

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Zsolt Czeglédi

Gulls over Hortobágy National Park

UPCOMING EVENTS

Commemorations of 1956 Revolution

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

HUNGARY EXEMPT FROM EUROPEAN GAS PRICE CAP

Hungary has been granted exemption from the European Union's gas price cap, "which will therefore not jeopardise secure gas supplies" to the country, Hungary's prime minister said.

Speaking on the sidelines of an EU summit in Brussels in the early hours of Friday, Viktor Orbán said "we have managed to protect Hungary's interests," the prime minister wrote in a Facebook message. Orbán said the European Commission's energy proposals had "posed the greatest danger" for Hungary. "Adopting them would have risked a stoppage of gas deliveries to the country within days," he said. That threat, he said, had been averted: "Hungary was not left alone and managed to negotiate a fair deal". "We agreed that even if a gas price cap were introduced in Europe, it would not impact the long-term agreements without which Hungary's gas supplies would be made impossible overnight," Orbán said. Participants in the summit also agreed that if there were joint gas purchasing in Europe, it would not be mandatory for Hungary. "That's important because we can only bring domestic energy prices down with more sources of supply at our disposal, with more competition on the Hungarian energy market," he added.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: FOOD INDUSTRY HUNGARY'S STRATEGIC SECTOR

The food industry employing some 135,000 people in Hungary is a strategic sector and its effective and continued operation is of national security importance, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said at an expansion ceremony in Foktő, in southern Hungary, on Thursday. Péter Szijjártó said that the food industry had proven "shock resistant" to economic hardships of the past years, noting that food supplies had not suffered any disruptions in the country.

The government's aim is to guarantee steady supplies as well as to boost food exports, Szijjártó told the inauguration of a 22 billion forint (EUR 53.4m) expansion of Viterra Vegetable Oil Production Ltd. The government contributed 1.8 billion forints to the project, which added 40 jobs to the current 134 kept, he said. Szijjártó said that despite the economic crisis, the value of Hungary's food industry production last year totalled a record 4,400 billion forints, up 17% from 2020. Its volume has this year already increased by 46% to total 4,000 billion by the end of August, he said. Hungary's exports last year increased by 11% to over 10 billion euros, Szijjártó said, adding that although the country ranks 95th in terms of population globally, it ranks 32nd in terms of its food exports.

PALKOVICS INAUGURATES NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT ZALAZONE RESEARCH CENTRE

Hungary has done everything in its power to strengthen its economy, especially its innovation capacity, László Palkovics, the minister of technology and innovation, said on Friday, at the inauguration of new research facilities at the ZalaZone Research and Technology Centre. Palkovics told the event on the outskirts of Zalaegerszeg, in southwest Hungary, that cooperation between the industrial, academic and education sectors, as well as government and local authorities, has resulted in a "world-class environment for research institutes". Zalaegerszeg mayor Zoltán Balaicz said the "eco-system built on the outskirts of the city comprises industrial production, R&D and a background of academic [knowledge] and services. Thanks to all that, Zalaegerszeg is in a position to weather hard times easier than others," he said. ZalaZone CEO András Hány noted that the main building of the research centre was inaugurated in 2019. Since then, a test track for autonomous vehicles, a Rheinmetall plant for army vehicles and other developments housing education and services were added, he said.

AUTHORITY: SINGLE-BID PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CONTRACTS DOWN IN Q3

The number of single-bid public procurement contracts started to

drop in the third quarter this year, "a positive development" from the point of view of commitments Hungary has made to the European Commission in connection with EU funds, the Public Procurement Authority said on Thursday. The total value of public procurement contracts amounted to 3,628 billion forints (EUR 8.8bn) in the first nine months, up almost 50% on the same period in 2021, the authority said in a statement. In January-September this year, 5,896 public procurement procedures were concluded, slightly up on the same period in 2021. According to the authority's data, the proportion of single-bid procurement procedures calculated under EU methodology dropped to 26.8% in August and to 26% in September from between 34% and 48% during the earlier period of the year.

The authority said in the spring that it would devote special attention to the control of public procurement procedures in an effort to improve their effectiveness, and the authority will declare a procedure invalid if only a single bid has been submitted. Hungary has undertaken to permanently reduce the proportion of single-bid public procurements to below 15% for procurements using EU and domestic monies by the end of 2024, the authority said. It noted in a positive trend that micro, small and medium-sized businesses, "the engine of the growth" for Hungary's economy, won 1,784 billion forints in total awarded in 4,986 procurement procedures during the first nine months.

