

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Tibor Rosta

Former President János Áder speaking before students in Sarkad

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Szijjártó has talks in Moscow**

**War in Ukraine**

## TOP STORY

### SZIJJÁRTÓ: GAZPROM COMMITTED TO SUPPLYING HUNGARY

The CEO of Russia's Gazprom has reaffirmed his long-term commitment to continuing the operations of the TurkStream pipeline and maintaining gas supplies to Hungary, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Moscow on Wednesday, adding that Hungary's gas supplies were secure despite the current crisis.

Following talks with Alexey Miller, Szijjártó said the energy supply crisis in Europe raised serious concerns about the coming heating season, but added that "it is at least as important how supplies for Europe could be secured in the next two to three winters since delivery via the northern routes has in fact become impossible". TurkStream is the only remaining route with uninterrupted gas delivery from Russia, "which has proven that it was worthwhile to construct it", the foreign ministry quoted Szijjártó as saying. Gazprom will "shift the focus of its supplies" from north to the southern route, and will also redirect smaller supplies to Hungary via Austria to TurkStream, Szijjártó said. "This will make Hungary's energy supply even more secure," he added. Szijjártó noted that TurkStream's components had been made in Russia, therefore their maintenance was not hindered by European Union sanctions.

Szijjártó said an agreement between Hungary and Gazprom to ensure deferred payment for gas supplies would be signed on Thursday.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: BRUSSELS DECISIONS HURT EUROPE ENERGY SECURITY**

Decisions made by Brussels have so far have caused nothing but “damage” to Europe’s energy security, whereas measures taken by the Hungarian government have ensured continued supplies to the country, the foreign minister said in Prague on Wednesday.

The foreign ministry cited Péter Szijjártó after attending a meeting of EU energy ministers welcoming the fact that “no concrete decisions have been made” on introducing a cap on gas prices. Hungary will not support any proposal on introducing such measures because it would pose a serious risk to the continent’s energy supplies and send energy prices skyrocketing, he said.

Hungary supports diversification in the form of using additional resources, such as importing more gas from Azerbaijan and increasing the capacity of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, Szijjártó said, adding that “the real solution” to the energy crisis is in infrastructure development including the construction of more pipelines and LNG terminals. Hungary supports keeping energy related decisions in national competence, allowing member states the autonomy to decide whether to join mandatory community-level energy purchases, the foreign minister said. Szijjártó said Hungary’s natural gas supplies were secure and its gas storage facilities were 48,2% full, as against the European average of 26,9%.

The government is paying increased attention to the smooth “physical and legal operation” of the TurkStream gas pipeline through which gas flows are steady between east and west. He said the world was living “its first global energy crisis in history” and called for working out solutions for the long term.

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## **FIDESZ PROTESTS ‘WITCH HUNT AGAINST HUNGARY’ IN COE**

“The international Left is again attacking Hungary on the basis of false claims,” ruling Fidesz told MTI on Wednesday. Zsolt Németh, head of the Hungarian delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and delegation member Lőrinc Nacsa said in a joint statement that the leftist majority of the assembly, “supported by Hungary’s leftist representatives”, had adopted a report on Hungary earlier in the day which they said was a “biased, political indictment riddled with factual mistakes”. The report, they insisted, was aimed at making Hungary scrap its child protection law. The report “is in conflict with the CoE’s goals and hinders dialogue based on mutual respect”, the representatives said.

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## **FIDESZ MEPS: ACCELERATING W BALKANS’ EUROPEAN INTEGRATION HUNGARY’S STRATEGIC INTEREST**

MEPs of Hungary’s ruling Fidesz said in their statements on Wednesday that accelerating the European

integration of Western Balkan countries is a primary strategic interest of the EU and Hungary, in reaction to the European Commission’s announcement concerning the EU’s further enlargement. The EC announced earlier in the day that it proposed granting Bosnia and Herzegovina the status of candidate to join the European Union, Olivér Várhelyi, the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, told a press conference in Brussels. He said that the EC also pledged to accelerate the EU integration of the Western Balkan region on the whole. MEP Kinga Gál said in her statement that given the region’s increasing geopolitical importance, its accelerated EU integration could be an important step from an economic and strategic as well as from a defence and security point of view. M E P Andor Deli said that the EU integration of Western Balkan countries has “no alternative”. The EU can only be strong again if it integrates those countries, primarily Serbia which is a key country in the region, he added.

