

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Stand presenting Serbia, the guest of honour at this year's Art Market Budapest fair

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU leaders begin two-day summit in Prague

Stats office releases Aug industrial output data, retail figures

Commemoration of 1849 Arad martyrs

War in Ukraine

Budapest Design Week presser

TOP STORY

HUNGARY GETS EXEMPTIONS FROM NEW SANCTIONS

Hungary has achieved an exemption of pipeline deliveries of crude from European Union oil price caps, and ensured nuclear energy was exempt from the latest sanctions imposed on Russia, the foreign minister said.

In a Facebook post after the meeting of member states' permanent representatives to the EU (COREPER) in Brussels, Péter Szijjártó said the meeting had focused on the sanctions against Russia. "As we have said many times before, Hungary refused to support sanctions that would have harmed the Hungarian people," he said. Thanks to Hungary's "tough negotiations", EU oil price caps do not pertain to pipeline deliveries, the way Hungary receives its supplies, he said. Marine deliveries are also exempt when they replace pipelines in an emergency, he added. "We ensured that nuclear energy is exempt from the sanctions, so they will not pertain to the construction of the Paks nuclear plant. The sanctions list does not contain institutions important for cooperation in nuclear R&D," he said. The government has successfully stopped measures that would have harmed Hungarians or threatened their security, the minister said. "We will continue to stand up for Hungarian national interests," he added.

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GOVT OFFICIAL: CHANGE OF DIRECTION NEEDED IN EUROPEAN POLITICS

A change of direction is needed in European politics because the energy sanctions are clearly destroying the European Union's economy, Zoltán Kovács, the state secretary for international communications and relations, said on Wednesday. Kovács said in a video on Facebook that the restrictions imposed by Brussels on oil and oil products must not be left unmentioned. For a long period after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the EU said no sanctions would be imposed on energy, he said. Then everything changed in June when Brussels forced through a decision on the ban of Russian crude oil and oil derivatives, he added.

"We said right from the beginning that imposing any sanction on energy would equal to dropping an atomic bomb on the Hungarian economy and also on the European economy," he said. "In the case of Hungary, which has no sea ports and can therefore only receive gas and crude oil by pipeline, it is obvious that a switch would take long years and require many hundreds of billion forints," he added. After lengthy fights and a tough battle, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has managed to achieve an exemption from sanctions on (pipeline-delivered) Russian crude oil, he said. "By now, we can see that these sanctions hurt Europe much more than they hurt

Russia, which has increased revenues while energy prices and inflation break loose in Europe," he said. "If enough of us express our support and give our opinion, we will manage to change these decisions," he added referring to the government's National Consultation survey.

HIDVÉGHI: LEFT-WING MEPS WANT HUNGARIANS TO BE DENIED ACCESS TO EU FUNDS

The interest of left-wing MEPs lies in political attacks and in denying the Hungarian people access to European Union funds, Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi said in Strasbourg on Tuesday. Speaking to Hungarian journalists after a European Parliament debate on freezing funding for Hungary under the conditionality mechanism which links EU funding to the rule of law, Hidvéghi said left-wing MEPs were "bothered" by the fact that Hungary and the European Commission had reached an agreement on EU monies. While the war in Ukraine and the related "flawed European sanctions" have led to skyrocketing energy prices, soaring inflation and the threat of unemployment and a severe economic recession, "extremist left-wing MEPs are continuing their ideological blackmail and campaign, their accusations and lies" to thwart the agreement between Hungary and the EC on EU funds, Hidvéghi said. Wartime and economic problems caused by

sanctions call for unity, respect towards one another and cooperation, he said, adding that the bloc should enact decisions that serve the interests of Europeans rather than divisions.

COMMISSIONER: EC TO CLOSELY MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION OF HUNGARY RULE-OF-LAW RELATED PROPOSALS

The European Commission will monitor "very closely" the implementation of Hungary's legislative proposals in connection with the rule of law and will always use "its toolbox of instruments" including the conditionality mechanism to protect the European Union's financial interests, the Commissioner for Budget and Administration said in Strasbourg on Tuesday. Johannes Hahn addressed a European Parliament debate on freezing funding for Hungary under the conditionality mechanism which links EU funding to the rule of law, noting that the EC had indicated to Hungary its concerns over the rule of law situation in the country in September.

