

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVI/Tiborllyés

Flag lowered to half-mast in front of Parliament in honour of Arad martyrs

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU heads of government and state meet in Prague

Stats office releases 1st reading of Aug commercial lodgings data

TOP STORY

BOOST FOR SERBIA-N MACEDONIA BORDER

Hungary is ready to boost its contribution of technology and personnel for protecting the Serbia-North-Macedonia border against illegal migration, the foreign minister has said.

Existing cooperation should be stepped up to combat growing numbers of migrants, Péter Szijjártó said in Belgrade after meeting the Serbian finance, foreign and interior ministers and Austria's foreign and interior ministers.

While the line of defence is currently on the Hungarian-Serbian border, it would be beneficial for all countries to shift it further south, he told a joint press conference. "We have to create a large, strong and effective border protection force in order to protect the border between Serbia and North Macedonia, and Hungary is ready to contribute to the maximum of its abilities," Szijjártó said.

Meanwhile, Hungary is under dual pressure, Szijjarto said. It has taken in some 1.5 million refugees since the start of the war in Ukraine even as its "southern border is also under siege," he said. "That is no exaggeration, since people smugglers and migrants on the southern borders have armed themselves and do not hesitate to use live ammunition to fire at each other and the police protecting the Hungarian border," he said.

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NOVÁK: ENERGY INDEPENDENCE EUROPE'S CHIEF AIM

Securing Europe's energy independence and peace on the continent are urgent aims, President Katalin Novák said on Thursday after a meeting of the Arraiolos Group in Malta. Also, work must be done to preserve the clout of the bloc and the western system of alliances on the world stage, she added.

Novák told a press conference that Hungary supports Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as bringing war criminals to justice before an international court. Further, the war must be brought to an end as quickly as possible, she added at the informal meeting of the heads of European Union member states.

She said participants condemned all activities that threaten the infrastructure of any European Union member state, especially the energy network. Sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines is cause for particular concern, Novák said, and she called for an effective and exhaustive investigation with the aim of preventing any similar attack in the future.

Novák said steps must be taken to bring the war to an end, and even if the countries failed to agree on how to achieve this, there were several proposals on which they could reach a consensus. "We must preserve the community power of Europe and the system of western allies, we must

preserve our common values and we must protect our peoples," she said. Novák said Europe must not be allowed to fall to its knees because in such a situation it would be unable to demonstrate power. "We must stand together as the single voice of Europe," she said.

Novák said that in their capacity as EU presidents, they perfectly understood that the EU was "the largest peace project in history", and Hungary continues to be willing to make every effort to achieve peace without delay.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: MIGRANT NUMBERS EXPECTED TO GROW FURTHER

As well as the EU's "pro-migration policy", a global economic recession is under way, coupled with a food crisis caused by the war in Ukraine and EU sanctions, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Belgrade, adding that the number of illegal migrants was expected to grow further and put the borders under even greater pressure. "Hungary continues to see it as a security and criminal issue rather than a human rights one, because breaching the border between two safe countries is a crime," he said.

Szjijártó praised Hungarian border patrollers for "risking their lives in protecting the Hungarian and European border". He rejected claims that the officers violated laws as they were protecting the border from illegal migrants.

Serbian Interior Minister Aleksandar Vulin said Serbia, Hungary and Austria were dealing with the same crisis, which he insisted was not a humanitarian one. The crisis is the result of the activities of organised gangs who violate international regulations and exploit the fate of people in trouble, he said. "Serbia cannot be left alone" in dealing with the crisis, he said, adding that the three countries had become "reliable allies". Serbia's priority is the security of its citizens, and so it cannot allow migrants to be "stationed" in the country and disrupt daily life. Austrian Interior Minister Gerhard Karner thanked Serbia for its policies helping the EU. He called for technological cooperation to make border protection and the fight against people smuggling and illegal migration more effective.