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## **FIDESZ MEP PROPOSES SETTING UP ROMA FUND**

Lívía Járóka, an MEP of ruling Fidesz, has urged EU member states to invest more in supporting and sustaining small and medium-sized firms, and proposed setting up a fund for the Roma in the sector. “Hungary is performing well in implementing the EU’s Roma Strategy, and we would like more member states to adopt our good practices,” the Roma MEP

told MTI after attending the International Roma Leadership and Business Forum in Brussels on Tuesday, a gathering of representatives of EU institutions and Roma organisations which share best practice in promoting the interests of the Roma in the labour market and business sector. Attila Sztojka, government commissioner for Roma relations, told MTI that Hungary had achieved outstanding results in Roma affairs in the past ten years, and was at the forefront in the EU in this respect. He noted that Roma employment went up by 50% during the period.

### **NAVRACSICS: 'EU MUST NOT BE DIVIDED'**

The European Union "must not be divided politically, ideologically, or in a regional sense", Regional Development Minister Tibor Navracsics said in State Secretary Zoltán Kovács's new podcast The Bold Truth About Hungary on Wednesday. Navracsics said he hoped his previous experience in previous positions such as European commissioner between 2014-19 and justice minister before could be used to contribute to the success of Hungary's efforts to access EU funds.

Kovács, the state secretary for international communications and relations, said annual community funding to Hungary, an equivalent of 4-5% of the country's GDP, was "no gift" but "among others compensation for market drawbacks". According to Navracsics, Hungary is "one of the most reliable end-users" of EU funds, with an ability to absorb over 80%

of the available funds. "Hungary is good investment for the EU budget, as all data reflect its good results in closing the gap between well- and under-developed regions and in increasing social mobility through using EU funds," the minister said. Kovacs cited data from the European Statistical Office and added that the number of poor and "socially challenged" people had been reduced by 50% in recent years. On another subject, Navracsics said issues around Hungary's judicial reform had been settled with the European Commission and the European Council, but "serious attempts are being made to reopen the case and question the independence of Hungary's judiciary". He added that some other member states had "much worse" record as regards the independence and efficiency of their judiciary. Navracsics said "the problem lies in a lack of mutual trust", adding that "a confidence-building exercise" is under way. Kovacs added that the government had so far tabled five proposals in parliament aimed at passing legislation necessary for an agreement between the government and the European Commission.

### **POLT SUBMITS REPORT ON PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE TO PARLIAMENT**

The number of registered crimes has dropped to one third compared with a decade ago, and the Hungarian prosecutor's office maintains good

relations with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), Péter Polt, the chief public prosecutor said in a report to lawmakers about his office's activities last year. The number of registered crimes, including crimes against life, fell by 5.2% last year, while the number of human smuggling offences increased, the public prosecutor's office said in a statement on Wednesday. Polt's report addressed corruption in detail and insisted that subjective assessments based on perception indicated a very different picture from the facts. Objective data show that the situation concerning corruption is no different in Hungary from the average in European Union member states, except for the health-care sector, the report said.

Commenting on efforts to speed up proceedings, the report said that last year the prosecutor's office proposed a court decision in 74.5% of cases. The report highlighted that with 87.9% of suspects, the court rulings matched the prosecutor's charges in every respect. Polt said the prosecutor's office maintained "excellent" international relations last year, especially concerning cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). There has been a continual decrease in the number of OLAF recommendations, and all recommendations have been followed up by the Hungarian authorities, with charges raised in 67% of the cases over the past five years. "This is an outstanding figure, nearly twice as high as the 35% average in the EU," he added. Polt also noted good relations with

EPPO, adding that among the countries that have not joined the organisation, Hungary is the only one to have signed a cooperation agreement with it.

### **CHRISTIAN CHURCH LEADERS HOLD JOINT PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Leaders of Hungary's three largest Christian churches held a joint prayer for peace at the chapel of the northern Lutheran diocese episcopate office on Tuesday, the Lutheran church communication service said.

András Veres, head of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Zoltán Balog, pastoral president by the Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church, and Tamás Fabiny, presiding bishop of the Lutheran Church in Hungary, held a joint prayer with an appeal to God for world peace and the restoration of peace in Ukraine.

