

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Noémi Bruzák

President Katalin Novák with her Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plenary session of parliament

Events related to war in Ukraine

European Parliament holds plenary session

Regőczi Foundation for coronavirus orphans organises charity auction

TOP STORY

HUNGARY, UZBEKISTAN TO BOOST ECONOMIC TIES

Hungary and Uzbekistan have agreed to boost bilateral economic relations, President Katalin Novák said after talks with Shavkat Mirziyoyev, her Uzbek counterpart, in Budapest on Tuesday.

At their meeting at the presidential Sándor Palace, the two heads of state also agreed on the importance of peace and security as well as to do everything in their power to support parents raising children, Novák said on Facebook. She noted that there has not been peace in Uzbekistan's neighbouring country, Afghanistan, for years, and now there is a war going on in Hungary's neighbour, Ukraine. Novák said Hungary was "the centre for economic cooperation between the West and the East". She said Hungary and Uzbekistan will strengthen their economic ties, particularly in the areas of energy, finance and the health industry. She also highlighted the importance of family when it came to the future of both nations, saying that the two countries were doing their utmost to support parents raising children. Novák welcomed that President Mirziyoyev intended to open an embassy in Budapest, and said she had accepted his invitation to Tashkent. The Uzbek president later also held talks with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

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ORBÁN: UZBEKISTAN HUNGARY'S STRATEGIC PARTNER IN CENTRAL ASIA

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held talks with Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the president of Uzbekistan, in Budapest on Tuesday, the PM's press chief said. At the talks held at the Castle District premises of the Prime Minister's Office, Orbán said Hungary considers Uzbekistan a crucially important partner in the Central Asian region. Cooperation between the two countries is of strategic importance from a political, security, economic and energy standpoint, Bertalan Havasi cited the prime minister as saying. The two leaders were in agreement that economic cooperation between Hungary and Uzbekistan was more intense than at any other time in the past, highlighting the role of the Hungarian-Uzbek Business Council. The talks also touched on Hungary offering one year of training to ten Uzbek university students in the field of nuclear energy as part of the Stipendium Hungaricum scheme with a view to promoting nuclear cooperation between the two countries. Orbán accepted the Uzbek president's invitation to the Organization of Turkic States summit to be held in Samarkand next month. Hungary and Uzbekistan signed 14 agreements during Tuesday's talks, including one on the advancement of their strategic partnership, as well as agreements on cooperation in the areas of health care, environmental protection, sports and agriculture.

PARLT PASSES LAW ON INTEGRITY AUTHORITY

Parliament passed a law on establishing the Integrity Authority as an autonomous public institution to investigate fraud, conflict of interest, corruption and other crimes in connection with the use of European Union funds in Hungary. Legislation on the new body passed with 150 votes in favour, 12 against and 19 abstentions. The authority set up as part of a bid to strike a deal with the EC will be headed by officials proposed by the head of the Audit Office and appointed by the president for a non-renewable six-year term. The Integrity Authority is expected to start operating in the second half of November. The authority will work to identify systemic problems and conduct integrity risk assessments, as well as prepare an annual integrity report. It will also lead a register of companies excluded from public procurements. It will alert the EU's anti-corruption body OLAF and the European Public Prosecutor's Office if it detects fraud.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, UZBEKISTAN TO LAUNCH NUCLEAR COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Hungary and Uzbekistan are launching a comprehensive nuclear cooperation programme designed as a key plank of their strategic partnership, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said after meeting Uzbek counterpart Vladimir

Norov in Budapest on Tuesday. Hungary is "highly likely" to provide the cooling technology for Uzbekistan's new nuclear plant, a model especially useful in places like the site of the new plant where water is scarce, Szijjártó told a press conference after the talks. Hungary will also provide training for Uzbek nuclear experts as part of its grants scheme for 170 Uzbek students wishing to study in the country, the ministry cited Szijjártó as saying. The two countries will also launch an R&D project focusing on fuel rods, he said, noting that Uzbekistan is the seventh largest Uranium producer in the world. "In the current energy crisis, capacity to produce nuclear energy has become extremely valuable; Europe won't have secure energy supply or affordable energy without nuclear energy," Szijjártó said. Meanwhile, Hungary's government sees the stability of Central Asia as an important aspect of European security, and Uzbekistan has a key role in this, he said. He noted the challenges plaguing the region such as migration waves originating in Afghanistan. The region is also considered a hotbed of international terrorism, he said. "If we manage to stop these dangerous trends in Central Asia, the security of Europe will improve; something the continent is in dire need of," he said.