EP URGES PRICE CAP ON PIPED GAS

The European Parliament is urging the European Commission to submit proposals on capping the price of natural gas delivered through pipelines from Russia, as well as an update of EU gas purchase regulations to curb the price of imported gas. In a resolution passed at Wednesday's plenary session, the EP called on member states to ensure that citizens failing to pay growing energy bills are not cut off from the services, and to strive to avoid the eviction of struggling households. Meanwhile, energy companies making

extra profits on high energy prices must contribute to curbing the fallout from the crisis, the resolution said. The EP welcomed the EC resolution introducing an emergency cap on revenues of companies with low operational costs. The EP again called for a full embargo on imports of oil, coal, nuclear fuel and gas from Russia and for fully ending deliveries via the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines.

The EP group of ruling Fidesz responded by slamming Hungarian left-wing parties for “taking the side of sanctions again”. MEP András Gyürk said in a statement the price cap on pipeline-delivered gas would be equivalent to new sanctions. Meanwhile, the EP’s “leftist liberal majority” was urging immediate embargoes on Russian energy imports, he said. Hungarian leftist parties agreed with those sanctions and continued to demand new ones, Gyürk added. “It has been proven that Hungarian people and companies grappling with the energy crisis caused by the sanctions can only count on the Fidesz-Christian Democrats,” he said. “We shall not give in to political pressure harming the interests of Hungary. The time for harmful sanctions is over; we have to focus on helping families and companies,” he said.

István Ujhelyi, an MEP sitting in the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats who recently left Hungary’s Socialist party, said he supported the resolution as it condemned Russia’s war as a direct attack on

European values. He also voted for the passages on protections for struggling households but abstained in the vote on those on the energy industry. “I maintain my stance to support energy measures only if Hungary is prepared to fend off its negative effects,” he said. Had Fidesz spent EU funding appropriately rather than “enriching their own families”, Hungary would be much more resilient to the crisis now, he said.

In a statement later on Thursday, Fidesz MEPs said an EP decision scheduled to be adopted on Thursday demanded new sanctions. The gas price cap would lead to falling gas supplies, “an absurd idea” on the cusp of the heating season, the statement said. The “irresponsible decision” would deepen the crisis and make Europeans pay the price of war, it said. “We Fidesz MEPs are protecting the interests of Hungarians. We will not support proposals that put Hungarian energy supplies and jobs at risk,” the statement said.

CBANKER: CRISIS MANAGEMENT MUSTN’T COME AT EXPENSE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Hungary’s central bank is working hard to bring inflation under control, but the management of the current crisis must not come at the expense of sustainability goals, Csaba Kandrács, the deputy governor of the National Bank of Hungary, said at the central bank’s green financing conference.

Kandrács called for doubling efforts to achieve green goals. He emphasised Hungary’s commitment to a sustainable economy, noting that the central bank had been handed a green mandate by parliament.

The bank has launched multiple programmes in the interest of sustainability, such as conducting a stress test to determine which sectors would be most affected by climate change, Kandrács said. It has also prepared recommendations for credit institutions, launched the Green Home Programme aimed at improving the energy efficiency of households and is cooperating with universities and researchers, he added. “This year will go down in history as the year of crises, not just because of the attack on Ukraine and the prolonged pandemic, but also because of the drastic rise in the costs of food, energy and living, as well as global economic challenges,” he said. Kandrács said 2022 could become the “milestone marking the end of the golden age of globalisation” and the beginning of “the era of the regionalisation of trade”.

He warned that the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity were getting less attention on the international stage, while businesses were looking for ways out of their commitments. “Meanwhile, nature is sending us red flags,” Kandrács said, noting that this past summer was the driest in the last 500 years, and both Europe and China were facing problems caused by droughts.



DEMO HELD AT PARLIAMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH TEACHERS

Supporters of the Tanítanék (I want to teach) and noÁr movements held a demonstration and concert in front of Parliament on Wednesday evening to “save education and the future of youth” and to show solidarity with teachers demanding higher pay and strike rights. Tanítanék founder Kata Törley called the government “arrogant and incapable of dialogue” and warned that an increasing shortage of teachers was threatening collapse in the sector. She insisted problems in education could not be resolved without restoring teachers’ right to strike and instant measures to improve teachers’ working conditions as well as a pay rise. Áron Molnár, founder of the noÁr movement, said the event was aimed at starting a strike fund for teachers. Roma activist László Glonczai said the right to strike was a fundamental one, and he called for joint action to demand a pay rise for teachers. Olivér Pilz, a Tanítanék co-founder, urged all trade unions to call a general strike to support teachers. Participants held up signs including “No teachers, no future” and chanted “Free country! Free education!”