### **SOCIALIST MP CALLS FOR 2023 BUDGET RETHINK**

The Socialist head of parliament's budgetary committee on Wednesday called on the government to submit a new budget, arguing that "pushing through" the budget as early as July had been a "mistake" in a volatile economic environment. Zoltán Vajda told a press conference streamed on Facebook that he had invited Finance Minister Mihály Varga to the committee's meeting to discuss the country's financial situation, but the committee's Fidesz majority removed the hearing from the agenda. Vajda

called the current budget for 2023 "fictitious", noting the law calculated with FY inflation of 5.1% next year, insisting that in reality it could go as high as 20%. While the budget forecasts a 4,2% GDP growth, the economy could actually dip into recession, he said. Meanwhile, the budget calculates with an exchange rate of 370 forints per euro, whereas the Hungarian currency currently hovers around 430 forints, he said. When three such fundamental components of the budget deviate from expectations, a new budget must be passed, he said.

### **MI HAZÁNK SAYS POSTAL WORKFORCE UNDER EXCESSIVE STRAIN**

The opposition Mi Hazánk party has called for measures to improve the situation of postal workers, saying that the stretched and underpaid workforce was having to work overtime, and this could lead to disruptions in services in the long term. Referring to Magyar Posta's announcement last month of the closure of 35 post offices in Budapest, MP of the radical party János Lantos told a press conference on Wednesday that the measure would inconvenience customers while also threatening the livelihood of employees unable to travel to other workplaces. Postal workers are among the most underpaid in Hungary, he said, adding that their real pay, "barely above the minimum wage", was worth even less amid rampant inflation. Lantos said Mi Hazánk backed a demand for a one-off government subsidy of postal workers' household energy bills as well as a wage hike.

### **HUNGARY INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP 14.4% YR/YR IN AUG**

Output of Hungary's industrial sector rose by an annual unadjusted 14.4% in August, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data on Thursday. Adjusted for the number of working days of which there were two fewer in the base period, output increased by 9.3%, accelerating from 6.6% in the previous month, KSH said. Output of the automotive industry, Hungary's biggest manufacturing sector, rose by an annual 58.0%, albeit from a low base hit by shutdowns, KSH said. The automotive segment accounted for 21% of manufacturing sector output in August. The detailed data show output of the computer, electronics and optical equipment segment, accounting for 11% of manufacturing, rose by an annual 25.6%. Output of the food, drinks and tobacco segment, which made up 14% of manufacturing sector output, climbed by 13.7%. Output in the January-August period rose by an annual 6.1%. Month on month, output edged up a seasonally and working day-adjusted 0.1%.

### **AROUND 9,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON TUESDAY**

Fully 5,189 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Monday, while another 3,879 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters

(ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 164 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 115 people, 31 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

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### **HUNGARY REGISTERS 12,636 NEW CORONAVIRUS CASES LAST WEEK, 104 FATALITIES**

Fully 12,636 new Covid-19 cases were registered last week, while 104 people died in connection with the virus, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday in a round-up of

last week's data. Currently there are 36,163 active infections and 1,700 Covid patients are hospitalised, 32 intubated on a ventilator. Altogether 6,418,580 have been vaccinated, with 6,205,067 having received a second shot, 3,898,061 a third, and 352,741 a fourth. Fully 2,120,543 Covid cases have been registered in Hungary since the start of the outbreak and 47,680 have died. So far 2,036,700 people have made a recovery.

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### **SEMMELWEIS UNIVERSITY AMONG WORLD'S TOP 250 HIGHER ED INSTITUTIONS**

Semmelweis University (SE) is among the 250 best higher education institutions in the world, according to the 2023 Times Higher Education

World University Rankings. Now is the first time that the medical school has reached THE's top-250 after ranking 250-300 last year. Assessment criteria include teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook, according to THE.

SE showed improvements in most areas, the university said in a statement on Wednesday, especially when it came to citations and research. Among European Union countries, SE ranks 64th, and is generally preceded by German, French and Belgian universities. Béla Merkely, the university's rector, said in the statement that SE was Hungary and central and eastern Europe's best higher education institution and a top scientific performer also known for its large number of foreign students.