

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Mihádkó

Police, firefighters demonstrate CPR on World Restart a Heart Day in downtown Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU foreign ministers meet in Luxembourg

Events related to the war in Ukraine

European Parliament holds plenary session

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: CAPABLE ARMY NEEDED

Hungarians need a capable army that can guarantee peace and serve as a deterrent, “because those who won’t have strength won’t be right, either”, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in Budapest over the weekend.

Addressing an oath-taking ceremony of volunteer soldiers and the inauguration of Lynx armoured infantry fighting vehicles, Orbán said it was time to “revive the military spirit within us”, arguing that a nation incapable of doing so “will certainly fail in the future”. “There are nations that have already begun making preparations and we can’t fall behind in this, either,” he said. “We can’t bury our head in the sand like an ostrich,” Orbán said, adding that “if things keep going as they are, the sanctions will shake Europe”. He said it also appeared that Europe would have to prepare itself for a protracted war. Orbán said the inauguration of the Lynx combat vehicles marked an important milestone of Hungary’s ongoing military upgrade. “We are now living in a time when we have good reason to discover threats at the country’s borders,” he said, noting the war in Ukraine and the flow of weapons from the West to the frontlines. Also, Hungary’s borders are under siege by groups of armed illegal migrants, he added.

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ORBÁN: HUNGARIANS AT THEIR BEST WHEN FACED WITH OBSTACLES

The Hungarian nation was known for centuries for its military virtues, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said at an oath-taking ceremony of volunteer soldiers and the inauguration of Lynx armoured infantry fighting vehicles, adding that Hungarians were at their best when “there is an obstacle to overcome”. Orbán noted that the primary task in the past had been to reorganise the Hungarian state. The economy has now made up lost ground, the crime rate has been pushed down, public safety has been restored and public administration renewed, but there is still more to be done when it comes to the Hungarian military, he said. Hungary is building a modern military because it needs soldiers who want to serve their country as well as effective, modern weapons, Orbán said. Because the government wants people to be able to move between military service and civilian life, the government has made changes to the institution of voluntary service, the prime minister noted. Volunteers are the bridge between civilians and the military, he said, arguing that they were the soldiers whom the public encounters most often. Orbán added that more recruitment campaigns will be launched in December. Concerning the inauguration of the Lynx armoured vehicles, he said the military industry was being brought to Hungary, noting

that the government was taking steps to develop this sector.

Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky, the defence minister, said that the Lynx combat vehicle was one of the most modern pieces of military equipment available.

Romulusz Ruszin-Szendi, commander of the military, welcomed the government’s support for the military and that companies and investors like German defence giant Rheinmetall were supplying the Hungarian army with 21st-century technology. He also thanked those who were committing themselves to voluntary military service.

Armin Papperger, Rheinmetall’s CEO, said it was advantageous that Hungary had a government that took care of its military. He said it was clear that the new soldiers were committed to defending their country, Europe and NATO.

According to the defence ministry, Rheinmetall is set to deliver 46 Lynx combat vehicles to Hungary by 2023. It will deliver 172 by 2029, which will be manufactured in Hungary.

FINMIN: HUNGARY BACKS MORE WORLD BANK FUNDS FOR UKRAINE, NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

Hungary supports Ukraine and neighbouring countries affected by the war there receiving more funds from the World Bank, Finance Minister

Mihály Varga said in Washington, DC, according to a ministry statement. Hungary has already given more than 28 billion forints (EUR 67m) worth of assistance to Ukraine, Varga said after meeting World Bank leaders on the occasion of the organisation’s annual meetings.

At his meeting with Anna Bjerde, World Bank Vice President for Europe and Central Asia, talks focused on the economic effects of the Russia-Ukraine war and support for Ukraine. The ministry cited Varga as emphasising the need to prioritise the region’s energy security and the development of its transport relations. He noted that Hungary has provided a significant amount of aid to Ukraine and has taken in some one million Ukrainian refugees. He added that Ukraine’s neighbours, including Hungary, were having to bear financial burdens related to the war that other countries were not.

