

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Márton Mónus

Budapest's House of Hungarian Music opens outdoor stage

UPCOMING EVENTS

Judicial conference

EU foreign ministers meet in Germany

War in Ukraine

TOP STORY

FM: OIL EMBARGO SHOULD EXEMPT PIPELINE FLOWS

Hungary's government is calling for pipeline deliveries to be exempt from the EU's planned sanctions on Russian energy deliveries, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Wednesday.

Szijjártó said in a Facebook video that the European Commission had not made a proposal that would ameliorate the damaging effects of an embargo on Russian oil. He said the Brussels proposal, if accepted in its current form, would "completely demolish" Hungary's currently stable energy security. The measures would cause a 55-60% rise in fuel prices, resulting in petrol prices around 700 forints (EUR 1.8) and diesel around 800 forints per litre, he said.

"We have made it clear that we may vote for the proposal only if Brussels proposes a solution to the problem they have created," Szijjártó said. "We expect propositions regarding the upgrade of our refineries and a capacity upgrade of the pipeline through Croatia for hundreds of millions of dollars, as well regarding the future of the Hungarian economy, as the proposal in its current form is tantamount to a nuclear bomb." The talks so far have made it clear that "Brussels has no solutions to those problems", he said. Hungary will therefore maintain its stance that sanctions on Russian oil may only pertain to maritime routes, he said.

ORBÁN INVITES POLITICIANS TO DISCUSS FORMING CABINET

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Wednesday discussed the formation of his cabinet, according to his press chief. The meeting held in his office was attended by János Csák, Gergely Gulyás, János Lázár, István Nagy, Márton Nagy, Tibor Navracsics, László Palkovics, Sándor Pintér, Antal Rogán, Zsolt Semjén, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky and Judit Varga, Bertalan Havasi said in a statement.

AMBASSADOR TO KYIV: 'HUNGARY WILL NOT BLOCK UKRAINE'S EU MEMBERSHIP'

Hungary will not prevent Ukraine's accession with the European Union when the time comes, István Ijgyártó, Hungarian ambassador to Kyiv, said in a television interview reviewed by the news portal European Pravda on Tuesday. The ambassador gave an interview to Ukrainian television channel Espresso which he concluded by saying "Finally, I would like to assure you that when a review of questions on Ukraine's EU membership starts, Hungary will support it [the membership]", the news portal said. The European Pravda cited Ihor Zhovkva, diplomatic advisor to the Ukrainian president on European integration, telling the portal earlier that Kyiv had not

yet received any indication from Budapest that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán would intend to block Ukraine's EU accession. The portal added that according to a survey published by Flash Eurobarometer last week, more than half of the population in every EU member state except Hungary supported Ukraine's EU integration. According to the survey, on average 66% of the EU's population said that "Ukraine should join the EU when it is ready", the portal said. Out of the 27 EU member states, the proportion of those supporting Ukraine's membership was above 50% in 26 member states compared with Hungary, the only member where the proportion was 47%, the portal said.

FINANCE MINISTER CALLS ON EBRD TO FOCUS ON C EUROPE

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) should focus more on central Europe, especially the countries neighbouring Ukraine, Finance Minister Mihály Varga told MTI on Wednesday, after attending a meeting of the EBRD's Board of Governors in Marrakesh. The EBRD was set up in 1991 to help central and eastern European economies recover after the collapse of Communist regimes in the region. While it is important to support development in Asia or the Sahel region, the EBRD must not lose its focus as a primarily European bank,

he said. Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia and Latvia have drafted a proposal for funding for local EBRD branches. "We aim to acquire funding for more projects through the bank," he said.

Regarding the Russia-Ukraine war, Varga said Hungary had already spent some 40 billion forints (EUR 105.2m) on handling the refugee crisis. He called it "fair and just" that other countries should shoulder some of the burden. The EBRD is launching a 2 billion euro programme in support of those countries most affected by the war, especially those neighbouring Ukraine, he said. The scheme could get under way within days, he added. EBRD President Odile Renaud-Basso said at talks on Tuesday that Hungary would be part of that programme, Varga said. The programme will aid local authorities and companies investing in projects that aid refugees, such as building refugee shelters or developing education projects, he said. The bank will also launch a programme to boost post-war reconstruction and infrastructure development in Ukraine, he said. Varga said Hungary was ready to participate in that scheme too.