ORBÁN CONGRATULATES DODIK ON RE-ELECTION

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has congratulated Milorad Dodik on being

re-elected as the Serbian member of the Bosnia-Herzegovina presidency at the weekend, the prime minister's press chief said on Monday in a statement. Orbán assured Dodik that he would strive to continue excellent political cooperation, the statement added.

HOUSE SPEAKER: EDUCATION LONG-TERM STRATEGIC ISSUE

Teachers need a wage hike, but the situation of teachers and public education must be treated as long-term strategic issues, Speaker of Parliament László Kövér has said, adding that strike action was not the solution. Commenting on protests in secondary schools nationwide, Kövér told commercial HírTV late on Monday that teachers could not "put the law aside and launch a movement of civil disobedience -- a concept which does not exist in Hungarian law -- to the detriment of our children." Teachers' wages must be raised as they are not proportionate to the work and responsibility they shoulder, Kövér said in the interview.

The state of public education, including the wages, is key to the future of children, and requires strategic decisions for the long term, he said. At the same time, "wages are not connected to the quality of education in the short term, as decent-minded teachers do not make their performance dependent on their wages," he added. The situation of

teachers was among the Fidesz-led government's first concerns after coming to power in 2010, Kövér said. The private and public sectors have since engaged in a spiral of "wage competition" and teachers were left behind, he said. "No one disputes that disparity," he said, adding that the question now concerned how the government can achieve change "that satisfies everyone" according to which timeframe, he said. Short-term solutions cannot be expected, and the "government is trying to remedy the anomalies resulting from this degree of wage disparity with stopgap solutions insofar as its means allow," Kövér said. On another topic, Kövér said the shadow cabinet set up by Democratic Coalition MEP Klára Dobrev was a "message to other opposition parties that cooperation was over". At the same time, "the wife of [DK leader] Ferenc Gyurcsány can't say anything new to ruling parties". Gyurcsány will not get another stab at government "in view of the sins he has committed in the past", Kövér said. Regarding European sanctions policy, Kövér said that the EU's leading elites should "become pro-Europe again". "We are not pro-Russia or Russia-friendly; we are Hungarians and pro-Hungary, and focus on the interests of our own nation," he said. "The European elite's disregard for Europe's most fundamental needs -- as it is ruining Europe -- poses worrying and serious questions. Until we have an answer to that, we can't expect changes to the EU's view of us," he said. Kövér said that currently

Hungary represented the interests of Europe as well as Hungary. Kövér said political leadership of the EU had failed to consider the "potential of the opponent or enemy that they are facing", adding that they were therefore unfit for the job. Kövér said the real war in Ukraine was not between Russia and Ukraine but between Russia and the US, and "the introduction to a conflict that could be waged between China and the US-led West if we are not very careful." Their aim, he said, was to "erect a political and economic Iron Curtain between Russia and Europe so that no one can dream of creating a peaceful, balanced economic area based on mutual respect."

Regarding changes to the special legal order -- emergency powers -- in Hungary, Kövér said that a proposal by Fidesz group leader Máté Kocsis aimed to add a deadline to the government's mandate to govern by decree. Under current legislation, parliament must withdraw the special mandate it had granted. The new regulation would have the special mandate expire automatically after 180 days, he said. "This does not restrict the rights of the opposition or parliament, which would continue to exercise its rights of control," he said.

KÖVÉR EXPRESSES CONDOLENCES OVER BRATISLAVA BUS STOP CRASH

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér has expressed his condolences to

his Slovak counterpart Boris Kollár over a deadly car crash in Bratislava late on Sunday. Five people were killed and seven injured after a driver, reportedly drunk, crashed into a bus stop in downtown Bratislava late on Sunday. In his letter of condolence, Kóvér said he had been “shocked” to hear of the accident, adding that it was “especially painful” to learn that there were university freshmen among the victims. On behalf of the Hungarian parliament, Kóvér expressed his sincere condolences to the families of the victims and his Slovak counterpart.

