

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamás Vasvári

Multifunctional Alba Arena under construction in Székesfehérvár, in central Hungary

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Events related to war in Ukraine**

**European Parliament holds plenary session**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN: MIGRATION GROWING PROBLEM

Illegal migration is becoming a bigger and bigger problem because no one is paying proper attention to the “alarming numbers and facts” of the matter, Viktor Orbán said after meeting the Austrian chancellor and the Serbian president in Budapest.

The Prime Minister told a press conference that the meeting was the first in a series involving leaders of countries severely affected by illegal migration. “All three [countries] suffer from illegal migration,” he said, adding that these efforts “consume immense energy, manpower and huge amounts of money.” “At the same time, we’re far from satisfied with the situation that has emerged.” Referring to the war in Ukraine, high energy prices and sanctions, Orbán said attention was being diverted away from the issue of migration to “other burning problems”. The aim of today’s meeting, he said, was to confront the situation and work out appropriate measures, adding that Hungary was in a “special situation” owing to migration problems stemming from two directions. He noted that more than one million refugees have come to Hungary from Ukraine, while the border was “under constant siege” from the south. Orbán insisted that EU policy was “encouraging migration”. War, sanctions, the global economic downturn and food problems all added pressures in terms of illegal migration, he said.

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**ORBÁN: W BALKAN ROUTE GETTING MORE DANGEROUS**

The Western Balkans is a major migration route to Europe, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán noted after meeting the Austrian chancellor and the Serbian president in Budapest, and people smugglers and illegal migrants have reached a dangerous new level, using weapons in standoffs with border guards. Hungary, Austria and Serbia are protecting the whole of Europe, not only their own borders, Orbán said. Hungary, he added, meets its Schengen obligations, but it would be in the interest of the whole of Europe to gradually push the line of defence as far south as possible from the Serbia-Hungary border.

The prime minister said that whereas Serbia and North Macedonia have received support for their anti-migration efforts, new modes of cooperation were needed. The next meeting in the current series will be held at ministerial level in Belgrade to discuss joint action, as well as the financing and manpower needed. A third meeting is slated to be held in Vienna, he added.

Orbán said illegal migrants must be repatriated and refugee hot spots established outside EU territory for the submission of asylum applications. Transport routes for goods and energy from the east are expected to seize up soon, so routes from the south are becoming especially important, he

said, adding that Hungary now saw Serbia as its most important partner “for reaching the world”. “We’re grateful to Serbia,” he said, referring to the gas pipeline feeding Hungary. “While Hungary has gas, Serbia will also have gas; we’ll help one other in one way or another,” he added.

Meanwhile, Orbán said rich countries were bailing out their own companies “with huge sums”, but poorer countries were unable to do the same. “Brussels must do something about this, otherwise European unity will be destroyed.”

The prime minister called Austria-Hungary ties “pragmatic”, but called for ideological questions to be put aside. “What we need now is concrete solutions rather than doctrines,” he said. Orbán faulted the EU for not providing Hungary financing to build and operate its southern fence. He insisted that rules in Brussels “are foreign to life in this corner of the world”. Migration rules in particular “only cause trouble” here. Orbán called for “a new refugee policy in Brussels”. “But we can’t sit back and wait; we must act,” he said. “We’d be glad for a European solution, but right now European solutions are holding us back,” he said, adding national solutions were the way forward.

Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer told the press conference that taking action against illegal migration was a decisive security issue for Austria, noting that police from Austria, Serbia and Hungary have enjoyed longstanding cooperation, and this will

be expanded. As part of cooperation efforts, he noted, Serbia receives expertise and technical assistance in returning illegal migrants, as well as help to reduce migration pressure on the North Macedonian-Serbian border. Nehammer said Austria had seen growing numbers of asylum seekers arriving illegally through Serbia and Hungary. He said Aleksandar Vučić’s promise to harmonise Serbian visa rules with EU ones was a signal outcome of the meeting, and this would reduce migration pressure. Vučić noted that a new EU visa policy coming into force on Jan. 1 meant that it would become harder to travel from Serbia to western countries, so Hungary, Austria and Serbia are drafting a joint action plan for the law enforcement forces of the three countries in response. “People in Belgrade have no idea how serious the problems our border guards confront are, but the people ... living next to the northern border really do,” he said.

