

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Márton Mónus

Works by Hungarian painters József Rippl-Rónai, Béla Kádár and János Vaszary, up for auction at the Virág Judit Gallery

UPCOMING EVENTS

Inauguration of Katalin Novák as president

NATO foreign ministers meet in Berlin

War in Ukraine

TOP STORY

ORBÁN CONCLUDES TALKS ON FORMING GOVT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has concluded talks on forming Hungary's next cabinet.

Zsolt Semjén will continue as deputy prime minister and take on the role of minister responsible for policies for Hungarian communities abroad, national minorities and church relations, and for church diplomacy.

István Nagy and Sándor Pintér will stay on as minister of agriculture and interior minister, respectively.

János Lázár will oversee the new ministry of construction and investment. Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky will take over the defence ministry.

Judit Varga will remain justice minister. János Csák will lead a new cultural and innovation ministry.

Péter Szijjártó will stay as minister of foreign affairs and trade, and Antal Rogán will continue as head of the cabinet office.

Gergely Gulyás will remain head of the prime minister's office, while Mihály Varga will continue as finance minister.

László Palkovics will head the ministry of technology and industry, while former deputy central bank governor Márton Nagy will become minister for economic development.

Former EU commissioner Tibor Navracsics will lead a new ministry for regional development and the utilisation of EU funds.

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JUSTICE MIN: HUNGARIANS WANT 'STRONG HUNGARY'

Hungarians want a "strong Hungary within a strong European Union", Justice Minister Judit Varga told a conference in Budapest on Thursday.

"Unfortunately, some used the series of conferences on the future of Europe to support their own ideologies," Varga told the conference on the future of Europe and Hungarian interests organised by the Foundation for a Civic Hungary. "The Hungarian nation, however, declared that it wants a strong Hungary." Varga said that unlike the EU of today that rejected its traditional values and preferred foreign cultures, the Hungarian government holds that unless Europe's Judeo-Christian roots and natural communities of family, nation and church are taken seriously, Europe's future would be in doubt.

And, she added, whereas the EU was intent on entrenching a hegemony of opinion and effecting self-censorship, the Hungarian government believed in freedom. The EU, the minister said, was increasingly constricting member states' powers, while Hungary regarded member states as the sole bearers of sovereignty. Varga insisted that the EU was driving in an anti-democratic direction, but Hungary wanted to create a "democracy of democracies".

She also accused the EU of working to dilute Europe by supporting mass immigration while failing to provide adequate support for families

raising children. "We must say no to a European Empire," she said, alluding to the opinions of Hungarian citizens canvassed during a series of conferences on the future of Europe, adding that Hungarians wanted member states to preserve and protect their country's constitutional identity. Decisions, she added, should be made by elected leaders rather than NGOs.

EC SPOKESMAN SAYS OIL EMBARGO STILL ON THE TABLE

A spokesman for the European Commission has confirmed for news channel M1 that the European Union's executive body is standing by its plan to introduce an embargo on Russian oil. The public television broadcaster had asked for comment on a report by Politico early Friday suggesting the proposed oil embargo could be removed from the EU's sixth sanctions package because of a possible veto by Hungary. Hungary's government has said it will support the embargo only if crude deliveries by pipeline are exempted. Hungary gets most of its oil via pipeline from Russia, and the country's main refinery is technically reliant on Russian crude.

SZÁZADVÉG: BRUSSELS OIL EMBARGO PLAN UNPOPULAR AMONG PUBLIC

Three-quarters of respondents would not support Hungary shutting off crude oil and natural gas deliveries

from Russia under pressure from the US and the EU, while 21% would not oppose the measure, according to a fresh survey by the Századvég Foundation. The foundation canvassed the views of 1,000 people in May regarding the economic consequences of the sanctions imposed on Russia in response to the war in Ukraine.

Rejection of the proposed phased embargo on Russian energy resources traversed "traditional party lines", the survey said.

A majority (51%) of the sympathisers of the opposition alliance, 58% of the opposition Two-Tailed Dog party, and 91% of the radical Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) party opposed Hungary banning oil and gas deliveries from Russia. "On the issue of the oil embargo, the ruling parties represent the opinion of the majority of opposition voters," Századvég said. Fully 89% of respondents said sanctions against Russia harmed the EU and its economy. Some 10% said the sanctions had no meaningful impact on the European economy, Századvég said.

HUNGARIAN INTERCHURCH AID, FINN CHURCH AID SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Hungarian Interchurch Aid and Finn Church Aid have signed a cooperation agreement to work together on rebuilding schools in Ukraine damaged in the war. Hungarian Interchurch Aid

president László Lehel told a press conference on Friday that there were 7.7 million internally displaced people in Ukraine, while 5.7 million people have fled the country. Over 400,000 internally displaced people are in Transcarpathia.

Hungarian Interchurch Aid is helping 225 institutions, mostly refugee shelters. The organisation is present in nine counties around Ukraine and has helped some 100,000 people, he added. Aid shipments have been sent to areas as far as near Kyiv, often with the help of local organisations, he said.

