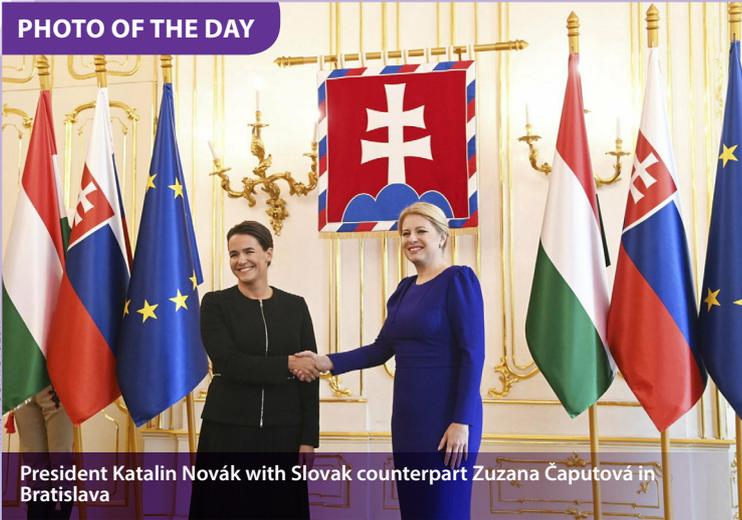


PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Katalin Novák with Slovak counterpart Zuzana Čaputová in Bratislava

MTV/NoémiBruzák

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to war in Ukraine

Researchers' Night

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: BRUSSELS 'LIED' TO EUROPEANS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Friday that “they lied in Brussels to the people of Europe” when they said that sanctions would not be extended to energy, and that this would lead to a swift end to the war in Ukraine.

European citizens are currently paying a “sanctions surcharge” for energy, which makes the future unstable, he told public radio. “The question is whether we will make the situation even worse, given that in Brussels they want to introduce more and more sanctions,” he said. The war in Ukraine is dragging on, with no hope of a swift ending, Orbán said. Meanwhile, large shareholders of energy companies, “starting with [financier] George Soros, are raking in billions in extra profits” thanks to sanctions-related energy price rises, he said. Energy prices were driven by politically motivated decisions in Brussels rather than economic reasons, he said. Without the sanctions, energy prices would be the same as they were in April, when the price of gas and oil was expected to stabilise around 100 dollars, “which would have been manageable” without altering the government’s price-cap scheme. He said the government is protecting families and businesses through energy price caps, and households would pay on average 181,000 forints (EUR 432) more each month without them.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY WOULD BE IN A WORSE SITUATION WITHOUT EXEMPTION FROM RUSSIA SANCTIONS

Hungary would be in a much worse situation had the government not fought for an exemption from the sanctions against Russia, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio. Rather than worrying about energy prices, Hungary would have to contend with energy shortages, he said. At the same time, Hungary will have to adapt to market prices, which are “basically the same throughout Europe”, Orbán said. Hungary has enough natural gas reserves to cover demand for up to five weeks, “even if no gas arrives” in the country, he said. Regarding the European Union’s sanctions policy, Orbán said: “Most bad political decisions can be mended.” Unless the policy is changed, the “sanctions surcharge will be built into the economy and will stay in the long run, becoming a part of our lives in the coming five to ten years,” he said.

Orbán said that before the election campaign in Hungary had got under way, EU countries had agreed “with the leadership of Germany and Hungary” at a summit in Versailles not to extend sanctions to energy. Germany “switched sides” in June, and Brussels imposed sanctions on oil and it has tabled similar measures against gas imports, he said.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY OUTPERFORMS REST OF EUROPE IN SHIELDING HOUSEHOLDS FROM PRICE RISES

Hungary outperforms the rest of Europe when it comes to protecting households from energy price rises, providing support equal to 30% of the average salary, while in Germany this amounts to 20%, and for Austrians it comes to 6%, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio. For the time being, Hungary’s budget can afford this, and hopes are high that this support can be maintained until 2023, he said. He mentioned government caps on the price of firewood and coal as well as a 200 billion support scheme for small and medium-sized enterprises. Also, there is a programme to help out factories and one to protect jobs, he added.

Meanwhile, the government “expects” to pay a pension premium again this year. In line with its 2010 promise to protect the value of pensions, “it has given back the 13th month pensions”, based on the country’s economic performance, he said. “We are continuing to increase pensions in line with inflation,” he said. When economic growth exceeds 3.5%, the government also pays a pension premium, Orbán added. “Although there is a debate about this, I think it will happen this year,” he said.

Referring to the opposition, he said “they play to a different tune”,

so it would be a mistake for the government to base its policy on cooperation with them. He said they were financed “from America” and were beholden to those people funding them. On the subject of the abortion law, the prime minister said the government did not plan to change the law. “I strongly oppose any kind of changes to the abortion law,” he said, adding that he was in favour of “the current system”. Orbán said currently there were more important issues to be dealt with such as sanctions, the war and skyrocketing energy prices.

PALKOVICS: HUNGARY WON'T SUPPORT PROPOSALS THAT THREATEN ENERGY SUPPLIES

Hungary will not support any proposal that could threaten energy supplies, the minister of technology and industry said in Brussels on Thursday. The European Union’s cap on gas prices is one such example, László Palkovics said. Palkovics said a stoppage in Russian gas supplies would affect not only Hungary but other EU countries, too, including Slovakia. “Full independence from Russian gas is currently untenable,” he said. Gas flowing into Hungary from the south will cover consumption needs until March, he said. “If the current situation in Hungary remains unchanged, winter will be manageable from the point of energy security,” he

added. Commenting on a review of Hungary's energy strategy, he said the government has prepared an energy transition plan aiming to reduce the proportion of natural gas in the energy mix. The 16 billion euro scheme will ensure that by 2050 the Hungarian end-user energy mix includes less than 10% gas as against the current 45%. "By 2050 we'd like to use gas only for the purpose of firing up [fossil-fuelled] power stations when needed," he added.

