

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



US combat vehicles at a Hungary-US military exercise in eastern Hungary

MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**NATO defence ministers meet in Brussels**

**War in Ukraine**

**Commemoration of martyred 1956 PM Imre Nagy**

## TOP STORY

# FORMIN: 'SHAMEFUL' EU ENLARGEMENT HAS STALLED

It is "shameful" that European enlargement has stalled in the recent period, Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's foreign minister, said on Wednesday in Podgorica.

European security and economic competitiveness would improve with the integration of the Western Balkans, he added. At a joint press conference with Montenegrin counterpart Ranko Krivokapić, Szijjártó said the EU faced serious economic and security challenges, noting the war in Ukraine and sanctions which have pushed up inflation, interest rates, and energy and commodity prices. In the current situation, the EU should be doing everything it can to reduce security risks and to maintain European economic competitiveness, he said. NATO, he said, already understood the security considerations and has approved the accession of three countries in the region. Now it was time for the EU to take the region with fast-growing economies seriously, he added. Citing the case of Montenegro, Szijjártó noted that all thirty negotiating chapters had been opened, but not a single one had been concluded in the past five years. As a NATO member that uses the euro, and with a population of roughly 0.12% of the bloc's population, admitting Montenegro "would be easy and risk-free", he said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: GOVT NOT KEEN ON GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX**

Hungary is not keen on a global minimum tax because it would undermine European competitiveness, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said after talks by phone on Wednesday with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. Szijjártó said on Facebook that he had told Blinken: "We're not keen on this idea at all, especially not in its current form or under the current circumstances." The war is putting the European economy under strain, and new taxes on producers could prove fatal, "especially since efforts are under way to introduce them in Europe at the start of next year, while who knows when they'll be introduced in the rest of the world, if at all," he said. Szijjártó said he agreed with Blinken to hold further consultations later this week.

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## **NAGY: 80% OF INFLATION IN HUNGARY DUE TO GLOBAL FACTORS**

Global factors such as rising energy and grain prices account for 80% of Hungarian inflation, Márton Nagy, the minister of economic development, said in a newspaper interview published on Wednesday. Nagy told the daily Magyar Hírlap that recent forint weakening was linked to global developments and could be traced back to the US inflation data released last Friday. The minister said

inflationary tensions were growing, and he also spoke of the risk of a recession. He noted that bond yields are rising, setting a challenge for the region and southern European states. Much depends on how the war in Ukraine pans out, he said, adding that next year could be tougher than the current one.

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## **DEFENCE MINISTER: NATO'S POSITION ON UKRAINE WAR COINCIDES WITH HUNGARY'S NATIONAL INTEREST**

NATO's position on the war in Ukraine coincides with Hungary's national interest, according to which every effort must be made to prevent the conflict from spreading beyond the borders of Ukraine, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said on Wednesday, after meeting soldiers arriving for a military exercise at a training base in Hajdúhadház, in eastern Hungary. He said soldiers in the region had the dual task of carrying out humanitarian activities while also protecting the borders of Hungary. Hungary, as a NATO member, can rely on its allies in fulfilling these tasks, he said. Szalay-Bobrovniczky said that there were domestic and international exercises, joint training and preparation events and tasks each year which involved soldiers from NATO member countries arriving in Hungary. Protecting the security of Hungarians is a priority for the government, and the Hungarian and

US soldiers carrying out joint patrols under the arrangements of NATO also serve this purpose, he said, noting that Hungarian and US soldiers serve together in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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## **PALKOVICS MEETS GERMAN MINISTER OF TRANSPORT IN BERLIN**

László Palkovics, the minister of technology and industry, had talks with Volker Wissing, Germany's minister of transport and digital infrastructure, in Berlin on Wednesday. After the talks, Palkovics said the Hungarian government would consider the system of Germany's "nine-euro" public transport pass. He said the German government had made a wise decision to put a cap on the price of fuels and introduce the cheap passes, which he said were very popular and made a lot of drivers switch to public transport. "The Hungarian government will study this solution and soon make a decision on the matter," Palkovics said. Germany offers the monthly passes costing nine euros for the summer months, valid for local public transport services as well as regional services of the Deutsche Bahn.

