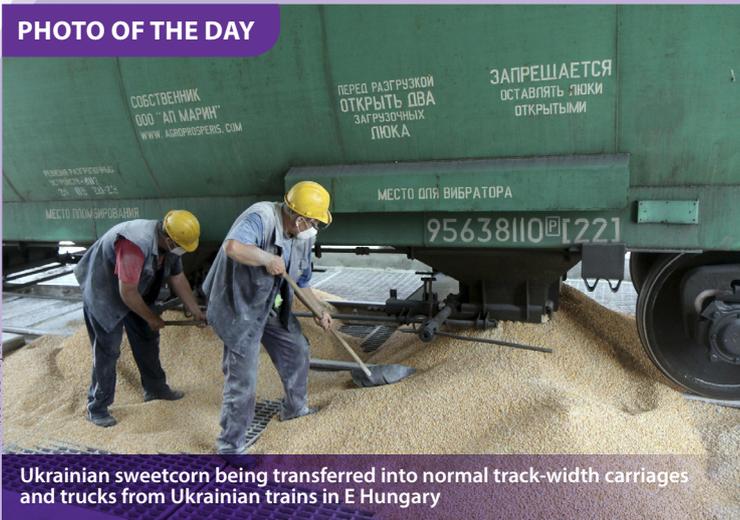


PHOTO OF THE DAY



Ukrainian sweetcorn being transferred into normal track-width carriages and trucks from Ukrainian trains in E Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events at Băile Tușnad Summer University

War in Ukraine

TOP STORY

FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL AT TALKS IN KYIV

Education, transport and regional development were in the focus of five bilateral talks between foreign ministry state secretary Levente Magyar and Ukrainian officials in Kyiv on Thursday.

Education, transport, regional development were areas seriously harmed by the war, Magyar said. They agreed on expanding the capacity of the Záhony-Chop (Csap) border crossing, enabling Ukrainian grain exports to transit Hungary, he said. Hungary will have to carry out major railway developments in the Záhony area, and a working group has already been set up to work on this project, he said. Progress has also been made in the areas of education and minority rights, he said. "If [Ukraine] pays attention to these issues, then we are ready to maintain constructive dialogue and find solutions to Transcarpathian Hungarians' concerns regarding their rights." Meanwhile, the Hungarian Interchurch Aid works with Hungarian government financing and uses local experts who have considerable experience and knowledge of Ukraine to help internal refugees and carry out infrastructure development, he said. Magyar said he also met the Ukrainian president's foreign affairs advisor, and they agreed that the war must not hinder the two countries' representatives in making progress with unresolved issues.

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GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY AIDS UKRAINE GRAIN DELIVERIES

Hungary is aiding the transport of Ukrainian grain by expediting legal procedures and the transfer of goods on the border, a state secretary of the interior ministry told a press conference in Eperjeske, in eastern Hungary, on Friday. Customs and plant health procedures have been speeded up and red tape cut on Ukrainian grain transports, mainly wheat, sweetcorn and sunflower seeds, so the procedures can be completed in 1-1.5 hours, Bence Rétvári said. Officials and the employees of national railway company MÁV are working around the clock to satisfy demand for the transfer of goods into new cargo holds, Rétvári said. Transfer capacity has grown five-and-a-half-fold at Záhony Port and the surrounding cargo stations recently, he said. Hungary is doing everything in its power to help in ensuring that Ukrainian grain, stranded in the country due to the war, can reach its destinations worldwide and ease the unfolding food crisis, he said. This also allows this year's crops to be warehoused safely in Ukraine, he said.

EC: HUNGARY YET TO FULLY ADDRESS ALL RULE-OF-LAW CONCERNS

Though the European Commission acknowledges the steps Hungary has taken so far to address the body's

rule-of-law-related concerns, it finds certain remedial measures proposed by the government to be lacking in terms of compliance with the decree on the rule-of-law conditionality, EC spokeswoman Arianna Podesta said on Thursday. The EC on Wednesday discussed the next steps to be taken in the ongoing rule-of-law procedure against Hungary and has mandated Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner for Budget and Administration, to notify the Hungarian authorities of the measures to be recommended by the commission if it finds the remedial measures taken by Hungary to be inadequate, Podesta told MTI. She said that although the Hungarian government's response issued last month contained a number of remedial measures, it failed to address all of the body's concerns. Hungary now has a month to submit additional remedial measures, Podesta said, adding that the EC was prepared to continue talks with Hungary on the adequacy of the country's proposed steps. She said the EC will take into consideration Hungary's latest remedial measures as well as any others the government will put forward over the coming month before deciding whether to recommend to the European Council any steps to be taken in the matter.

The EC activated the mechanism in the EU budget linking funding to the rule of law against Hungary in April, with EC President Ursula von der Leyen naming anti-corruption measures as the most important criteria in the

procedure. The Hungarian government sent its response to the commission's concerns at the end of June.

AGRICULTURE MINISTRY OFFICIAL MEETS INSURERS OVER DROUGHT DAMAGE

Zsolt Feldman, state secretary at the agriculture ministry, on Friday had talks with representatives of insurance companies to ensure smooth procedures to indemnify farmers suffering damages due to droughts. The ministry said in a statement that nearly half of Europe was being hit by unprecedented drought, including Hungary where over 550,000 hectares affected. Many further claims are expected in the coming weeks, the statement added. Providing quick compensation to farmers is "in the interest of the whole of society", the statement quoted Feldman as saying. The official asked the insurers to have sufficient staff to assess incoming claims.