FINANCE MINISTER: HUNGARY, MOROCCO STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC TIES

Trade between Hungary and Morocco jumped by 24% in the past year, and the growing economy of

the region offers good prospects for Hungarian companies, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said after meeting his Moroccan counterpart, Nadia Fettah Alaoui, in Morocco on Wednesday. Trade between the two countries reached 260 million dollars last year, Varga said after the talks on the sidelines of the general assembly of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Hungarian companies with innovative technologies and products will find new opportunities in Morocco, Varga said. Hungarian exports of electrical equipment and vehicles there is significant, the finance ministry quoted Varga as saying. The aim is to boost ties in water management, farm and food processing technologies, energy management and property development, Varga said. The cooperation agreement concluded between the Hungarian and Moroccan customs and tariff authorities will also contribute to the development of ties, as will the Morocco-Hungary Business Council, which is scheduled to start work in the near future, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: MIGRATION, TERRORISM OUT OF AFRICA SET TO INCREASE

The world must prepare for the food supply challenges stemming from the war in Ukraine to lead to a significant increase in migration

pressure from the direction of Africa, which will in turn lead to an increase in the spread of terrorism, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Morocco on Wednesday. According to a foreign ministry statement, Szijjártó told a meeting of the foreign ministers of the global coalition fighting the Islamic State terrorist group that both Europe and Africa were facing critical security challenges due to the war in Ukraine and an increase in the number of terrorist attacks. Szijjártó pointed out that these two threats were connected, arguing that Russia and Ukraine were among the world's top grain exporters and the conflict between them would slash their export volumes, putting many African countries in a difficult situation. If unstable regions are thrown into a difficult situation because of problems with the import of basic food products, it results in a rise in extremism and terrorism becoming more severe, the minister said.

Terrorism leads to an increase in migration, he said, adding that because terrorists could infiltrate large migrant groups, the international community should focus primarily on managing the root causes of migration. Szijjártó also said that the number of illegal migrants entering Europe was up 57 percent in the first three months of 2022 and at its second highest since 2016. Meanwhile, he said there were 146 Hungarian soldiers

serving in the international mission in Iraq, adding that an international working group on the prevention of infiltration by foreign fighters will meet in Budapest in September. Szijjártó met with his Georgian, Congolese, Kuwaiti, Moroccan and Saudi Arabian counterparts on the sidelines of the meeting.

ISRAEL PRESIDENT CONGRATULATES INCOMING PRESIDENT NOVAK

Isaac Herzog, the president of Israel, has sent a letter congratulating Katalin Novák on her "historic and inspiring" election as Hungary's next president, and he wished her much success. In his English-language letter, Herzog called Hungary a dependable ally of Israel in international forums and a country home to one of the largest Jewish communities in Europe, Novák noted on Facebook on Wednesday. "The State of Israel values and appreciates its relationship with Hungary," Herzog wrote in the letter. Herzog who stated his commitment towards advancing ties between the two countries, extended an official invitation for Novak to visit Israel. Novák in her post thanked the Israeli president for his "kind wishes", stressing that "Israel can count on the continued support of Hungary in the future, as can the Jewish community living in peace and security in Hungary". "I look

forward to further strengthening the cooperation between our countries in the coming years," Novák said. Parliament elected Novák president on March 10, and she will be the sixth president since the 1989/90 change of political system. Novák will be sworn in during a ceremony on Saturday.

OSCE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES RECEIVES HIGH HUNGARIAN STATE AWARD

Hungarian President János Áder has given a high state award to Kairat Abdrakhmanov, the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Hungarian embassy in The Hague said on Tuesday. The Hungarian Order of Merit, Officer's Cross was handed over to the diplomat by Ambassador András Kocsis at a ceremony at the embassy, the embassy said in a statement. Abdrakhmanov received the honour in recognition of his outstanding efforts towards the protection of minorities, the integration of multi-ethnic societies and the promotion of interethnic relations, the embassy said.

The ambassador highlighted Abdrakhmanov's achievements in the protection of human rights and his openness towards minority protection, an issue of primary importance for Hungary.

In his acceptance speech, the high commissioner praised the

Hungarian political and legal environment for minorities, intensive relations between the Hungarian authorities and the minorities living in Hungary and the humanitarian support provided by Hungary to Ukrainian refugees, the embassy said.