Concerning bilateral ties, Palkovics said the economy and politics of the two countries were interlinked, which would necessitate continued cooperation. Hungary and Germany have "many common causes", he said, adding that car making and transportation were key industries

in both countries. A large part of Hungary's car making is also linked to Germany, he said. Palkovics and Wissing discussed dominant technologies of the near future such as electric and hydrogen-fuelled cars and synthetic fuels, and agreed that the principle of technological neutrality should be applied in political decision making. "Each country should be given an opportunity to choose its path," the minister said.

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### **INVESTIGATIVE PROSECUTOR DROPS PROBE INTO PEGASUS SPYWARE IN 'ABSENCE OF A CRIME'**

Hungarian investigative prosecutors have terminated the investigation into allegations of illegal eavesdropping on the mobile phones of several Hungarian journalists and opposition figures in connection with Pegasus spyware, citing "absence of a crime". "A broad investigation which included classified documents found no unauthorised and secretive collection of information or the unauthorised use of a concealed device," the Central Investigation Prosecutor's Office (KNYF) said on Wednesday. Referring to certain people named in the press who were allegedly spied on, the public investigators said people on whom the authorities secretly collected information for law enforcement or national security purposes were not necessarily criminal suspects, and in such cases they examined whether

these people had been caused harm in any way. The findings were negative, the investigators said.

In January, data protection ombudsman Attila Péterfalvi told journalists that no violations in connection with the use or licensing of Pegasus spyware had been discovered in Hungary. For the last six months, his office has investigated the use of the Israeli spyware by Hungarian national security agencies, as well as ministry of justice permission procedures, after the publication of allegations in the summer by investigative news site Direkt 36 in connection with the discovery that 50,000 phone numbers selected by customers of Israeli company NSO Group had been eavesdropped in 50 countries since 2016, including Hungary.

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### **FIDESZ MEPS BLAME LEFT WING FOR VOTING AGAINST HUNGARIAN INTERESTS**

After two European parliamentary committees on Tuesday voted against a proposal to include nuclear energy and natural gas on the list of environmentally sustainable economic activities, Fidesz MEPs slammed left-wing members for voting against Hungarian interests. Left wing MEPs "attacked the sustainability" of caps on household utility bills in votes by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), ruling

Fidesz MEPs Edina Tóth and Enikő Győri said in a statement. Nuclear energy and investments in natural gas are essential to achieving climate targets and maintaining low utility bills, while guaranteeing the security of energy supplies in the long term.

The vote's outcome, Győri said, "lacks common sense". Nuclear energy and natural gas are indispensable if Europe is to achieve its climate neutrality targets by 2050, she said, blaming "the European left wing" for the result.

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### **FIDESZ MEP: EP SENDS 'LECTURING MESSAGE' TO SERBIA**

The European Parliament has sent a "lecturing message" to Serbia, which has been waiting for the last twenty years to become a European Union member state, Andor Deli, a Fidesz MEP, told MTI on Tuesday. Born in Vojvodina, Serbia's northernmost province, Deli commented on a report by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) assessing the political situation of three countries aspiring for EU membership, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia. Serbia deserves a much better assessment, he said, calling it "unacceptable" that during the war in Ukraine "Serbia is exposed to a frontal attack and lecturing". The report, Deli said, failed to promote Serbia's soonest possible admission to the EU when the country had the potential to be a European mainstay in a period of multiple security challenges.

Although the report was meant to deal with the fulfilment of accession criteria, it was motivated by political considerations in the background, Deli said.

For instance, it criticises Serbia for its approach to the EU sanctions against Russia while failing to mention that Serbia is a sovereign country whose government gives priority to its national interests, especially in a situation when the country is highly dependent on Russian energy deliveries, he said.

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### **MINISTRY: HUNGARY TO GET NEW SUPERCOMPUTER**

Hungary has won funding of 6 billion forints (EUR 15m) for developing and operating a 20 petaflop supercomputer, the Ministry of Technology and Industry (TIM) said on Wednesday. The facility based at the Wigner Physics Research Center in Csillebérc, near Budapest, will be built in the next 2-3 years thanks to funding granted under the European High Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC).

EuroHPC provides major resources and coordination for infrastructure upgrades and the broadening of technology use, the ministry said. Hungary's bid submitted in February won support based on the evaluation of international experts, and the grant covers more than a third of the value of the so-called Levente project and five-year running costs. László Palkovics, the minister of technology and industry, said

in a ministry statement: "We are creating the conditions for new internationally marketable Hungarian technological and industrial developments..." He added that with the new capacities, Hungary would jump ahead to take its place in the global top 50.

