”.

As regards the rise of online media, Orbán said that though technology made people’s lives easier, it also posed challenges. Advances in technology, he said “have led to the rise of a new intellectual fashion, and liberalism has surrendered to this intellectual headwind”. He said progressive liberals believed it was their duty to “enlighten” people, and the media’s job was to “represent the liberal political agenda rather than to provide credible reporting and preserve the diversity of opinion”.

Now that the new liberal media “has clearly involved itself in political and

ideological battles”, it has become the job of “the few remaining classical liberal media outlets and conservative media” to keep the public informed and “enforce the sanctity of news”, Orbán said.

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## **ORBÁN WISHES POLAND WELL ON NATL INDEPENDENCE DAY**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán expressed his best wishes to his Polish counterpart Mateusz Morawiecki in a letter on Thursday, on the occasion of Poland’s National Independence Day. “Your national day is a great tribute to all the brave Polish patriots who fought for independence,” Orbán said. “After 123 years, the nation of Poland returned to the map of the world by uniting its people, and as a sovereign state, it took part in shaping the future of Europe,” he added. “It fills me with great joy that Hungary could also contribute to the victorious fight for Polish independence in the 20th century,” he said. “Ever since,” he said, “the alliance between Hungary and Poland has grown stronger and our two countries together are eager to provide common answers to the challenges of our times, especially in the face of ideologies that question our sovereignty and traditional values”. “I can assure you that Poland will always be able to rely on the dedication of Hungary to achieving our common goals,” he added.

**SZIJJÁRTÓ: POLAND  
PROTECTING EU BORDERS**

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó assured his Polish counterpart Zbigniew Rau of Hungary’s solidarity and expressed thanks for Polish border guards and police protecting the borders of Poland and consequently the borders of the European Union. Szijjártó said on Facebook from Istanbul, where he is scheduled to attend the Turkic Council summit, that he had consulted with Rau over the phone late on Wednesday. He said Rau had made a recovery and they would again sit together on the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on Monday.

“The bad news is that Poland’s eastern borders continue to be under serious pressure posed by migration,” he said.

“Our poor Polish friends can now experience the same thing that we have been facing as a practically continuous situation for six years, with illegal migrants refusing to obey our regulations, laws and sovereignty and attempting to violate the borders of our country in large numbers,” he added. “It must be clearly said that border violation is a crime and the same applies to encouraging border violation, not to mention people smuggling,” Szijjártó said.

All politicians in Brussels who represented a pro-migration view over the past six years, kept the mandatory resettlement quota on the agenda and denied resources from countries

protecting their borders should now visit the Polish-Belarus border and “be deeply ashamed”, Szijjártó said.

**SZIJJÁRTÓ: TRADE  
TURNOVER DOUBLES  
BETWEEN HUNGARY,  
TURKIC COUNCIL  
MEMBERS**

Trade turnover has doubled between Hungary and Turkic Council states in the past decade and the importance of cooperation is continually increasing, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Thursday. Szijjártó welcomed at a meeting of the Turkic Council in Istanbul that three years ago Hungary was given observer status in the organisation and added that the number of states that want to join the cooperation has been increasing ever since. Hungary has signed strategic partnership agreements with all five members of the Turkic Council, including, most recently, with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. A Hungarian embassy has been opened in the capital of the latter country, thereby the government has fulfilled its promise to establish representative offices in each of the member states, he added. Hungary currently offers 870 university scholarships to Turkic Council member states, as against the former 725, with the number of applications recently getting near 5,000, Szijjártó said.

Hungary’s Eximbank has opened credit lines for investment in four

of the member states and a 16 million dollar Hungarian-Kyrgyz development fund recently started operation, he added. Trade turnover between Hungary and Turkic Council member countries doubled between 2009 and 2020, and it saw a 28% annual increase already this year, Szijjártó said. He expressed hope that a decision would be made in the near future about the organisation’s investment fund, adding that Hungary intends to join as soon as possible. “A global competition is under way for the redistribution of economic capacities. Member states and observers of the Turkic Council must be among the winners of the new global economy. To that end, investments are needed and tools to attract investment,” he said.

Szijjártó said climate change posed increasingly serious challenges to agriculture, especially in terms of water shortage, adding that Hungary had highly advanced technologies for water management. The government has made a proposal to establish an institute aimed at preventing water shortage within the Turkic Council and Budapest is ready to host this institute and pay for its operational costs, he said. He also said that the failure of international intervention in Afghanistan has resulted in increasing migratory pressure in the region and the entire world. He assured all neighbouring countries and countries on the migration route of Hungary’s



solidarity. "Hungary will never approve decisions that disregard the interests of Turkic Council members, regardless of whether they are made by the European Union or any other international organisation," he said. All affected parties must be involved in decision making, he added.

**HUNGARY DELIVERS 200,000 JABS OF COVID VACCINE FOR TURKIC COUNCIL DONATION TO AFRICA**

Hungary has delivered some 200,000 jabs of Covid vaccine to Istanbul to be shipped to African countries as part of a donation by members of the Turkic Council. Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, presented the doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine to Turkic Council Secretary General Baghdad Amreyev at a joint press conference. Szijjártó said that Hungary has sufficient vaccine supplies for domestic vaccination and has extra reserves to help other countries that are in a difficult situation. "This is why we immediately said yes

to the Turkish initiative according to which Turkey and Hungary are each to donate 200,000 doses of vaccine, with Azerbaijan donating an additional 100,000 doses to the most disadvantaged African countries in coordination with the Turkic Council..." he said.

**HUNGARY REPORTS 132 COVID DEATHS, 8,394 NEW INFECTIONS**

Altogether 132 patients died of a Covid-related illness in the 24 hours up to Thursday, while 8,394 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said. So far 5,986,727 people have received a first jab, while 5,764,573 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 1,475,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 83,818, while hospitals are treating 4,990 Covid-19 patients, 488 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 931,414 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 31,751. Fully 815,845 people have made a recovery.

There are 39,655 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 7,715,195.

**EC RAISES HUNGARY 2021 GDP GROWTH FORECAST TO 7.4%**

The European Commission has raised its projection for GDP growth in Hungary this year to 7.4%, up from its July projection of 6.3%. The EC projects a 5.4% growth rate for 2022, slowing to 3.2% in 2023 as output returns close to its potential and monetary support is gradually withdrawn. Last week, Hungary's finance ministry lowered its projection for GDP growth this year to 6.8% from 7-7.5% against the backdrop of higher energy prices, inflationary pressure and the impact of the fourth wave of the pandemic.

The commission said rising production costs were keeping inflation high. It expects the harmonised consumer price index to peak at 6.7% in the fourth quarter of 2021 on the back of price hikes after the reopening of the economy and global commodity price increases.