FINMIN: GOVT WORKING TO EASE EFFECTS OF ENERGY CRISIS

Europe is paying a “sanctions surcharge” on energy, so the Hungarian government is working to ease “those harmful effects”, the finance minister said after a meeting of his European Union counterparts in Luxembourg on Tuesday. “A policy of sanctions is pointless unless it hurts the aggressor more [than the initiator] and helps to put an end to the war,” the finance ministry quoted Mihály Varga as saying. On that basis, “current sanctions can be declared a failure”, it added. European sanctions against Russia have resulted in a prolonged war and record-high revenues for Russia rather than meeting their original goal, Varga said. The Hungarian government does not support further sanctions that would jeopardise Hungary’s energy supplies and would do more damage

to the European economy than to Russia, he said. Moreover, it rejects any further sanctions that would remove Hungary’s exemption from a ban on Russian oil imports, the minister said. Concerning the meeting, Varga said finance ministers had revisited a Czech proposal dubbed RePowerEU, adding that the Hungarian government supported the idea of granting member states aid for efforts aimed at reducing their dependence on Russian fossil fuels. Hungary had indicated its support for the Czech proposal earlier, but declined to support a related EC proposal because it was not aimed at distributing the funds in proportion of the cost such efforts would incur for the given country, he said. “The Hungarian government will only support an equitable distribution of funds.” Meanwhile, Varga said Hungary’s border protection efforts had already cost the central budget a total 600 billion forints (EUR 1.4bn) while the EU had contributed less than 2% of that sum. He urged the EU to take on a larger share of the burden.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HOLY SEE, GERMANY ASSIGN NEW AMBASSADORS TO SERVE IN HUNGARY

The Vatican and Germany, two highly important partner countries for Hungary, have recently appointed new ambassadors to serve in Budapest, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Tuesday. He said on Facebook that he had reassured Michael Wallace Banach,

the apostolic nuncio assigned by the Holy See, that Hungary is proud of its Christian heritage and that it can identify as “a country of Mary”. “Here, in our country, we have a government leading the country with a strong Christian-Democratic character which is often met with antipathy by the European left-liberal mainstream,” Szijjártó said. “But this is far from being reason enough for us to give it all up.” As regards Germany, Szijjártó said economic cooperation between the two countries could be regarded as a success story. He said bilateral trade last year broke all previous records and German companies continue to invest in Hungary. “We will continue cooperation with Ambassador Julia Katharina Gross in that spirit,” the minister said.

MINISTRY: HUNGARY RECEIVES EUR 21.1 M IN EU FUNDING TO PROVIDE FOR UKRAINE REFUGEES

The European Commission has made 21.1 million euros available to Hungary to help with the country’s “extra burdens in connection with tasks around services to refugees arriving from Ukraine”, the interior ministry said in a statement on Tuesday. Hungary has so far received over 900,000 people fleeing the war in Ukraine, and has performed above and beyond to provide for the refugees, the statement said, noting contributions by the armed forces, disaster management, the

National Humanitarian Coordination Council, local authorities, civil and religious groups, as well as volunteers as partners, to current efforts. New arrivals get food, accommodation, health services, counselling and administrative assistance at service centres, the ministry said, adding that children are provided schooling, and help is given to people seeking a job. The central budget has borne the related burden of 28 billion forints (EUR 67.2m) so far, the ministry said. The supplementary aid was provided under a May 18 decision by the commission to help Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Czech Republic as countries most affected by a massive influx of refugees, to help with expenses incurred in Hungary between February 24 and August 23, the statement said.