Meanwhile, Varga told Elena Bourghanskaia, Vice President of the International Finance Corporation, that Hungary supported Ukraine and its neighbouring countries affected by the war receiving more funds from the World Bank. He said Hungary was prepared to have Hungarian companies with good ties and experience in the region contribute to the reconstruction of Ukraine. He added that the reconstruction also needed to involve the development of western Ukraine’s Transcarpathia region. Varga and Bourghanskaia also reviewed a World Bank scheme

aimed at easing migration pressure by providing assistance and carrying out developments where the problems arise, the ministry said.

DEFMIN: HUNGARY URGES IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE, PEACE TALKS

Hungary calls for an immediate ceasefire and peace talks among parties involved in the war in Ukraine as its interest lies in a peaceful Europe, the defence minister said in Brussels on Friday, after a two-day meeting of NATO defence ministers. It is also in Hungary's interest that NATO should not get involved in the Russian-Ukraine war, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky told Hungarian journalists, adding that the alliance must not "yield to any pressure posed by an escalation of the war". He reiterated Hungary's position that it did not want "to drift" into the war and would not send lethal arms to Ukraine in a bid to protect Hungarians in the Transcarpathian region. The minister noted Hungary's large-scale army development programme and its pledge made to NATO in 2014 to increase its defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2024. He said Hungary was among member states "faring well" and would fulfil that pledge earlier, already by next year. Szalay-Bobrovniczky also noted that NATO's peacekeeping mission in Kosovo had operated in the recent past under Hungarian command. "Stability in the Western

Balkans is of primary importance for Hungary. Pressure posed by migration continues to increase on Hungary's southern borders and this is why it is important to maintain peace in the region," he said. The minister said he held bilateral talks with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg who reaffirmed that Hungary is an esteemed and highly appreciated member of the alliance. Stoltenberg highlighted Hungary's undertakings and achievements in NATO, saying that those "represented a value" to the military alliance and contributed to its security.

HOUSE SPEAKER EXPRESSES CONDOLENCES OVER TURKEY COAL MINE BLAST

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér has expressed his condolences to the families of the victims of a recent coal mine explosion in Turkey. In his letter of condolence to Mustafa Sentop, his Turkish counterpart, Kövér said it was with great pain that he had learned of Friday's mine explosion in northern Turkey's Bartın province which claimed many lives. Kövér reaffirmed Hungary's support for Turkey "in these tragic moments". He expressed his condolences on behalf of Hungary's National Assembly to the families of the victims, wishing a speedy recovery to those injured in the blast. At least 40 people were killed and 11 injured in the mine explosion, while 58 miners survived.

FINMIN: HUNGARY'S 'MODEL' CRISIS MANAGEMENT RECOGNISED BY IMF

Hungary's achievements after 2010 are seen as something of a "model" for successful crisis management, "therefore they pay attention to us", Finance Minister Mihály Varga said after the plenary session of the World Bank and the IMF's annual meetings in Washington, DC, on Friday. Hungary today is considered a donor country, Varga told public media, adding that it was in this respect that he had held talks with the vice president of the World Bank. He said they had agreed to explore opportunities for Hungarian businesses to join programmes in Ukraine financed by the World Bank. Varga, who took part in the plenary session of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) as a deputy governor representing European countries, said he had aimed to convey the special situation the central and eastern European region is in due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. He emphasised the importance of finding a solution to energy dependence, including through alternative means, adding that the region also needed to manage the energy crisis triggered by sanctions. High energy prices are pushing inflation higher in the CEE region, Varga said, adding that this was a burden on the middle class that was very hard to relieve without state

support. This was why, he said, the Hungarian government had been right to preserve its price caps on utility bills up to average consumption. Varga said his talks in Washington had touched on the Hungarian price cap scheme as a “best practice”. The minister said that whereas in the past Hungary had needed money from the IMF, he now felt that the organisation was even open to Hungary’s solutions and was “showing interest in us”. The Hungarian solution put in place after 2010, namely that the response to an economic downturn should be stimulus rather than austerity measures, is an element that has since been added to the IMF’s package and is now being discussed in connection with the economic crisis management of several countries, Varga said. He said Hungary was no longer and did not want to be a country that was forced to rely on the IMF’s resources. Instead, Hungary now wants to introduce to the IMF the solutions that allowed it to go from being “a country aided by the IMF” to one that had the highest growth rate in the European Union before the coronavirus pandemic, he added.

