

PHOTO OF THE DAY



National flag hoisted in front of Parliament on the Oct. 23 national holiday

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plenary session of parliament

Stats office releases figures on Aug wages

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HUNGARY PROTECTING ITS INTERESTS

Viktor Orbán said “we’re able to protect Hungary’s interests both at home and abroad”, in his address marking the 66th anniversary of Hungary’s 1956 anti-Soviet revolution.

“In 1956, we learnt that joining our forces was the only way to come through hard times,” Viktor Orbán said at the inauguration of a visitors’ centre in the city of Zalaegerszeg, in western Hungary, dedicated to the late Cardinal József Mindszenty. “So we should not worry about those who are sniping at Hungary from the shadows or from the heights of Brussels; they will end up in the same place as their predecessors,” he said, insisting that ever since Hungary had been governed by a conservative government, the country had emerged from every crisis stronger than it was before entering it. “We’re prepared now, too: we will preserve the stability of the country; everyone will have a job, and families will not be left on their own,” Orbán said, adding that the government had the strength and the experience to achieve those goals.

The West left Hungary high and dry in 1956, he said. “They put us on the cover of the Time Magazine, then left us under the Soviet yoke for forty years,” he said. “Only Hungarians can defend their own truth against threats,” Orbán said.

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ORBÁN: WEST FAILED HUNGARY IN 1956

"In the absence of Western support, the Soviet leaders ... turned back the tanks, and set up military oppression and a communist puppet government in Hungary for another 35 years," Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said, addressing an event in Zalaegerszeg marking the 66th anniversary of Hungary's 1956 anti-Soviet revolution. "The blood of Hungarians was not appreciated by the West, which first encouraged the Hungarians, but failed to offer help when needed," he said.

The prime minister said that although the heroes of the revolution had been of very different backgrounds, their inspiration had been the same: a love for a free Hungary. "They took every risk because they believed that they could succeed; and their hope was not unfounded, because in 1956 Hungary stood a real chance of gaining independence," Orbán said.

Hungarians, he added, had remained tough and determined, and they finally won in 1990, regaining their free and independent country. "From this, the whole world can understand that anyone who wants to oppress us is doomed to failure," Orbán said. "We have to simultaneously fight the invasion of migrants in the south, the war in the East and the economic crisis in the West," the prime minister said, adding that "we were here when the first conquering empire attacked us, and we will be here when the last one collapses."

GULYÁS: 'GOVT DOES NOT SUPPORT EU PROPOSALS THREATENING ENERGY SUPPLY SAFETY'

The Hungarian government supports any European Union proposal that would result in lower energy prices but does not support proposals that would undermine the security of supplies, the prime minister's chief of staff told public radio in an interview. Assessing the recent EU summit, Gergely Gulyás said it would have been disadvantageous for Hungary if Brussels had introduced sanctions and an embargo on natural gas imports, or had adopted a gas price scheme that would threaten long-term gas purchase contracts. "For Hungary, that would mean that the Russians would terminate the gas contract concluded earlier and that would put our gas supplies at risk." He said that proposals put forward by the European Commission were aimed at extending sanctions on natural gas which would "most obviously and certainly result in a shortage of supplies for Hungarian families and businesses", said Gulyás. "We have managed to prevent this: the EU will not introduce regulations in connection with long-term contracts on gas," said Gulyás. Concerning the idea of the common European Union gas purchases, Gulyás said the Hungarian government insists that there should be no obligation to participate in any purchase. "As long as taking part in such a procedure is

voluntary, and we can freely decide whether to join or not every time, this is also in accordance with our interests," the minister said.

Regarding electricity, Gulyás said the continent was self-sufficient, but for the time being the gas market also determines the prices in the electricity market, and cheaper renewable energy would "not resolve all of our problems but could ease them and it could somewhat bring down the price of electricity."

Regarding new economic measures, Gulyás said the government aimed to minimise the Hungarian economy's losses by freezing interest rates on the loans of small and medium-sized firms, extending a business credit scheme and launching a "factory-saving" scheme. The aim is to ensure that businesses can keep repaying their loans and avoid bankruptcy, while the "factory-saving" scheme aims to help manufacturers sign gas purchase contracts. Without such measures, mass lay-offs would ensue.

Answering a question concerning recent US-Russia talks, Gulyás said the government welcomed the development, adding that dialogue that could lead to peace negotiations and an eventual peace was highly important.

NAGY OUTLINES ECONOMIC SUPPORT MEASURES

The government is freezing interest rates on loans to small and medium-sized firms from Nov. 15 until July 2023, Márton Nagy, the minister of economic

development, announced at a government press conference. Interest rates will be frozen retroactively at their June 28 levels, which was 7.77% as against the current 16.69%, he said. Around 60% of SME loans are subsidised, with 40-45% being variable-rate loans, the minister said. The stock of variable-rate loans to SMEs amount to almost 2,000 billion forints (EUR 4.9bn) and are held by close to 60,000 businesses.