PALKOVICS: HUNGARY’S GAS RESERVES THIRD HIGHEST IN EU COMPARED TO ANNUAL CONSUMPTION

Hungary’s gas storage facilities are 75% full, and given their outsized combined capacity, the country’s gas reserves relative to its annual consumption are well above the European Union average, the minister of technology and industry told a conference on Tuesday. Speaking at the Portfolio Energy Investment Forum 2022, László Palkovics said the government’s strategic objectives concerning energy supplies included reducing the proportion of natural

gas in the country’s energy mix, which required measures to reduce demand, increase efficiency and promote electrification. Utilisation of alternative energies should be promoted, capacities for electricity production increased and networks further developed, he added. Concerning gas consumption, Palkovics said the government had prepared a comprehensive programme aimed at significant reductions by 2030, requiring investments of a combined 16 billion forints (EUR 38.3m) during the period. In an optimum case, a quarter of Hungary’s gas demand could be covered from domestic sources, therefore the government is planning to increase the country’s gas extraction from the current 1.5 billion cubic metres a year to 2 billion by 2030, he said. At the same time, the proportion of electricity in the total energy consumption could increase from 20% to 26% by the end of the decade, he said, and noted the increasing role of solar plants.

FIDESZ MEPS REJECT EP SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT AS ‘FALSE REPRESENTATION OF HUNGARY’

The MEPs of Hungary’s ruling Fidesz on Tuesday rejected social media posts on European Parliament sites which they said cast Hungary in a bad light by quoting “the most biased points” of a report on the country “as if they were facts”. The group protested against posts quoting the Delbos-Corfield

report on Hungary, which the EP adopted some two weeks ago, on the EP’s English, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Finnish, German, Greek, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak and Spanish sites. In a letter sent to EP President Roberta Metsola, group leaders Kinga Gál and Tamás Deutsch rejected the posts as “an unprecedented smear campaign in the history of the EP’s communication”. MEP Enikő Győri called for cooperation rather than division in the “current situation riddled with crises”. The MEPs called on Metsola to stop the “fake news campaign” and hold those responsible to account.

COMMISSIONER HIGHLIGHTS EU COMMITMENT TOWARDS RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS

The European Commission is committed to protecting the freedoms of thought, expression and religion as fundamental rights, Helena Dalli, EU commissioner for equality, told a plenary session of the European Parliament late on Monday. In a debate on the subject, Dalli also confirmed the commission’s staunch position against racism, discrimination or any kind of religious intolerance. The EU condemns abuse of laws penalising blasphemy and non-believers are also entitled to protection, she added. In recent years, the commission has launched infringement procedures against countries that fail to adopt the EU’s directives concerning religious faith and affiliation, while the body supports dialogue between religions

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as it leads to more inclusive societies and promotes integration, she said.

György Hölvényi, Hungary's Christian Democrat MEP, noted that practising religion was internationally recognised as a fundamental human right. He said, however, that while a European Parliamentary report adopted in January 2019 established a special envoy for freedom of religion outside the EU, the community had not appointed anyone to the post as yet. "This could convey the negative message that Europe shows no solidarity with those stripped of their rights," he said. "The EU will only be really credible if it grants meaningful powers to the post," he said. "Until a special envoy is appointed and given suitable powers, the EU will be spreading a culture of indifference towards those suffering," Hölvényi added.

DK PROPOSES CHANGING CONSTITUTION TO FACILITATE CORRUPTION LAWSUITS

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) is tabling a new constitutional amendment aimed at making it possible to raise corruption cases in court if the public prosecutor refuses to press charges. DK said its move is in reaction to a government "charade" which saw a similar law referred to the top court. Lawmakers approved an amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act on enforcement of charges on Monday, only to submit it to the Constitutional Court for scrutiny at the government's request, the

leftist party's director, László Sebián-Petrovszki, told an online press briefing on Tuesday. He accused the law's sponsors of "deliberately drafting the bill to be anti-constitutional" to ensure that the court strikes it down. "Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is getting the Constitutional Court to scrap his own law, then he can tell the European Commission that he did everything he could," he insisted. "DK does not think that Monday's legislation is good or that it could replace joining the European Prosecutor's Office," Sebián-Petrovszki said, adding that their constitutional amendment proposal was aimed at "revealing the charade Fidesz and the Constitutional Court have staged".