**PINTÉR: PROTECTION OF EXTERNAL BORDERS CRUCIAL TO SCHENGEN AREA SECURITY**

Europe must protect its external borders so as to guarantee peace and security within the borders of the passport-free Schengen area, Interior Minister Sándor Pintér said after meeting his Slovak, Czech and Austrian counterparts in Bratislava. The ministerial meeting was held at the initiative of Slovakia in the

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wake of Czechia and Austria recently reinstating checks on the Slovakian border in response to a rise in the flow of illegal migrants. The four officials discussed boosting cooperation against illegal migration.

Addressing a joint press conference after the meeting, Pintér said Hungary's position on illegal migration had not changed since 2015. "In 2015, when 391,000 people entered Hungary uninvited, we built a fence and have been protecting the European Union's external Schengen borders ever since," he said. Pressure on Hungary from illegal migration this year was at its highest since 2015, he said, with the authorities having turned away or deported some 100,000 people so far. He said the fact that some 2,000 people smugglers had been sentenced so far this year was a testament to Hungary's successful border protection efforts.

Pintér thanked Austria and Czechia for their assistance in protecting the Schengen area's external borders, saying that hopefully the new agreements between the four countries would provide further help. "I hope Brussels will also accept that we need to protect our external borders in order to ensure peace and security within the Schengen zone's borders," Pintér added.

Roman Mikulec, Slovakia's interior minister, welcomed the "constructive" meeting, saying he and his counterparts were in agreement on the need to boost the protection of the external borders,

to stop illegal migration outside the Schengen area, and that this required cooperation from the European Union. "Frontex should do what it was created for," he said.

Czech Interior Minister Vit Rakušan said the message of the meeting was that illegal migration needed to be resolved at the EU level and that the bloc needed to recognise that it had to act.

Austrian Interior Minister Gerhard Karner said "cross-border crime" required cross-border solutions. Though the protection of the internal borders is also important, it is the strengthening of the external borders that is most important right now, he said, adding that Austria will send police officers to help boost border controls.

### **OFFICIAL: GAS SANCTIONS TO FEATURE IN PUBLIC SURVEY**

The Hungarian government will soon launch a seven-question "National Consultation" public survey on the European Union sanctions against Russia, which will feature a question on sanctions against gas, Csaba Dömötör, the state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office said on Facebook. The European Union, he said, had "gradually overridden" the agreement that sanctions against Russia would not hit energy resources, an agreement reached among member states at the beginning of the war. It has already adopted sanctions on oil

deliveries and "wants to extend the restrictions to gas too", he said. Energy prices which started increasing after the war had started in February shot up in June after the sanctions were adopted, he said. European companies are being forced to cut back or stop production, inflation is growing, and so are utility prices, Dömötör said. The government's view is that sanctions will ruin the economy, and it urges a swift change of course, he said. "If many of us stand by this view, we can achieve that, and so we encourage everyone to participate in the National Consultation survey," he said.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, S KOREA TO LAUNCH NEW DIRECT FLIGHT**

A new direct flight between Budapest and Seoul will help to enhance the "success story" of Hungary-South Korea cooperation, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said at an event organised by South Korean flag carrier Korean Air. Szijjártó said the airline plans to operate the new service twice a week before expanding it to three flights a week next summer. He also praised bilateral cooperation, noting that South Korean companies make up the third largest investor community in Hungary today. Bilateral trade turnover reached a record 5 billion US dollars last year, and was up 20% in the first half of this year, he added. "We have but one opponent in this struggle, which is distance, given that our two capitals

are more than 8,000 kilometres apart, but we can proudly say that today we've defeated even this opponent," Szijjártó said. The new flights are expected to increase tourism flows between the two countries, he said, noting that so far this year, more than 22,000 South Korean tourists have spent over 100,000 guest nights in Hungary, representing a return to pre-pandemic levels.

He noted that South Korea was the top foreign investor in Hungary in both 2019 and 2021. The minister said it was clear that South Korea's technologically advanced companies were discovering the opportunities offered by the Hungarian investment environment, which was crucial in order for Hungary to maintain its economic growth. Moreover, these investments, Szijjártó said, were mainly focused on the automotive sector, which he said represented the backbone of the Hungarian economy. These investments, he added, allowed Hungary to become a global leader in the auto industry's "electric revolution". "Our country is where German electric car production and Eastern electric battery production meet," Szijjártó said.