KARÁCSONY ‘PROUD’ OF ACHIEVEMENTS AS MAYOR IN PAST THREE YEARS

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony on Saturday expressed his pride over achievements made in the past three years, stating that all 323 measures introduced in the period

served to make the city freer and greener. Karácsony and Richárd Barabás, spokesman for opposition Párbeszéd and deputy mayor of Budapest’s 11th district, assessed the achievements and outlined tasks for the next two years at a joint event on Margaret Island, marking the end of Karácsony’s third year in office. By the end of 2022, some 164 billion forints (EUR 510m) had been “taken out of the capital’s pockets” as a result of various government decisions, he said. Additionally, the city’s officials had to cope with the economic crisis, the coronavirus pandemic and the energy crisis, he said.

Karácsony said that in the spirit of “open governance”, his administration had engaged in social debates over the last three years on issues like the uses for public spaces. The mayor said he did not care about re-election but wanted to change the city when it came to things like how people view public spaces. He also said he was encouraged by the fact that in the public budget, Budapest residents had voted in favour of more social policies and green areas in the city. He emphasised the importance of public transport developments which involved the goal of procuring more comfortable and more energy-efficient vehicles. The mayor said that despite the measures aimed at making the city greener, he was not satisfied. He said he hoped there would be a period when there would be “fewer burdens” and more could be done for a “free and green” Budapest. Karácsony expressed

his belief that green policies should represent both those who are “worried about the world” and those who are “worried about the end of the month”. “This is the direction to go in even in a wartime crisis,” he added.

The city must remain a community characterised by solidarity in order to overcome the difficulties, Karácsony said. Efforts are being made to make Budapest climate neutral and carbon neutral by 2030, he said. “If we survive 2023, then we’ll win 2024 and Budapest can become a green city of solidarity, where walking on grass is allowed,” he added.

Ruling Fidesz in response said Budapest had only been “backsliding” with its affairs over the past three years. “Public transport is chaotic, the city is becoming dirtier day by day and it is becoming filled with slums,” the party’s Budapest chapter said in a statement, adding that Budapest needs “responsible and competent leaders”.

POLITICAL LEADERS BID LAST FAREWELL TO 1956 FREEDOM FIGHTER MÁRIA WITTNER

Hungary’s leading politicians attended the funeral of Mária Wittner, a 1956 freedom fighter and former lawmaker of ruling Fidesz, in the Dunakeszi cemetery, near Budapest, on Friday afternoon. Wittner died on September 14, at the age of 85. Aged only 19, she participated during the 1956 anti-

Soviet revolution in the siege of the Hungarian Radio and tended to the wounded in Corvin Alley, the site of ferocious fighting. She was hospitalised with shrapnel wounds on November 4 as the Soviet Army overran the city. Wittner was arrested in 1957 and sentenced to death a year later. She spent 200 days in prison before her sentence was reduced to life in 1959. She was released in March 1970, but was not granted an amnesty. She worked as a seamstress and cleaning lady until she retired in 1980. Wittner took an active role after the 1989-90 political regime change and in the work of various 1956 organisations. From 2006 to 2014, she was a lawmaker of the Fidesz party. She wrote several memoirs of her role in the revolution and of her years in prison. Wittner received the Grand Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit in 1991, along with the 1956 Medallion. She was decorated with the Hungarian Order of St Stephen, the highest honour in Hungary, in 2006. Her funeral was attended by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, President Katalin Novák, Parliamentary Speaker László Kövér and former President János Áder. Addressing the ceremony, Fidesz lawmaker and government commissioner Szilárd Németh called Wittner “an immaculate symbol of brave, self-sacrificing freedom-loving people”. “She was a hero and at the same time a victim of 1956, a victim of the Communist terror that followed in the footsteps of

the freedom fight and revolution of Hungarians,” he said.