HIDVÉGHİ CALLS ON EU TO 'STOP ACCUSATIONS' AGAINST HUNGARY

After the clear and unequivocal decision made by Hungarians at the parliamentary elections on April 3, it is high time that respect should be shown and accusations stopped against the country, ruling Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi said on Wednesday in reaction to a recent report on Hungary. Hidvéghi said on Facebook that the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) was scheduled to meet this week and "a report condemning Hungary is again on the agenda". Following the critical reports of rapporteurs Rui Tavares and Judith Sargentini in the past, the new report has been drafted by Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield who visited Hungary a few months ago heading a LIBE committee, he added. Hidvéghi, who is a substitute in LIBE, said that Delbos-Corfield had prepared a "pre-written verdict" and consulted organisations linked to US financier George Soros. At the

April election, however, Hungarians "unequivocally rejected these lies, they rejected Brussels' arrogance and constant lecturing," Hidvéghi said.

DK CALLS ON GOVT, CBANK TO 'TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RISING FOOD PRICES'

At a time when basic necessities are luxuries for some Hungarians, the government has to take responsibility for the rise in food prices it had caused, the deputy leader of the opposition Democratic Coalition said on Wednesday. László Varju said in a statement that inflation had reached twenty-year records, and he cited the Central Statistical Office as saying that some Hungarians had been forced to cut the amount of food they buy due to skyrocketing prices.

"Many families refrain from buying meat, vegetables or coffee. The price hikes are mainly due to the weakest Hungarian forint in history, the results of the work of [Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán and [central bank governor] György Matolcsy in the past few months," he said. The government should admit that the central bank has no exchange rate target, he said. "It is time Matolcsy told Hungarian families that they cannot do their shopping or afford meat, and their mortgage payments are going up, because the central bank has no exchange rate target," Varju said.

NATL ELECTION CTTEE FINES KARÁCSONY OVER HUF 500,000 FOR UNRETURNED REFERENDUM SLIPS

The National Election Committee (NVB) has fined Gergely Karácsony over 500,000 forints (EUR 1,320) for failing to return more than 600 signature slips in connection with a national referendum he initiated on two issues, NVB said on Wednesday. Karácsony, who serves as the mayor of Budapest, submitted referendum initiatives regarding a planned Budapest campus of China's Fudan University and jobless benefits last year. As a private individual, Karácsony submitted the slips on January 21 this year, and NVB established on March 9 that both initiatives had garnered the required minimum of 200,000 valid signatures.

Under Hungarian law, an initiator of a national referendum must return all of the signature slips to the National Election Office (NVI). A fine of 800 forints is levied for each unreturned slip, the committee said in a statement, noting that its decision was passed unanimously. Its decision can be appealed at the Kúria, Hungary's supreme court, within the next five days.

POLICE: NEARLY 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON TUESDAY

Fully 5,060 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Tuesday, while another 4,746 from Ukraine crossed via Romania, the national police headquarters said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 407 people, the police website said on Wednesday. Holders of such permits must contact a local immigration office near their place of residence within thirty days to apply for permanent documents, it added. Budapest police received 253 refugees, 137 children among them, by train, according to the municipal police website.

HUNGARY RECORDS 6,748 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 77 DEAD LAST WEEK

Fully 77 people with Covid-19 symptoms died last week, while 6,748 new infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said in a weekly release of data on Wednesday. Altogether 6,407,918 people have

been vaccinated, with 6,194,102 having received a second jab, 3,869,067 a third, and 293,131 a fourth. The number of active infections stands at 42,170, while hospitals are caring for 1,015 Covid-19 patients, 29 of whom are intubated on a ventilator. Since the start of the coronavirus epidemic, 1,909,948 people have been official confirmed as having contracted the virus, while the number of deaths has risen to 46,343. Fully 1,821,435 people have made a recovery.

BMW'S DEBRECEN PLANT TO BE WORLD'S FIRST RUNNING FOSSIL-FREE

The world's first car plant to operate solely from renewable energy will soon be up and running in Debrecen. BMW's new plant will "completely abandon fossil fuels", the company's chief executive, Oliver Zipse, told the BMW Annual General Meeting in Munich on Wednesday. Construction will start on June 1 and electric BMW cars will roll off the production line 26 months later, he said. Electricity for manufacturing will be generated on site for the most part, while "100% renewable energy sources" will provide the rest, he added.