The commission is concerned over a serious risk of Hungary's continued breach of laws in using EU funds, and irregularities and inadequacy in public procurement procedures, Hahn said. Hahn said that since EU funds were mostly allocated in a public procurement procedure, the commission had decided for suspending 65% of Hungary's cohesion

funding. The suspension amounts to an estimated 7.5 billion euros, he said.

The commissioner noted Hungary's 17 legislative proposals in remedial measures submitted to parliament to fulfil requirements set by the commission. He expressed hope that Hungarian authorities would adequately implement the proposed measures.

Addressing the debate, Balázs Hidvéghi, an MEP of ruling Fidesz, said that the EP's "extremist representatives" continued ideological blackmail and generate disunity in a rather serious situation triggered by the war in Ukraine and "flawed European sanctions". He accused them of "coming up, hand-in-hand with their left-wing Hungarian peers, with the most absurd accusations just to prevent that Hungarian people can access the EU funds they are entitled to".

Csaba Molnár, an MEP of the opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), said that the authorities pledged to be set up by the Hungarian government would not be independent, but have "government appointees" filling leadership posts. He said access to EU funds had to be ensured to Hungarian people, Hungarian local governments and Hungarian businesses. Katalin Cseh, an MEP of opposition Momentum, said the European Commission had "a historic chance to stop the rise of autocracy", but had still failed "to present tangible results" after almost two years of creating the conditionality mechanism. István

Ujhelyi, an MEP for the Socialists, told Hungarian journalists after the debate that "Hungary would only be a country governed by the rule of law, and the EU become a safe, unified and wealthy community of Europeans, if every generation knows what it means to be responsible for common democratic standards".

NOVÁK TO LEAVE FOR WORKING VISIT TO MALTA

President Katalin Novák will leave for a working visit to Malta where she is scheduled to attend a meeting of the Arraiolos group, the Sándor Palace said on Wednesday. The meeting will be attended by George Vella, president of the host country, as well as Sergio Mattarella of Italy, Alexander Van der Bellen of Austria, Borut Pahor of Slovenia, Michael D. Higgins of Ireland, Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany and Andrzej Duda of Poland, the statement said. Additionally, the presidents of Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Portugal and Slovakia will be in attendance, it said. Novák is also scheduled to hold bilateral talks with Vella, the statement added.

PROTESTING STUDENTS BLOCK MARGARET BRIDGE

Protesting students blocked central Budapest's Margaret Bridge from traffic on Wednesday afternoon. The demonstrators expressed support for striking teachers and a speaker called on participants to "recapture the hope

and future together". Participants chanted the slogan "no future without teachers" and held up a sign "We stand by our teachers". Others held up the national colours, Szekler and Roma flags, as well as the flag of teachers' trade union PDSZ. "Who is going to teach tomorrow?" the protesters wrote on a poster placed on the railing. The demonstrators occupied Jászai Mari Square and the eastern half of the bridge.

DK CALLS FOR REINSTATING 'UNLAWFULLY FIRED TEACHERS'

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) said on Wednesday that teachers who had been "unlawfully fired" must be given their jobs back. Referring to nationwide protests, party spokesman Balázs Barkóczi called it "marvellous that thousands of teachers and students protest against the general state of public education and humiliating wages". He told an online press conference that it was an "important lesson to the Orbán regime" that protest and strike could not be banned, and "free people cannot be intimidated or silenced". Barkóczi, who holds the position of education and culture minister in the party's shadow cabinet, said it was time that the government admitted it had "lost" against teachers and "lost control of the country". He called on the government to start talks with teachers' unions.

MI HAZÁNK EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH STRIKING TEACHERS

Radical opposition Mi Hazánk has expressed solidarity with a strike action of teachers demanding higher wages. Mi Hazánk deputy leader Dóra Dúró told an online press conference on Wednesday that teachers' professional and strike freedoms "should be increased rather than cut". The problem of teachers earning meagre salaries "could be seen from the Moon", while the government "has no intention to settle their problems", Dúró said, adding that suggestions from government circles that teachers' salaries could be raised in 4-5 years' time were "quite appallingly cynical". The government's argument that a pay hike in education is not possible without European Union funds is "unacceptable", she said, noting that the government had been waging a "high-sounding war of independence" against the EU for years. "The government has admitted that if it were for them, teachers' finances will not improve," Dúró said. She suggested that soon there would be no teachers for certain subjects, adding that in some schools "cleaners earn higher wages than teachers". Dúró also demanded that "no teacher should lose their job because they dare to speak up about their difficult situation".