STUDENTS STAGE DEMONSTRATION FOR EDUCATION IN BUDAPEST

A demonstration organised by students was held for public education and teachers in front of the interior ministry in Budapest on Friday evening. The participants at the demonstration organised by the “Students for Teachers” Facebook group demanded immediate wage increases as a solution to the shortage of teachers. They also demanded professional autonomy for teachers, teaching material that is “teachable and learnable”, “liveable schools” and a genuine dialogue about public education. Demonstrators gathered at Heroes’ Square and made their way along Andrassy Avenue and József Attila Street to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the ministry at Széchenyi Square. They carried a banner reading “We are with our teachers” at the front. Student speakers at the square insisted that “education is a national issue”, saying they were proud of their teachers who stood up for the cause of education. “These teachers teach us what is missing most in Hungary today: courage”. They criticised school district leaders for “sacking” or threatening with such a reprimand teachers who participate in an act of civil disobedience, and burned copies of dismissal letters.

Many of the demonstrators carried Hungarian and EU flags and flags symbolising chequered shirts, an outfit that has become associated with teacher demonstrations. They held up banners reading “To strike is a fundamental right”.

DK JOINS PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

The Democratic Coalition (DK) has joined the Party of European Socialists (PES), the party told MTI on Friday. DK has been a member of the European parliamentary group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats for nine years and now it sees the time ripe for joining PES, the alliance of European left-wing parties, it said in a statement. A Hungarian opposition party, the Democratic Coalition said that the congress of PES unanimously supported its application on Friday. In line with the PES’s rules, DK will be an associate member for a year, and then become a full member.

LMP LAUNCHES PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON GREEN ISSUES

Opposition LMP is launching a public consultation about environmental issues, with the aim of starting a social debate about the green transition, the party’s co-leader said on Saturday. Péter Ungár told an online press conference that “unlike with the government’s National Consultation surveys”, responses at

the website zoldkonzultacio.hu were also welcome from people who do not agree with the party's goals. He insisted that in the current National Consultation survey the government had put forward "untrue statements in the form of questions". Citing a statement according to which high energy prices are caused by the sanctions imposed on Russia, Ungár said the high prices were actually caused by the dependence on fossil fuels. He said it was vitally important to decide what the basis of Hungary's energy mix and independence will be in the next ten to twenty years. There is "chaos" about this issue even within the government, he said, and cited remarks by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán showing a lack of consensus within the cabinet on the use of wind energy. LMP spokesman József Gál said the party is also asking for people's opinion on whether the 700 billion forints (EUR 1.7bn) that the government plans to use on purchasing Vodafone should instead be spent on insulation on buildings and whether a ban on the utilisation of wind energy should be lifted. Another question concerns the cancellation of product fees on solar panels.

LMP believes that renewable energy should be supported instead of taxed and the fuels shortage should be handled by improving public transport instead of putting a cap on petrol prices, he said. Another question in LMP's survey concerns whether Russia should be building a nuclear power station in Hungary, using Russian

technology and a Russian loan, he added.

MORE THAN 12,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON SATURDAY

Fully 6,379 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Saturday, while another 5,976 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 177 people, ORFK told MTI on Sunday. 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 35 people, 15 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

ARAB CULTURAL DAY HELD IN ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM

Some 15 Arabic countries were presented at the Arab Cultural Day at the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest on Saturday. The event featuring exhibitions, presentations by Arabic artists, concerts and food was opened by House Speaker László Kövér. Kövér in his address said Hungarians' links with the Arab world and culture go back to the time preceding the founding of the Hungarian state. The intensity of maintaining ties received new impetus

with the government launching its policy of opening to the south after 2010, he said.

"Economic mixed committees have been reformed, we have developed a network of attachés covering the entire region and we have launched the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship scheme," said Kövér. Some 3,308 Arab students study in Hungary on scholarships and they represent 31% of all students in the Stipendium Hungaricum scheme, he added. Economic relations represent the main area of cooperation, the speaker said. Hungary's exports to Arabic countries exceeded 1 billion dollars in each of the past six years and Hungarian imports from these countries doubled during the period of 2016-2018, he added. "It is our common interest to further enliven foreign trade," he said. Learning about each other's values is a tool for this and culture and education play an important role in this process, he added.

Ambassador of Morocco Karima Kabbaj said culture plays a key role in the cooperation of nations and in maintaining their relations in the long term. She added that Hungarian and Arab culture have maintained a harmonious relationship for a very long time. She expressed thanks to the Hungarian government for its position on Arab affairs, especially in efforts aimed at resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The ambassador also expressed thanks for the scholarships Hungary has offered to Arab students.

