

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Low-cost carrier Wizzair launches Dortmund-Sármellék service

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU health ministers meet in Luxembourg

LMP presser on nuclear energy

War in Ukraine

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: PRICE CAPS EXTENDED

The government is extending price caps on food and petrol to October 1, while the loan moratorium and cap on mortgage rates will apply until December 31, the prime minister has announced.

Orbán said on Facebook that the price of petrol will remain 480 forints (EUR 1.2) per litre.

Also, the prime minister has written to 44 MEPs who recently approached him in an open letter concerning the war in Ukraine, his press chief told MTI. Orbán expressed support for peace and help for Ukraine but also rejected "remarks that offend Hungary" and sanctions against religious leaders. Orbán said Hungary condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and violation of the Budapest Memorandum. Hungary wants the war to end and for disputes to be settled through negotiations, he added.

Orbán also called for stepped-up efforts to help Ukraine and people fleeing the country. He noted that Hungary had so far accommodated nearly 800,000 refugees, providing shelter, food, medical aid and schooling for children as well as jobs for adults. Tens of thousands of Hungarians have opened their homes to refugees, raised funds or worked as volunteers, while the government sent money, food, fuel and medicines to war-stricken Ukraine, he said.

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ORBÁN: HUNGARY DESERVES GRATITUDE, NOT LECTURING

For all its efforts in support of Ukraine, Hungary “deserves appreciation and gratitude rather than offensive and lecturing remarks”, the prime minister said in an open letter. The Hungarian government protects religious freedoms, so it will never support sanctions against church leaders or isolating them from members of their church, Orbán said, adding that peace could not be achieved without the active participation of churches. Orbán also said the Hungarian government had done everything to support the six sanctions packages approved so far in the interest of European unity. Hungary backed the sanctions even though it became increasingly difficult to maintain the earlier consensus that the sanctions should not hurt the EU more than they hurt Russia, he said.

Orbán noted that the European Council takes unanimous decisions under the bloc’s basic treaty, so there a decision cannot be made without consensus. It would therefore be wrong to refer to a veto. Orbán said that in the interest of Europe he reserved Hungary’s right to fight proposals that went against common sense and threatened the impoverishment of Hungarian and European families. The prime minister said he was certain that he would find “more and more partners” among his

letter’s recipients in this endeavour. This is not only in the interest of Hungary but in Europe’s interest, too, he said.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY BACKS EU CANDIDATE STATUS FOR MOLDOVA

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán discussed the war in Ukraine and Moldova’s European integration with Natalia Gavrilița, his Moldovan counterpart, in a phone call, the PM’s press chief said. Orbán and Gavrilița discussed the situation in Ukraine, including the refugee crisis, noting that both of their countries neighbour Ukraine and help hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the war. Orbán welcomed the Moldovan government’s plan to obtain European Union candidate status. Hungary will support Moldova’s EU integration throughout the path towards membership, the prime minister told Gavrilița. Orbán and Gavrilița also praised their countries’ historical ties and expressed their support for further boosting bilateral economic and training cooperation, Havasi added.

VÁRHELYI: EU ENLARGEMENT CRUCIAL FOR HUNGARY

The European Union’s enlargement policy is a “very important dimension” for Hungary, Olivér Várhelyi, EU commissioner for neighbourhood policy and enlargement, told a conference in Brussels, arguing that in

neighbouring countries “challenges of peace, security and welfare” could still lead to instability. Referring to recent applications by Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova to join the EU, the Hungarian commissioner said: “These countries see the EU as a place where they could find peace, prosperity and security,” adding that the bloc should give them that opportunity.

Várhelyi told MTI after the conference that the European Commission will respond to the three applications on Friday, and provide recommendations, adding that applicants must meet the EU’s Copenhagen criteria in full before accession talks are launched.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY DOESN’T SUPPORT GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX

Hungary does not support the introduction of a global minimum tax, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said, arguing that the tax would be harmful and threaten jobs. International pressure to introduce a global minimum tax in Europe as early as the start of next year is growing, Szijjártó said on Facebook. “We consider this extremely dangerous,” he said, noting the war in Ukraine and the European economy contending with sky-high energy prices, rising interest rates and inflation, as well as supply chain disruptions. Increasing the tax burdens of European companies would cause serious problems, especially given that the global minimum tax would only be

introduced in Europe, the minister said. The minimum tax would put European businesses at a serious competitive disadvantage against their global rivals, he added.