Meanwhile, Nagy said the interest rate on Széchenyi card loans for businesses will rise to 5% from the current 3.5% from Jan. 1. Further, the government is mulling using the bank levy not just as a fiscal tool but also as an economic incentive, Nagy said. "So those that lend will pay a smaller bank levy and those that don't lend will pay a larger one," he said. The government will begin drafting such a scheme next week, he added.

Asked about the loan freeze, Nagy said the measure was an alternative to a moratorium. "We can either have an interest-rate cap or a moratorium," he said. The aim, he added, was to avoid a cost shock in the SME sector. Nagy also said that the new Széchenyi card interest rates will be valid through the first half of next year. The minister said Hungary had every chance to remain on a growth path while Germany could slide into recession.

Meanwhile, Nagy said inflation could be brought down to single digits by the end of 2023. He said that fundamentally price caps were "not good", but "the current times aren't

normal" and shocks needed to be managed. Price caps need to remain in place as long as they are needed and as long as inflation demands it, he added.

In response to a question, the minister said he expected Hungary's economic growth to exceed that of the EU next year, though there will be a temporary slowdown. He said he expects the economy to expand by 4-5% in 2024-2025. Nagy said the central bank had been successful in stabilising inflation and had contributed to financial stability.

Hungary's government is allocating 150 billion forints (EUR 365.6m) towards supporting investments aimed at improving the energy efficiency of large companies as part of the first phase of a new "factory-saving" scheme, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said in a statement. The scheme to be launched on Nov. 2 will be open to companies that invest at least 200 million forints in the expansion of their energy supply capacities with the aim of improving their energy efficiency and reducing energy costs, the foreign ministry cited Péter Szijjártó as saying. The government will cover 30% of the energy-efficiency investments of Budapest-based companies whose applications are approved, while companies based outside the capital will have 45% of their investments covered. Companies will be able to apply for a maximum of six billion forints in funding, Szijjártó said.

GULYÁS: MPS TO DEBATE FINLAND, SWEDEN'S NATO BIDS BY YEAR-END

Asked about Finland and Sweden's NATO membership bids, the prime minister's chief of staff Gergely Gulyás told a government press conference that lawmakers first had to pass legislation concerning the commitments Hungary had made in its agreement with the European Commission. Now that those have been approved, Finland and Sweden's NATO bids will be debated before the mid-December end of the autumn session, he said. Hungary, he added, had been working to strengthen the defence alliance for years and to reach the goal set by NATO to raise defence spending to 2% of GDP. "We're not interested in what is or isn't in Russia's interest," Gulyás said. "The question is what Hungary's interests are, and we will make a decision accordingly."

Meanwhile, the European Commission's decision to withhold funding from Poland, he said, was "unfair, unlawful and politically motivated", adding that it did not contribute to the bloc's unity. He criticised the EC for deciding on the approval of funds for member states based on sympathy.

Gulyás also slammed the local council's decision to remove the statue of a turul bird from the Mukachevo (Munkács) Castle in western Ukraine as "unacceptable". If Ukraine intends to strengthen its ties with Europe, it must respect minority rights, he added.

NATIONAL FLAG HOISTED AT PARLIAMENT

Hungary’s national flag was hoisted with military honours in front of Parliament on Sunday morning, in a state commemoration marking the anniversary of the anti-Soviet revolt which started on October 23, 1956. The ceremony was attended by President Katalin Novák, representatives of military and state organisations, as well as members of the public. In October 1956, a revolution began in Hungary, starting with a peaceful demonstration and continuing with an armed uprising, against the communist dictatorship and the Soviet occupation. Parliament declared October 23 an official national holiday in 1991.

The dedication of Hungarians to freedom and sovereignty is not new-fangled, the group leader of the junior ruling Christian Democrats said on Sunday, marking the 66th anniversary of the revolution. “Fighting for this has been part of our history, and this was the case in October 1956, too,” István Simicskó said in a statement. “We are continuing that fight today,” Simicskó said, adding that “expectations and interventions conflict with Hungarian interests ... always from a different direction”. Hungarians had to band together in the middle of the 20th century against Soviet tanks and Hungarian communists, whereas “today sanctions enforced upon us by Brussels are threatening Hungarian

families and the future of Hungarians”. “We cannot allow others to tell us what the future of Hungary should be this time round either,” he said. “We must look with respect to the heroes of 1956 who acted ... with courage and their love for freedom,” he added.

Opposition leaders on Sunday also addressed gatherings in Budapest on the occasion of the 66th anniversary of the outbreak of the 1956 revolution and freedom fight. “Everyone belongs to the nation,” Ágnes Kunhalmi, co-leader of the opposition Socialist Party, said at the statue of Imre Nagy. “The streetfighters of the 1956 uprising, martyred prime minister Imre Nagy, as well as those who are now fighting for a better education, have been key to the nation’s future,” she said. Kunhalmi insisted that in recent years Fidesz had tried to deny the role of Imre Nagy in the events, focusing solely on the young streetfighter heroes of the uprising. But the martyred prime minister “played just as an important role in 1956 as those who fought in the streets against an authoritarian regime”, and was a victim of it, she added. Kunhalmi said the young people demonstrating today for a better education, a better country, and a shared national cause “are also victims of this authoritarian regime”, which Fidesz, she insisted, had built over the past 12 years. Socialist co-leader Imre Komjáthi said that in October 1956 the Hungarian people had rejected dictatorship and embraced democracy. “Our task today is to lead Hungary back to the path of democracy,” he said.