Meanwhile, the national water management directorate (OVF) said it was preparing a watering schedule for the country, and asked the disaster management authority to help prevent illegal removal of water from rivers and reservoirs. According to a statement from the OVF, the whole of eastern Hungary was hit by a drought due to an increasing heat wave and lack of rain. Concerning actual operations, the OVF said ensuring the drinking water supply in Szolnok, in central-eastern Hungary, as well as the water necessary for the agriculture and the

area's ecology from the Tisza River and Lake Tisza. It said the situation called for "great discipline by users" because "unless they cooperate they will take the water available from each other". Water management authorities are focusing on the River Danube, and Balaton and Velence lakes, the statement said, adding that currently water was being pumped into the Soroksár branch of the Danube. The water level in Lake Balaton was 86cm on Friday morning, 20cm lower than a year ago, the statement said, added that the difference was "not extraordinary", the lake having seen lower levels "on dozens of occasions in the past 100 years". The quality of the lake's water is monitored every week, and the tests have not indicated any recent problems, the statement said. The water in Lake Velence has been aerated every day since Wednesday. The level of the water was 67cm on Friday morning, a mere 4cm above the lake's all-time low, the statement said, adding that a new record low was expected. It added, however, that "it may be unpleasant for bathers, but it is a natural phenomenon, the lake being the kind that occasionally dries out".

END-JUNE BUDGET DEFICIT HUF 2,892 BN, MINISTRY CONFIRMS

Hungary's cash-flow-based budget deficit, excluding local councils, came to 2,892.3 billion forints (EUR 7.2bn) at the end of June, the Finance Ministry confirmed in a detailed reading of data

on Friday. The deficit widened from 2,737 billion forints at the end of May. The full-year cash-flow-based budget deficit target is 3,152.7 billion. The central budget deficit came to 3,040.7 billion forints, while social security funds were 26.8 billion in the red, while the separate state funds had a surplus of 175.2 billion. The ministry noted that revenue from tax and contributions grew by an annual 13.5% in January-June. Revenue of budget-funded institutions, payments related to state-owned assets and revenue from European Union programmes were also higher than in the base period, it added. "In the current, unpredictable global economic environment, the result of the protracted Russia-Ukraine war and sanctions by Brussels, the government's goal remains clear: to preserve Hungary's stability, and to protect the utilities price cuts, family support, pensions and full employment," the ministry said.

"Additionally, maintaining disciplined fiscal policy is of key importance. To that end, the government is standing by its 4.9% budget deficit target for this year and will continue to reduce the public debt," it added.

GOVT OFFICIAL: 73,805 STUDENTS ADMITTED TO UNIVERSITIES THIS YEAR

This year, 73,805 out of 99,192 applicants gained admission to higher-education institutions in Hungary, the deputy state secretary for higher education told public current affairs channel M1 on Friday.

Most freshers -- some 17,000 people -- applied for courses in business administration, followed by technical studies, medicine, pedagogy and law, Balázs Hankó said. Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University attracted more students (11,000) than any other institution, he added. Thanks to the higher-education reforms launched by the government, the number of students starting their studies in vocational fields has grown by 16%, to 8,300, since 2020. Fully 6,200, or 14% more freshers, are starting medical studies this year than in 2020, he said. The number of students starting courses in agriculture has grown to 3,100, he said. Tertiary education has a 30% drop-out rate in Hungary, one that the government plans to reduce to 20% in the coming years by launching mentoring programmes, he said. Hungarian graduates need only 1.2 months on average to find work in the European Union, and earn 1.5-2 times more than their peers with only secondary education, he said. Of 25,000 universities worldwide, 11 Hungarian institutions are among the best 1,400 in the world, Hankó said. The government aims for one to be included among the top 100 by 2030, and three among the best 100 European universities, he added.

POLICE: 13,201 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON THURSDAY

Fully 6,891 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Thursday, while

another 6,310 from Ukraine crossed from Romania, the national police headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 342 people, ORFK told MTI 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 received 47 people, 26 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

HEAT ALERT EXTENDED UNTIL TUES MIDNIGHT

The chief medical officer has extended the current heat alert until midnight on Tuesday. The alert was originally issued from Wednesday until Saturday midnight. The heat alert is in force nationwide, the national public health service and the disaster management authority said on Friday. Young children, the elderly and those with

cardiovascular diseases should take particular precautions, the statement said. The heat alert comes with advice to drink plenty, avoid the sun between 11am and 3pm and use skin protection. The heat is forecast to intensify until Tuesday, topping 40 degrees in places. Then, a cold front is expected to sweep the country from the north-west, bringing highs down to between 30-38 degrees Celsius generally, and between 27-29 degrees in the west.

HUNGARY LAUNCHES SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN WARNING AGAINST ELF BAR VAPING PRODUCTS

Hungary's state-run Focal Point for Tobacco Control has launched a social media campaign warning of the dangers of electronic cigarettes such as Elf Bar vaping products, the head of the organisation said on public television on Friday. Tibor

Demjén said Elf Bar products are featured on sites popular with young people, such as TikTok and Facebook, adding that some videos with Elf Bar products have over 1m views. He said anti-smoking programmes have been launched in over half of the kindergartens in Hungary and several hundred in Hungarian-speaking regions outside of the country, while classroom activities for teachers are available on the website cikiacigi.hu. Hungary's Regulated Activities Oversight Authority (SZTFH) recently said it would continue to use "all legal means at its disposal" to put the squeeze on underage smoking and to protect the legal market, after the European Commission "blocked" its expedited effort to regulate herbal products heated for consumption in a crackdown on Elf Bar electronic cigarettes.