BUDGET RUNS HUF 181 BN SURPLUS FOR SEPTEMBER, MINISTRY CONFIRMS

Hungary's cash flow-based budget deficit, excluding local councils, had a 2,691.7 billion forint (EUR 6.5m) deficit at the end of September, after running a 181.0 billion forint surplus for the month, the finance ministry confirmed in a second reading of data on Friday. The full-year cash flow-based budget deficit target is 3,152.7 billion forints. The central budget deficit reached 2,773.0 billion forints at the end of September. The social security funds were 171.3 billion forints in the red, while the separate state funds had a surplus of 252.6 billion. The ministry noted that the 2022 budget deficit target, calculated according to the European Union's accrual-based accounting rules, has been raised from 4.9% to 6.1% of GDP. It attributed the full increase to a top-up of the gas reserves of the Hungarian Hydrocarbon Stockpiling Association (MSZKSZ), worth some 740 billion forints.

ENERGY AUTHORITY: GAS STORAGE FACILITIES NEARLY 80% FULL

Hungary's gas storage facilities contain 4,938 billion cubic metres of natural gas, 78.02% of their total capacity, the Hungarian Energy and Public Utility Regulatory Authority (MEKH) said on Friday. Compared with the country's

annual consumption, the storage units are 49.41% full, 22.2% over the European Union average, the authority said. The amount currently stored is 124.6% of annual residential gas consumption, it added. In line with the schedule included in European Union regulations on gas storage, Hungary must store 35% of its five-year average consumption by November 1, which equals 3.65 billion cubic metres, MEKH said. Owing to fast storage filling in Hungary, it already exceeded that amount, the authority added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: GOVT COMMITTED TO ATTRACTING INVESTMENT, KEEPING ECONOMY ON GROWTH PATH

The government continues to focus on attracting as much foreign investment as possible, thus keeping the national economy on a growth path, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said on Friday. Péter Szijjártó said investments required "stability politically, physically and in terms of energy supplies" which Hungary could all ensure. Speaking at the inauguration of a new facility of Tamási-Hús Kft, owned by Austria's Gierlinger Holding, the minister said the government's top priority was to keep the economy on a growth path for the long term, thus preventing the country from being hit by recession in Europe.

Szjijártó said the government highly appreciated investment projects contributing to the high technology

of Hungary's food industry, adding that he was proud that "one plant out of the five belonging to Austria's largest meet producer is here in Hungary". He said the new plant and warehousing unit had cost a total of 14 billion forints (EUR 43.1m), and created 255 jobs. The minister said ensuring security of food supplies was a top priority for the government. He said Hungarian food production had "stood the test of shocks it was exposed to in recent years", as there had been no interruptions of supply despite "supply routes becoming erratic due to the pandemic".

For example, he mentioned that in 2021, when "the world was still suffering from the impacts of the pandemic", Hungary's food production had totalled a record 4,400 billion forints, 17% on top of the previous year. He added that 2022 August data had indicated a 4,000 billion total, 46% up from 2021. Hungary's food sector employs 135,000 people, while its exports, shipped to 163 countries, exceeded 10 billion euros last year, 11% up from 2020, Szijjártó said.

LMP: PAKS UPGRADE WOULD INCREASE HUNGARY'S DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIA

The planned upgrade of the Paks nuclear power station would further increase Hungary's dependence on Russia which should not be neglected "in the shadow of the Russia-Ukraine war", opposition LMP said on Friday.

Party lawmaker Máté Kanász-Nagy said LMP would ask people's opinion in a public consultation on green matters whether they would support the cancellation of the current contract about the Paks investment project. He said that Hungary should not rely on nuclear energy because it is neither green, nor safe, nor sustainable. Kanász-Nagy called for shifting the focus to renewable energy, which he said was cheap, safe and environmentally friendly.

He condemned the government's National Consultation survey, stating that it was deceitful and omitted such important issues as sustainability and green matters.

LMP's "green consultation" covers licencing for wind power station, simplifying the use of solar energy, the launch of a nationwide building insulation scheme and the introduction of a discounted national transport card dubbed "climate pass".

NEARLY 11,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON THURSDAY

Fully 5,641 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Thursday, while another 5,279 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 182 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 30 people, 16 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

SIMON MÓRICZ-SABJÁN WINS 2022 CAPA GRAND PRIZE

Simon Móricz-Sabján has been awarded this year's Capa Grand

Prize for Permanently Overcast, a photo series on life in Hungary's Great Plain, the Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center said on Friday. Móricz-Sabján has spent over a decade photographing communities living in localities of the plains in southern and southeastern Hungary. The series focuses on mortality, ageing communities, lack of opportunities and this year's challenges, the centre said. "The effects of climate change and the current crisis have become apparent. The villages and their residents have been pushed to their limits, experiencing severe drought, several brush and forest fires, the rising costs of living, and inflation," Móricz-Sabján said. The prize and the scholarships granted by the Capa Center will serve the artists' further development and give them an opportunity to experiment further, the center said.