UNIONS EXPRESS SOLIDARITY WITH TEACHER STRIKE

Several trade unions voiced their solidarity with a strike organised by teachers' union PDSZ across the country on Wednesday. Speaking in front of a Budapest primary school, Erzsébet Boross, the head of public servants' union MKKSZ, expressed her union's support for a demand for a 20% pay rise offsetting inflation to be paid retroactively from July 1. She voiced opposition to changes to occupational health and safety rules as well as the rule requiring state institutions to limit their heating to 18°C. Boross said the union demanded a right to strike that ensured fair wages and talks where the sides were considered equals. "We've had enough of public servants being condescended to and the fact that there are no consultations about working and living conditions or wage talks," Boross said. She added that MKKSZ expected the government to treat public servants "as people ... not as those on whom it can save money".

László Nagy, head of the strike committee at Budapest's Kölcsey Ferenc Secondary School, said that although he was one of the 45 teachers at the school who were participating in today's strike, he was still required by law to teach four of his six classes. "This is not a strike. It's impossible to stage a strike like this," he said. "A strike can't be sustained if it can't be seen."

PDSZ national board head Anna Komjáthy said that some 13,000-14,000 teachers from more than 200 schools had been projected to take part in Wednesday's strike. She said PDSZ has called another strike for Oct. 14, noting that it was on this day a year ago when PDSZ presented its demands jointly with fellow teacher union PSZ.

István Taskovics, head of social security workers' union TBDSZ, criticised the decision to suspend the regulation requiring an indoor temperature range of 20-22°C for workers.

GOVT OFFICIAL INAUGURATES CHILDREN'S CENTRE IN NE SLOVENIA

Árpád János Potápi, the state secretary in charge of policies for Hungarian communities abroad, inaugurated a children's preschool development centre built with Hungarian government support in Radamos, in north-eastern Slovenia, on Tuesday. The centre has been built with the aim to provide help to preschool children in need with their development, Potápi told public media in the town. The facility will provide care for children, Hungarian and Slovenian, coming also from Lendava (Lendva) and other towns and villages in Slovenia's Prekmurje (Muravidék) region, he said. The centre cost 276 million forints (EUR 660,000) to build within the framework of the Carpathian Basin nursery development scheme, the state secretary said.

SOME 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON TUESDAY

Fully 5,208 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Tuesday, while another 4,362 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 197 people, ORFK told MTI on Wednesday. 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 31 people, 17 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

NÉZŐPONT: HUNGARIANS, GERMANS HOLD GOOD OPINIONS OF EACH OTHER'S COUNTRY

Hungarians and German mutually hold a good opinion on each other's country and people from both countries believe that good relations with each other are important for the future of the European Union, according to a recent survey by the Nézőpont Institute released

on Wednesday. Nézőpont director Ágoston Sámuel Mráz told a press conference that 1,000 people had been interviewed from both countries by phone as part of the survey dubbed "Hungary-Germany barometer" prepared for the sixth time this year. Some 56% of Hungarians and 59% of Germans said they had a good opinion of the other country but less than half of Hungarians and Germans said bilateral relations were good. Bilateral relations need to be improved considering that 88% of Hungarians and 70% of Germans said they were important for the future of the EU, he added.

HUNGARY REGISTERS 13,765 NEW CORONAVIRUS CASES LAST WEEK, 73 FATALITIES

Fully 13,765 new Covid-19 cases were registered last week, while 73 people died in connection with the virus, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday in a round-up of last week's data. Altogether 6,418,352 have been vaccinated, with 6,204,725 having received a second shot, 3,897,614 a third, and 348,934 a fourth. Fully 2,107,907 Covid cases have been registered in Hungary since the start

of the outbreak and 47,576 have died. Currently there are 35,039 active infections and 1,752 Covid patients are hospitalised, 32 intubated on a ventilator. So far 2,025,292 people have made a recovery.

BUDAPEST FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA WINS GRAMOPHONE'S ORCHESTRA OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Budapest Festival Orchestra (BFO) was named Orchestra of the Year by the prestigious Gramophone magazine at a gala in London on Tuesday. BFZ was shortlisted for the award on the back of its Brahms recording, alongside nine other orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic and the Bavarian State Orchestra. The prize was awarded based on some 10,000 votes cast by the public worldwide, of which BFO received some 38%. Music director and conductor Iván Fischer said in a speech from Berlin that the award was a feedback of their aim to "share the beauty and joy of music with our audience", and expressed hope that it would boost interest in the orchestra and lure "corona-shy audiences" back into concert halls.