ORBÁN MEETS FORMER CZECH PRESIDENT KLAUS IN PRAGUE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán discussed the Russia-Ukraine war and the related

migration and economic crises with former Czech president Václav Klaus in Prague. The meeting held in the building of the Václav Klaus Institute also touched on price increases and energy shortages. Orbán told Klaus that Brussels’s “flawed sanctions policy” should be rethought since sanctions on Russia had failed to live up to expectations. The war has not ended, prices in Europe are soaring and Russia is benefitting from the situation, the prime minister said. Orbán and Klaus also discussed the political and economic developments seen in central Europe after the fall of communism, including their own personal memories. Orbán also met former Czech prime minister Andrej Babiš, who heads the opposition ANO movement, prior to Thursday’s summit of European Union leaders.

FLAG LOWERED TO HALF-MAST IN HONOUR OF ARAD MARTYRS

Hungary’s national flag was hoisted with full military honours and lowered to half-mast in front of Parliament to mark the anniversary of the 1848-49 war of independence and the martyrs of Arad, at an event attended by Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky and army chief Romulusz Ruszin-Szendi on Thursday. The ceremony was also attended by interior ministry state secretary Bence Rétvári. The flag remained at half-mast throughout the day in tribute to the martyrs on the national day of mourning. Commemorations continued at the

Fiumei Road cemetery with a wreath-laying ceremony at the mausoleum of Count Lajos Batthyány, Hungary’s first prime minister. The government declared October 6 Hungary’s national day of mourning in 2001, in commemoration of the 13 martyrs executed in Arad following the crushing of the revolution. Batthyány, also commemorated today, was executed in Pest.

KARÁCSONY: BUDAPEST LEADERSHIP WORKING TO RESUME WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES

Budapest’s leadership is working to ensure that waste collection services in the city resume, Mayor Gergely Karácsony said on Thursday, adding that talks in the matter would continue. Budapest’s FKF waste management company announced on Tuesday that several hundred of its employees had started a strike, saying that the wage hikes they had received had been eroded by inflation and increased utility costs. Karácsony said on Facebook that from Thursday waste collection was the responsibility of the disaster management authority. The mayor said he had met FKF workers on Thursday morning and had proposed a 200,000 forint (EUR 474) utility bill subsidy in addition to a 15 percent wage hike. The offer will be discussed with Budapest company unions as well, he added. The mayor said the city council’s revenues were not even enough to cover its own electricity costs. “But we won’t back down on

solidarity and on helping as much as we can," Karácsony said.

Zsolt Wintermantel, group leader of ruling Fidesz in the Budapest city assembly, told commercial channel TV2 that the city council was required by law to ensure that waste collection services run smoothly. He later told public media that Karácsony had "failed" as Budapest mayor. Wintermantel said that by turning to the government commissioner over the city council's inability to organise waste collection, Karácsony had proven that he was unfit to serve as mayor. Not until now has Budapest had a mayor incapable of handling the collection of waste, he said. "Within three days, Gergely Karácsony ... surrendered because he's incapable of reaching an agreement with his own employees," he added. Wintermantel said that under the law the disaster management authority was only supposed to get involved in the collection of waste in emergency situations like if a landfill or garbage trucks are destroyed. He said the problem was that the people appointed by Karácsony to head Budapest's public works companies were "totally unqualified". He called on the mayor to reach an agreement with waste collectors.