"But of course central Europe would be hit hardest of all," Szijjártó said. Thanks to disciplined fiscal policies, central Europe has the lowest corporate and payroll taxes, which would see a drastic increase if the global minimum tax were to be introduced, he said. The key to Hungary's economic success is that it has continually cut taxes in recent years, Szijjártó said, arguing that tax increases would hurt the economy and threaten jobs. "We cannot support such a proposal," Szijjártó said. He said this will be the position Finance Minister Mihály Varga will represent at Friday's Ecofin meeting.

POLISH PRESIDENT RECOGNISES HUNGARIANS WHO SAVED POLES IN WW2

Polish President Andrzej Duda awarded four Hungarians post mortem with the Virtus et Fraternitas medal in recognition of their efforts to help Polish refugees during the second world war, in a ceremony held in the park of the presidential Belweder Palace in Warsaw. The honours were handed to the descendants of Margit Károlyi, Erzsébet Szapáry, Antal Szapáry and Edit Weiss. Countess Margit Károlyi was founder of the Hungarian-Polish Committee for Refugees. She

personally received refugees from Poland and made arrangements for their accommodation and education for their children.

Countess Erzsébet Szapáry and her brother Antal accommodated the first Polish refugees and helped them leave Hungary for western Europe. Erzsébet was also active in rescuing orphaned Jewish children from Poland. Edit Weiss, the daughter of industrialist Manfred Weiss, helped Polish refugees to travel on to Iraq and France, and saved many Polish Jews from deportation. During the war, nearly 120,000 Poles fled to Hungary and found shelter across the country, the Hungarian-Polish committee playing a crucial role in assisting them.

GOVT OFFICIAL MARKS ANNIVERSARY OF 1956 MARTYR IMRE NAGY'S REBURIAL

The day of the reburial of Imre Nagy, the martyred prime minister of Hungary's 1956 anti-Soviet uprising and freedom fight, was when Hungarian political life was able to begin anew, a state secretary of the ministry of culture and innovations told a commemoration event on Thursday. Marking the 33rd anniversary of Nagy's reburial at the late prime minister's statue in Budapest, Eszter Vitályos said the anniversary was about paying tribute to the ideas of courage, patience and wisdom. She said the revolution of 1956 represented courage, the period from November

4, 1956, the defeat of the revolution, to June 16, 1989, the day of Nagy's reburial, symbolised patience, while June of 1989 had called for wisdom. Addressing Hungarians within and beyond the country's borders, Vitályos said the threats facing Hungary were no smaller today than in the past, only different. But those who are brave, patient and wise enough can bring about peace, she said.

János Áder, Hungary's former president, on Thursday marked the anniversary of the reburial of the martyrs of the 1956 anti-Soviet revolution. Addressing a commemoration held at Plot 301 in Budapest's New Public Cemetery, Áder said the martyrs of 1956 had not been given proper burials until decades after they had been executed. The reburial of the martyrs in 1989 was worthy of the freedom fighters, the Hungarian nation and truth, the former president said, adding that June 16, 1989, the day of the reburials, had been "a day of hope".

"It is this hope that we can experience when we don't allow others to decide our fate," Áder said.

KÖVER PLEDGES 'GREATEST POSSIBLE PROTECTION' FOR PENSIONERS

Providing pensioners with the "greatest possible protection and preference" in line with the economic capabilities of the country is a priority for national politics, Speaker of Parliament

László Kövér told the 5th “parliament for seniors”. Kövér said Europe’s economies and societies were facing challenges comparable to the political regime change of 1990, adding that “pensioners will clearly remember what price the elderly had to pay for the economic and social havoc following the political changes”. He added that political parties should cooperate in order to improve the situation of pensioners rather than consider the matter as rivalry. “We don’t want pensioners to pay the price of the hardships facing us,” Kövér said.