LMP LAWMAKERS BOYCOTT VOTE ON PROPOSALS AIMING FOR EC DEAL

Lawmakers of the opposition LMP boycotted the vote on draft legislation aiming to strike an agreement with the European Commission on EU funding for Hungary, party spokesman József Gál said on Tuesday. The government today tabled a bill on establishing an anti-corruption body. Gál told an online press conference the proposals were "very clearly tabled only to comply with EU funding regulations, as indicated in their name." The question is not whether Hungary is "entitled" to the funds the EU is holding back in the conditionality procedure, Gál said, but rather "how we can stop these funds from later migrating back to [large EU

countries] via French or German big capital" as a result of Fidesz's economic policies. Meanwhile, he said "the only way to boost the economy is through a green transition", and he called on the government to allocate funds to promoting the use of wind and solar energy and a large-scale building insulation programme.

DEFMIN: SERVICEMEN RECEIVE HIGHER WAGES

The government has raised the wages of servicemen by 26%, the defence minister said on Tuesday. The salaries of professional, contracted and active-duty reserve soldiers are being raised in two steps, in September 2022 and January 2024, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said in a statement. He said the aim was to improve the prestige of the profession amid a war environment and migration pressure on the southern border which require greater preparedness and a rapid reaction capability. The government's Defence Fund ensures that development of the armed forces remains sustainable even in economically challenging times, he said.

MEDIA AUTHORITY HEAD: STATE, MARKET PLAYERS JOINTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERNET REGULATION

The state and market players are jointly responsible for regulating the internet, the head of the National Media and Communications Authority (NMHH) said on Tuesday. Opening a two-day

conference on the internet in Siófok, in western Hungary, András Koltay said the NMHH's role was changing in line with shifts in direction elsewhere. In the past twelve years, for instance, the European Union moved closer towards internet regulation, he said, noting the audiovisual directive which covers video sharing, and the Digital Services Act, slated to be adopted at the end of October, which regulates online platforms. Further, the recently leaked EU draft law on media freedom aims to harmonise media regulation Europe-wide, he added. One task for the NMHH is to determine how to act against large video-sharing and online platforms that are beyond Hungarian jurisdiction, Koltay said. The authority also strives to provide support when it comes to child protection, media awareness, consumer protection and handling problems related to online platforms, he said, noting the recent launch of programmes that would soon "hopefully be visible". "When we think of the internet's transformational effects on culture and society, and Hungary's vulnerability to powerful influences ... what's at stake is Hungarian culture, its functioning democracy, [and] the survival of Hungarian society," Koltay said.

HUNGARY'S UN YOUTH DELEGATE ORGANISES SUSTAINABILITY EXHIBITION AT UN

An exhibition on sustainability and waste management initiated by

Hungary's Youth Delegate to the United Nations opened on Monday in the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The installation of selective garbage containers made from recycled paper and decorated by Hungarian and Israeli youth is on show until the end of the week. The exhibition was organised in cooperation with Hungary's foreign ministry and the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the UN. UN Youth Delegate Domokos Kovács told MTI that some of the containers were placed in schools for everyday use. He noted that he had given speeches in 14 schools on river protection and sustainability along the River Tisza in Transcarpathia and Hungary. The UN's decision to host the exhibition is a token of appreciation of those participating in the initiative, he said.

SOME 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON MONDAY

Fully 5,263 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Monday, while another 4,980 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 165 people, ORFK told MTI on Tuesday. 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 37 people, 18 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

HOUSE OF TERROR PRESENTS EXHIBITION ON 1956 GYPSY HEROES

Budapest's House of Terror Museum is presenting an exhibition dedicated to "the Hungarian Gypsy heroes of the 1956 revolution". Opening the show on Tuesday, Attila Sztojka, the government commissioner for Roma relations, said the issue should not be whether a person is Roma or not, but how they can contribute to the good of the community and strengthen the economy. A common responsibility was to work towards such a future, he said. Two images of Gypsies -- their rich culture and poverty -- tend to flash up in people's minds, he said. But unity achieved since 2010 has given them strength, faith and hope to overcome their hardships, he added. Sztojka cited the prime minister as stressing the importance of narrowing disparities between the mainstream and Gypsies through government-supported programmes.

Meanwhile, the commissioner paid tribute to jazz legend Béla Szakcsi Lakatos, a pianist and composer who died a few days ago. The exhibition has been mounted by the Public Foundation for the Research of Central and East European History and Society and the government commissioner responsible for Roma relations. The images on display have toured the country at 27 locations so far.