The minister said Hungary was certain that the physical link between itself and South Korea becoming stronger would allow the two countries to "add another chapter to the book on the success story of their economic cooperation". Szijjártó also praised the Hungarian government's Eastern Opening strategy as a

"success story", noting that Hungary's overall trade turnover with countries to its east had increased by 49% since 2010, with its exports to the East having increased by 45%.

### **SASVÁRI ELECTED TO HEAD ELECTION BODY**

Veteran election official Róbert Sasvári has been elected to head Hungary's National Election Committee (NVB) to serve a nine-year term. Zoltán Lehel on Monday was elected as his deputy. The committee's members elected in 2013 saw their terms expire on Sept. 30. President Katalin Novák made the appointments after parliament voted with a two-thirds majority to put names forward for the new committee.

### **DK CALLS FOR JOBLESS BENEFITS TO BE EXTENDED TO 9 MONTHS**

The Democratic Coalition (DK) wants Hungary's jobseekers' allowance to be lengthened to nine months from the current three while there is an economic crisis, Klára Dobrev, the opposition party's MEP, said on Monday. "We're on the precipice of an abyss called recession," Dobrev told an online press conference, adding that owing to "austerity", thousands of Hungarians were on course to lose their livelihood. Dobrev said all types of jobless allowance and benefits should be reviewed and possibly increased in anticipation of a likely recession. DK's shadow prime minister proposed

increasing the net amount of the 133,000 forint (EUR 314) jobseekers' allowance to at least 160,000 forints.

In a statement, Fidesz said in response that DK's "pro-sanctions stance" would lead to recession and unemployment in the country. Hungary was on the verge of collapse under the government of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, while it drove the country to the verge of bankruptcy, the statement said. Unemployment doubled under the stewardship of Gyurcsány, while Hungarians were impoverished on the back of utility price increases, austerity measures and high tax rates, the ruling party added. Fidesz attributed the "energy crisis, recession and unemployment in Europe" to Brussels and the European left wing "forcing sanctions" onto EU member states.

### **LMP: LOCAL COUNCILS SHOULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR CAPPED ENERGY PRICES**

Opposition LMP said it wants local councils to be able to buy energy at capped prices. Órs Tetslák, a board member of the green party and the deputy mayor of Érd, near Budapest, told a press conference that he expects local councils will find themselves in a "dramatic" situation in what was likely to be a "brutal winter". LMP also wants local governments to be given back "the tax revenues that have been taken away from them in recent years" and for those local councils that cannot

afford to pay their utility bills to receive support, Tetlák said. All obstacles to the use of renewable energy should be eliminated and a social energy upgrade programme instated, Tetlák said. He also called for a state-funded utility bill support scheme that is organised by local councils.

He criticised the government's proposal to set up an application-based fund to help local councils, saying that this way whether or not certain localities receive support could depend on "the sympathy of a minister".

### **SOME 11,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON SUNDAY**

Fully 5,652 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Sunday, while another 5,660 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 231 people, ORFK told MTI on Monday. 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 52 people, 10 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

### **HUNGARY TRADE DEFICIT EUR 1.3 BN IN JULY**

Hungary had a 1.298 billion euro trade deficit in July, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data on Monday. A first reading of the data, released on September 8, showed a 1.150 billion euro trade deficit.

Monday's data show exports rose by an annual 12.8% to 10.802 billion euros, while imports increased by 24.1% to 12.100 billion euros. For the period January-July, Hungary's trade deficit reached 3.475 billion euros. Exports rose by 16.4% to 80.475 billion euros and imports climbed 27.4% to 83.951 billion euros. Hungary's terms of trade deteriorated 6.5% in July from the same month a year earlier as the forint weakened 13% to the euro and 31% against the dollar.

### **PMI AT 49.6 IN SEPT**

Hungary's seasonally-adjusted Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) fell to 49.6 points in September from 57.8 in August, the Hungarian Association of Logistics, Purchasing and Inventory Management (Halpim) said on Monday. A PMI over 50 signals expansion in the manufacturing sector. Among the PMI sub-indices, the new orders index fell from the previous month but remained over 50.

### **FORINT PLUMBS NEW LOWS AGAINST EURO**

The forint traded at 420.17 to the euro around 5:30 in the evening on Monday, recovering after slipping as far as 425.96 in the afternoon, a new low. The forint traded at 427.26 against the dollar around 5:30, firming from 430.48 late Friday. It strengthened to 430.65 from 438.71 to the Swiss franc.