KARÁCSONY HOLDS TALKS ON EU FUNDING IN BRUSSELS

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony recently travelled to Brussels for talks with European Commission representatives on European Union funding available to the Hungarian capital. Karácsony said on Facebook that he had met European Commissioner for Values and Transparency Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for Budget and Administration Johannes Hahn and European Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders. The talks covered Budapest’s plans for energy independence and green investments aimed at reducing utility costs, Karácsony said.

The war in Ukraine and the Hungarian government’s “insane spending spree” leading up to the April general election had left Hungary in a

“severe economic situation”, he said, adding that this was why Hungary needed the billions of euros in funding it was entitled to from the EU’s post-pandemic recovery fund. The Orbán government, however, “cannot access these funds because it refuses to meet the EU’s anti-corruption criteria”, he said. Budapest has drafted its plans, and the EU funding needed to carry them out is available, Karácsony said. “Now all that is needed is for the Orbán government to govern according to the rule of law,” he added.

FINMIN: TAX CUTS, PENSION, WAGE HIKES TO TOTAL NEARLY HUF 3,300 BN

The total amount of tax cuts and pension and wage increases will be close to 3,300 billion forints (EUR 8.3bn) this year, the finance minister, Mihály Varga, said on Facebook. The government, he said, was protecting Hungary from an economic crisis caused by the war. As a result, it will preserve family support, maintain the value of pensions and wages and will reduce the budget deficit and public debt, he added. Taxes on labour will be reduced by a total of 750 billion forints, tax rebates for families will total 685 billion forints, pension increases in January and July will total 400 billion forints and 13th month pensions will total 370 billion forints, he said. “Whereas the left wing is talking about the threat of austerity, reality shows something very different,” he said, adding that next year’s budget will be dedicated to

protecting utility fees and defence, with 670 billion forints allocated for a utility fee protection fund and 842 billion forints for a defence fund.

PARLT CTTEE HEAD EXPECTS SLOVAK ANSWER ON SAJÓ RIVER POLLUTION

The head of parliament’s sustainable development committee has said he expects the Slovak authorities to state when they will order a stop to pollution of the River Sajó which flows from the neighbouring country into Hungary.

László Lóránt Keresztes, a lawmaker for green opposition LMP, summarised his talks on the matter with the head of Slovak parliament’s environmental and agricultural committee earlier in the day. Keresztes said the pollution “has caused shocking destruction, wiping out living organisms along a 10-15km section of the river” in Slovakia, while arsenic content on the Hungarian section, he added, was above safe limits. He said that although the amount of toxic water released from an abandoned mine into the river had dropped by 70-80% over the past two weeks, water flowing into the Sajó on the Slovak side still had a high content of hazardous materials. “Ecological balance can only be retained by fully eliminating the pollution.” Keresztes criticised the Slovak government for failing over many months to take any measures to prevent the disaster. He also criticised the Hungarian government for failing to take sufficient diplomatic action.

MI HAZÁNK WANTS HUNGARY TO BID TO HOST 2036 OLYMPICS

The radical Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) party has said it wants social and political debate on whether Hungary should submit a bid to host the 2036 Olympics. Előd Novák, the party's deputy leader, told a press conference that, relative to its population, Hungary was one of the most successful nations at the Olympics. "We've earned the right to host the Games," he said, insisting that unlike the Winter Olympics, the Summer Games boosts the economy of the host country in the long run, in addition to the return on the various infrastructure investments. Hungary is hosting the World Aquatics Championships, the world's third biggest sporting event, this year, and several of the facilities needed to host the Olympics are already built, Novák said. Under Mi Hazánk's plan, civil groups and political parties would help oversee the organisation of the event, thereby helping to "curb corruption", Novák said, calling on the government and the other opposition parties to specify the conditions under which they would support Hungary bidding to host the Olympics.

POLICE: OVER 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON WEDNESDAY

Fully 6,072 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Wednesday, while another 4,431 from Ukraine crossed from Romania, the

national police headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 256 people, ORFK told MTI on Thursday. 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 251 refugees, 101 children among them, arriving by train, ORFK said.