MINISTER: HUNGARY DEFENCE INDUSTRY SET TO BE AMONG REGION'S BEST BY 2030

The Hungarian government aims to make the country's defence industry

one of the best in the region by 2030, the minister for technology and industry told an international conference in Budapest. Hungary aims to become a key defence industry hub in central Europe for manufacturing as well as research and development, László Palkovics told the Global Special Operations Forces (GSOF) Symposium Europe conference. The government's goal is for the value of the defence industry to reach 500 billion forints (EUR 1.2bn) by 2030, Palkovics said. The industry must also become self-sufficient so that it is capable of supplying the military, he added. It should also be successful abroad by joining international supply chains with competitive products, he said. The minister highlighted the Zrínyi 2026 defence development scheme as the start of the rebuild of the country's defence industry. Hungary currently spends 1.2% of its GDP on defence compared with the global ratio of over 2%, Palkovics said. High-tech fields make up 70% of Hungary's industry, he said, adding that the country's geographical location was also favourable from a logistical standpoint.

DEFMIN PRAISES HUNGARIAN SPECIAL FORCES IN NATO

Hungary's government is proud of the country's Special Forces and their contribution to NATO and regional security, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky, the defence minister, said in Budapest said on the closing day of the GSOF

Symposium Europe. The security situation has deteriorated in the region due to challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic, illegal migration and the war in Ukraine, he said. For those reasons, the minister said he had instructed the leader of the Armed Forces to step up their readiness. The Armed Forces served in hospitals during the coronavirus pandemic, the minister noted, while also fighting illegal migration on the southern border. By now, many countries have followed in Hungary's footsteps in combatting illegal migration, he added.

The government is also committed to ensuring stability in the Western Balkans, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said. The Hungarian contingent is the third largest in NATO's Kosovo mission, and Hungarians also serve in the EUFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he said. Hungarian Gripen fighter jets are also contributing to the air policing of the Baltic countries, he said. He welcomed the government's decision to launch an Armed Forces development programme. GSOF Symposium Europe is held annually for international military and government officials who oversee the Special Forces.

PAKS BLOCK BACK ONLINE AFTER SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE

The number one block of the Paks nuclear power plant has gone back online after scheduled maintenance work, the state secretary for energy

policy said on Thursday. The block went offline in early August for annual scheduled maintenance which included, among other things, cyclical testing of the reactor tank and main equipment, Attila Steiner said. The maintenance work was overseen by the National Atomic Energy Authority (OAH), he said. Each of the plant's four blocks has a nominal capacity of 500MW. Paks accounts for about half of domestic electricity production.

SOME 9,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON WEDNESDAY

Fully 4,786 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Wednesday, while another 4,586 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 162 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 10 people, 5 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT GROWTH ACCELERATES TO 14.4% IN AUG

Output of Hungary's industrial sector rose by an annual 14.4% in August, expanding at the fastest pace in more than a year, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Thursday. Adjusted for the number of work days -- of which there were two fewer in the base period -- output increased 9.3%, accelerating from 6.6% in the previous month. KSH said output of most branches of manufacturing rose in August. Output of the automotive industry "jumped", albeit from a low base, while output of the computer, electronics and optical equipment segment and the food, drinks and tobacco products segment also "expanded significantly", it added. Output for the period January-August rose by an annual 6.1%. Month on month, output edged up a seasonally- and workday-adjusted 0.1%.

ING Bank chief analyst Péter Virovác said output may have

been lifted as the usual end-of-summer shutdowns were cancelled at factories because of forced halts in production in the spring, amid supply chain woes. Businesses don't appear to be suffering the impact of higher energy costs or the global decline in demand as they work to fill orders that have "piled up" in recent months, he added. He noted that the drop in PMI under 50 in September could augur a slowdown in the coming months.

RETAIL SALES GROW 3.3% IN AUGUST

Retail sales growth in Hungary reached 3.3% year-on-year in August, edging down from 3.8% in the previous month, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) on Thursday show. Adjusted for calendar year effects, retail sales growth slowed to 2.4% from 4.3% during the period. Adjusted food sales fell 2.4% in August, non-food sales edged up 0.5% and vehicle fuel sales climbed 18.4%. In January-August, adjusted retail sales were up 8.4% compared with the same period last year.