Finn Church Aid, a Finnish church organisation, has representative offices in 13 countries, with 4,000 workers, he said. Jouni Hemberg, the executive representative of Finn Church Aid, said before signing the agreement that existing cooperation with the Hungarian aid organisation will be raised to a higher level. Schools must be rebuilt in many locations, and support must be offered to both teachers and students, he added. The signing event was also attended by Anikó Lévai, the wife of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and a welfare ambassador of Hungarian Interchurch Aid.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: EDUCATION IN MOTHER TONGUE MUST BE GUARANTEED TO ALL HUNGARIANS IN CARPATHIAN BASIN

The government aims to ensure that every Hungarian child in the

Carpathian Basin should have access to kindergarten care or school education in the mother tongue, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Satu Mare (Máréfalva) in Transylvania on Friday. "An important message of the parliamentary election and referendum in April was that our children should be protected from extremist liberal gender propaganda and we should not allow NGOs to confuse their thoughts," Szijjártó said at the groundbreaking ceremony of a kindergarten. He said it was "fantastic news" that the community of ethnic Hungarians was constantly growing and they needed a new kindergarten, which, he added, was a testament to the success of the Hungarian government's scheme to develop kindergartens throughout the Carpathian Basin. The government is contributing 220 million forints (EUR 570,000) to the 400 million forint development started in Satu Mare, he said. The kindergarten will be owned by the local church and run by the local council, he said. Fully eighty children will receive language training and kindergarten care in the mother tongue, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY SENDING 400,000 RAPID TESTS TO PHILIPPINES, SOMALIA

Hungary is sending 400,000 antigen test kits to the Philippines and to Somalia this weekend, the foreign minister said on Friday. Péter Szijjártó

said in a video posted on Facebook that coronavirus posed a greater challenge than ever before in many parts of the world. Hungary, he noted, has been helping out in many cases, most recently sending test kits to Moldova, North Macedonia and Montenegro. The Philippines will receive 300,000 rapid antigen tests while Somalia will get 100,000, he said. "We trust that [the shipments] will aid in a successful fight against the pandemic in these two countries," Szijjártó said.

LMP CALLS FOR BUDAPEST CONGESTION CHARGE

The green LMP party wants the rapid implementation of strong measures to reduce car traffic in Budapest, and advocates the introduction of a congestion charge as well as a car-free embankment on the Pest side of the city, a party lawmaker said on Friday.

Bernadett Bakos said the partial closure to car traffic along the embankment was a half-hearted solution, and she called for whole of the banks of the Danube in Pest to be made pedestrian- and bike-friendly. She also rejected the Budapest mayor's insistence that the congestion charge would be untimely, adding that Gergely Karácsony's had made the charge a plank of his election manifesto. "It would be high time for at least one impact study, you would think," she said. The charge should be graduated to reflect when congestion and air pollution are higher,

and revenues raised should be used for public transport, Bakos said. Also, a plan is needed to dampen traffic throughout the city, she added.

POLICE: OVER 11,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON THURSDAY

Fully 5,670 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Thursday, while another 5,777 from Ukraine crossed via Romania, the national police headquarters said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 463 people, the police website said on Friday. 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 305 refugees, 89 children among them, by train, according to the municipal police website.

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP 3.6% YR/YR IN MARCH

Hungarian industrial output grew by an annual 3.6% in March, slowing from 4.8% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday in a second reading of the data.

Adjusted for the number of working days, output grew by 4.2%. Month on month, output eased by 0.1%, based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. In January-March, industrial output increased by 5.5% from the same period a year earlier.

Output of automotive companies dropped by an annual 13.3% in March. The segment, which accounted for 22% of manufacturing sector output in March, continued to be challenged by the semiconductor shortage and supply chain problems, KSH said. The detailed data show output of the computer, electronics and optical equipment segment, accounting for 11% of manufacturing, increased by an annual 6.3%. Output of the food, drinks and tobacco segment, which also made of 11% of manufacturing sector output, rose by 10.2%.

CONSTRUCTION OUTPUT SLOWS TO 10.5% YR/YR IN MARCH

Hungarian construction sector output grew by an annual 10.5% in March, slowing from an increase of 38.5% in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. Building segment output rose by

10.6%, while civil engineering output was up 11.4%. Overall, construction sector output was worth 521.8 billion forints (EUR 1.36bn) in March, with the building segment making up 68% of the total.

KURTÁG'S 'FIN DE LA PARTIE' PERFORMED IN OPERA GARNIER, PARIS

World-renowned Hungarian composer György Kurtág's first opera, *Fin de la partie*, is being performed at the Opera Garnier in Paris from April 30 to May 19. The performance is a reprise of the work's 2018 premiere in La Scala Milan. Directed by Pierre Audi, the singers are Frode Olsen (Hamm), Leigh Melrose (Clov), Hilary Summers (Nell) and Leonardo Cortellazzi (Nagg). *Fin de la partie*, 96-year-old Kurtág's longest piece, is based on Samuel Beckett's eponymous play, written in French and premiered in Paris in 1957. Kurtág said in an interview earlier that the play had had a "lifelong effect" on him when he saw it the same year. French daily *Le Monde* praised the opera as a "masterpiece" that "infuses with humanity the nihilism of the Irish author, examining the end of humanity, the death of language and the abolition of all property."