FIFTH DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCIL: BUDAPEST 'IRRESPONSIBLE, CARELESS' OWNER

The metropolitan council is an "irresponsible and careless owner" of Podmaniczky and Vörösmarty Squares, and Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony "should not be surprised" that the central government wants to take over the management of these parts of downtown Budapest, the Fidesz-run fifth district council has said.

On Wednesday, Karácsony reacted on Facebook to press reports that Podmaniczky Frigyes Square, Vörösmarty Square and Széchenyi István Square will be transferred to the fifth district local council. He said that "the nationalisation of these three extremely important squares" would be unconstitutional and the Budapest administration will file a lawsuit if a corresponding law is approved.

The fifth district council said in response that Podmaniczky Square and Vörösmarty Square was revamped with government

support by the fifth district council in 2019. It added that the state of the two squares maintained by the metropolitan council had deteriorated under its "irresponsible and careless management".

MONKEYPOX CASES RECORDED IN HUNGARY RISES TO SIX

The number of monkeypox infections identified in Hungary has increased to six, Hungary's health authority (NNK) said on Thursday. New cases include a 37-year-old man living in Somogy County, in south-west Hungary, and two men in Budapest aged 39 and 33, NNK said in a statement.

All three persons contacted their local health services with typical symptoms. They are in a satisfactory condition with no need for hospital care, but are isolating at home. Hungary's first case of monkeypox was recorded at the end of May.

APPEALS COURT OVERRULES 18 VERDICTS IN COLOMBIAN DRUG-MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

The metropolitan appeals court has overruled first-instance verdicts handed to 18 defendants last year on charges of laundering cash from trafficking Colombian drugs to the tune of billions of forints. The defendants in the case were charged with having brought large amounts of

euros and dollars from the Netherlands and Spain to Hungary by car, which they then deposited in bank accounts in Hungary and Slovakia. The money was later transferred to Chinese companies.

Last April, the Budapest Metropolitan Court handed prison terms ranging between two and nine years to 16 defendants. Several people were given lesser sentences and five defendants were acquitted.

The court said it upheld the first-instance guilty verdicts but amended some of the charges. Having reviewed the appeals against the first-instance ruling, the court said it had reduced the sentences of two defendants and increased those of four others in its binding ruling. The sentences of the other defendants were upheld, it added.

NBH RAISES ONE-WEEK DEPO RATE RISE

The National Bank of Hungary (NBH) raised its one-week deposit rate by 50 basis points in Thursday in a move that the markets were not expecting. The bank's deputy governor, Barnabás Virág, said the measure was in

response to emerging risks, adding that the cycle of rate hikes must continue until inflations peaks. "We're far from" the end of the tightening cycle, he said. Virág said the bank was likely to raise its inflation forecast in its next quarterly Inflation Report due out late in June. He noted the bank's current 2022 forecast of 7.5-9.8% in its inflation report released in March.

BUDAPEST INCLUDED IN ULYSSES NETWORK PROJECT

Budapest has been included in a two-year cultural scheme of the European Union's Creative Europe programme placing James Joyce's novel Ulysses in a contemporary context. The city has been awarded 1.78 million euros and was one of eighteen European cities selected for participation in the Ulysses Network Project, the Budapest City Council said. Ulysses, published 100 years ago, chronicles the events of one day, June 16, 1904. The EU Creative Europe Fund announced its decision about supported cities on this date, also known as Bloomsday, after the novel's protagonist Leopold Bloom who was, in the novel, born in Hungary.

The project will follow the novel's eighteen episodes in chronological order, opening in September this year and concluding in June 2024. One of eighteen topics have been selected for each city, with Budapest to focus on the role of local communities in crisis-ridden Europe.

FORMER WEIGHTLIFTING PRESIDENT BANNED FOR LIFE

Tamás Aján, the former president of the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), has been banned for life for covering up doping cases, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) announced on Thursday. The 83-year-old Hungarian sports diplomat served as IWF secretary-general from 1976 and president from 2000 until his resignation in 2020. CAS said in a statement that Aján's case involved "complicity in anti-doping rule violations involving multiple weightlifting athletes over a period of many years since 2012".

A life ban for complicity was also imposed on former IWF deputy president Nicu Vlad of Romania.