He added that the structure of the supercomputer which incorporates modular technology will enable the connection of a quantum computer in the future.

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### **MOMENTUM CALLS FOR HUNGARY TO JOIN EUROPEAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE**

Opposition Momentum is submitting a proposal to parliament calling for Hungary to join the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the party's group leader András Fekete-Győr and MEP Anna Donáth said at a joint press conference on Wednesday. Donáth said it was vital for Hungary to be able to call down European Union resources, but the government was constantly fighting with the EU instead of sitting at the negotiation table. She noted that the EU expected the Hungarian government to provide anti-graft guarantees before making the monies available. Fekete-Győr said that with the proposal the party also wants to ensure that monies due to Hungarian teachers, nurses, ambulance workers and employees indeed go to the people instead of "some money-box that belongs to the Orbán family". He added that the government had

recently announced 2,000 billion forints (EUR 5bn) worth of austerity measures, which will take money out from average Hungarians' purses when they use banking and mobile services or travel. If Hungary receives the 2,500 billion forints (EUR 6.3bn) due from the recovery fund, there will be no need for austerity measures, he said.

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### **BAKONDI: MAINTAINING STRONG BORDER PROTECTION JUSTIFIED**

Maintaining strong border protection is clearly justified, the prime minister's chief domestic security advisor has said, noting "a complex and difficult situation" at Hungary's borders and considerable pressure on the country's southern borders. György Bakondi told daily Magyar Nemzet in an interview that a total of 94,307 border violators had been caught this year by midnight on Monday, as against 41,244 in the same period last year -- more than a twofold increase in the number of illegal border crossings. Afghans, Pakistanis and Indians are turning up in large numbers at Hungary's borders, as well as Syrians and the citizens of several other countries, Bakondi said.

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### **POLICE: TOTAL OF 10,595 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON TUESDAY**

Fully 6,277 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Tuesday, while another 4,318 from Ukraine crossed from Romania, the

national police headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 164 people, ORFK told MTI 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 268 refugees, 59 children among them, arriving by train, ORFK said.

### **HUNGARY REPORTS 1,636 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 23 DEATHS**

Fully 1,636 new Covid-19 cases were registered last week, while 23 people died in connection with the virus, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Wednesday in a round-up of last week's data. Altogether 6,410,946 have been vaccinated, with 6,197,968 having received a second shot, 3,881,399 a third, and 302,559 a fourth. There have been 1,923,122 Covid cases since the start of the outbreak and 46,594 have died. Currently there are 14,194 active infections and 233 Covid patients are hospitalised, 7 intubated on a ventilator. Fully 1,862,334 people have made a recovery.

### **CONSTRUCTION SECTOR OUTPUT SLOWS TO A CRAWL**

Output of Hungary's construction sector rose by an annual 3.2% in April, slowing from double-digit growth in the previous couple of months, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Wednesday. Output of the buildings segment edged down 1.2%, while civil engineering output increased by 11.4%. In absolute terms, construction sector output was worth 426.8 billion forints in April. The buildings segment accounted for 58% of the total. Month on month, construction sector output dropped by 5.9%, adjusted for seasonal and working-day effects.

Noting the slowdown and signs of supply problems, Magyar Bankholding analyst András Horváth nevertheless warned against reading into 1-2 months of data from such a volatile branch of the economy. Full-year growth, he added, was likely to arrive at more than 10%, supported by home construction and renovation and a backlog of state orders. Contract values are at record highs, Horváth said, though the revaluation of existing contracts may have a large part to play in this.

In the spring, contractors expected a rise in costs of 10%, and now 25%-plus is likely, he added.

### **NIGHT OF MUSEUMS TO PRESENT EVENTS AT OVER 400 LOCATIONS**

The twentieth Night of Museums running until the early hours will be held on June 25, featuring concerts, guided tours and interactive presentations at more than 400 locations. Péter Hoppál, state secretary at the ministry of culture and innovations, told a press conference on Wednesday that over 2,500 events were planned in 431 institutions. The motto for this year's Night of Museums is tradition remastered, and one of the declared goals is to raise awareness and interest towards public collections and exhibition venues in those who rarely, if ever, would go to a museum, he added. The city of Szolnok, in central Hungary, will be in focus of this year's Night of Museums, with 23 locations around the town offering a variety of programmes. This year Olympic and four-time European champion wrestler Tamás Lőrincz will promote the event as a face of the Night of Museums.