Commenting on the conclusions of a Thursday meeting on EU competition affairs, he said all member states supported a European Commission proposal on the single market emergency instrument presented on Sept. 19 in principle, but further details were pending. Ministers have also discussed a proposal on environmentally friendly planning for sustainable products submitted by the EC last spring, he said. "The Hungarian government also supports this proposal because Europe has a shortage of raw materials and energy, and therefore products should be planned without excessive energy and material requirements," he added.

SZÁZADVÉG: US, CHINA WINNERS ON BACK OF 'BRUSSELS SANCTIONS' - SURVEY

The United States and China are the clear winners of "Brussels sanctions", while the European Union and Hungary are the losers, according

to the results of a survey carried in September by the Századvég Foundation. Fully 71% of Hungarians believe that the US benefits economically from the war and related sanctions while 68% held this to be true of China, according to Századvég's report published on Friday. Meanwhile, respectively 81% and 87% said the EU and Hungary were their victims. Fully 56% of Hungarians surveyed said neither side would emerge victorious from the war in Ukraine, the report said.

Századvég said the two conflicting sides were moving farther apart from an agreement and a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Fully 28% of respondents to the think-tank's survey believed that Russia was more likely than Ukraine (10%) to prevail, while 56% said neither side was likely to do so. Most Hungarians are in favour of peace talks and a compromise rather than sanctions and further escalation, it added. Altogether 52% of respondents believed Russia to be the loser of the sanctions, while 84% of Hungarians considered Ukraine to be so, Századvég's report said.

CSER-PALKOVICS: STRONG LOCAL GOVT ESSENTIAL FOR STRONG STATE

Strong local governments are essential for the functioning of a strong state because only then is it possible to clearly define which responsibilities are assigned to the right place, the (Fidesz) mayor of Székesfehérvár, in central

Hungary, said on Thursday. András Cser-Palkovics told a conference of the MÖSZ alliance of local governments that many problems must be resolved locally, and the current cycle would likely turn into a period of lengthy crisis management until 2024. Local governments must take action and cannot expect solutions from elsewhere, he said. A new approach is needed, with larger cities thinking in terms of their agglomerations, too, he added.

He said that in the period of crisis, local council services must be divided in two groups. One includes services that must be maintained under all circumstances, such as kindergarten, social institutions, GPs, communal catering and, to a certain extent, public transport and lighting, he said. In the other group of services, changes must be introduced if no external support is received, such as the winter operation of theatres, sports halls and swimming pools, he added. Cser-Palkovics said it was crucial that European Union funding is received as soon as possible.

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony, co-leader of MÖSZ, said that in the past, the regulated utility fees in Hungary had been higher than global market prices and therefore the government scheme to cap them was a chimera. Currently local governments have little room for manoeuvre on the energy front because most demand for energy comes from public services that must operate as critical infrastructure, he said. "Let me tell you, the metropolitan council will not

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close down anything," he said. MÖSZ leader and mayor of Gödöllő György Gémesi said that "it's important that dialogue should be pursued between government and local councils to enable survival."

SOME 13,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON THURSDAY

Fully 7,078 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Wednesday, while another 5,632 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 293 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 received 189 people, 51 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

HUNGARY PPI UP 43.4% IN AUG

Hungary's industrial producer price index grew by an annual 43.4% in August, picking up from a 37.9% increase in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on

Friday. KSH said factory gate prices rose mainly because of dearer commodity and energy prices, coupled with a weaker forint. Prices for domestic sale grew by 66.6%, while export prices rose by 31.6%. KSH attributed the marked difference to the divergent weight of energy industry import and export sales.

GOVT SECTOR DEFICIT 2.8% / GDP IN H1 - KSH

Hungary's government sector posted a deficit of 893.2 billion forints (EUR 2.1bn) in the first half, equal to 2.8% of GDP, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. Government sector revenue came to 13,323.5 billion forints during the period, up 27.1% year on year, while expenditures rose by 18.4% to 14,216.7 billion.

DEATHS OUTPACE BIRTHS IN AUG - KSH

Preliminary data show that 8,073 children were born and 10,224 people died in August 2022, with the number of live births decreasing by 1.5% and deaths by 8.1% in September 2021-August 2022 compared with the same period a year earlier, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. The

natural population loss was 2,151 in August this year as against 1,531 in August 2021, KSH said. In August 2022, 7,952 couples tied the knot, down 14% from August 2021. In the past 12 months, 90,636 children were born, down 1.5% from the same period of last year, while 144,889 people died, 8.1% fewer than in the previous year. The natural population loss came to 54,253 compared with 65,715 in the same period of last year, a drop of 17%. Between September 2021 and August 2022, 67,045 couples were married, 8.1% fewer than in the previous year.

MÁRIA WITTNER TO BE BURIED ON OCT. 14

The funeral of 1956 freedom fighter Mária Wittner will be held in the Dunakeszi cemetery on Oct. 14, Parliament's press office said in a statement on Friday. The former MP who was awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary, Grand Cross, recently died at the age of 85. Parliament and the Fidesz parliamentary group have pledged to provide for the funeral. Wittner's family has requested that the press stay away from the farewell ceremony, with the exception of national public media provider MTVA.