Bence Tordai, co-leader of the opposition Párbeszéd party, said the hopes and objectives of 1956 had been fulfilled when Hungary became a free and sovereign country thirty years later. Tordai was speaking at his party’s commemoration of the 1956 uprising at the monument of Peter Mansfeld, the youngest victim of the reprisals, in Budapest’s 1st district. As the heroes of 1956 were the young streetfighters, Tordai said, “our hope is again invested in the young people who are out in the streets,” where they “must face an authoritarian regime ... and protect their lives, their future, and the life and fate of their teachers.” Recalling Peter Mansfeld and the other young heroes of 1956, Tordai said nobody should give up hope, and if they had lost hope, they should think of those who never gave up, since later on history confirmed the validity of their ideas and aspirations.

Péter Ungár, co-leader of the LMP party talked about the shared fate of the peoples of the region at his party’s commemoration in Budapest. Ungár said the message of 1956 was that those living in the region “must stand up for each other if they are to stand up for themselves”. “When speaking of 1956, it’s often said that all we received from the West were nice words but no help, and we were left on our own,” he said. Yet other central European peoples stood up for Hungary, he added, even at a great sacrifice. What was special about the events of 1956 is that they were at the same time a revolution against communist

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dictatorship and a freedom fight to regain Hungary's sovereignty from the occupying Soviet army, Ungár said. In connection with the war in Ukraine, Ungár said Hungary could not accept any solution to the conflict that would lead to Ukraine becoming a puppet state, because Hungary would then find itself dangerously close to the Russian empire.

Ferenc Gelencsér, leader of the opposition Momentum Movement, said the first step of the freedom fight was to say that "we do not want to live a lie any longer". Addressing his party's commemoration, Gelencsér said people from various backgrounds had come together on October 23 to reject the lies of communism, and this had shaken the dictatorship to the core. Gelencsér said the dictatorship of the era accused the revolutionaries of being foreign agents, even though they were only fighting for values that "are sadly still missing today: free education, free university, free press, free elections."

Ferenc Gyurcsány, head of the opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), accused the government of being unworthy of the legacy of 1956. At his party's commemoration, he said a government that failed to acknowledge the right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination and freedom was unworthy of the legacy of 1956. "Today the Hungarian government fights for sovereignty where there is in fact sovereignty, and falsely talks about freedom where there is autocracy," Gyurcsány said.

László Toroczkai, leader of the radical Mi Hazánk party, told a commemoration event held in Corvin Passageway, the site of ferocious fighting during the uprising, that the party was fighting against "shape-shifting internationalist powers" and "the power of money". "Hungary was last free when Hungarian revolutionaries ... freed it for a few glorious days." Toroczkai insisted that the Russia-Ukraine war was the site of "brutal, merciless deception". Mi Hazánk, he said, represented the stance that Hungarians "are not happy to see sister nations killing each other," because "we are the heirs and preserving force of a Eurasian civilisation", he said. Hungary has been fighting for its existence for centuries, he said. He called for a European cooperation to "vanquish this internationalist foe". The cooperation could be based on a new cooperation between Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland, he said.

DK MEP DOBREV MEETS EUROPEAN EMBASSY LEADERS

Opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) MEP Klára Dobrev recently discussed the ongoing rule-of-law procedure against Hungary and the linked question of European Union funding, NATO enlargement and other topics with the leaders of the embassies of 25 European countries. At an online press conference after her talks, Dobrev said she had made it clear at

the meeting that "every single euro cent" Hungary would receive must be channelled to Hungarian civil groups, small businesses and local councils. EU monies "must never again be entrusted to the corrupt regime which has been stealing a large part of the funds for the last 12 years", she insisted. The system of EU funds should be changed, Dobrev said, arguing that this was the only guarantee of the monies landing where they were needed.

Noting her own past legislative proposals, Dobrev said her shadow cabinet would join the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), make the courts and the public prosecutor's office "politically independent", change the way the Constitutional Court works, which she said currently restricted the rule of law, and restore "balanced reporting and press freedom". Concerning her shadow cabinet's policy of alliances, Dobrev said members of DK considered themselves European and Hungarian citizens and believed that Hungary "unquestionably" belonged in the EU.

As regards Finland's and Sweden's plan to join NATO, she said the defence alliance was the only entity that could guarantee Hungary's security, adding that boosting its defence capabilities was Hungary's national interest.

Ruling Fidesz said in response that Dobrev had for all intents and purposes "admitted today that she is not only working behind the scenes to undermine Hungary but openly runs a roadshow in an effort to prevent Hungary from getting EU

resources and for them to return to power". "Preaching about democracy, Mrs Gyurcsány has failed to notice that Hungarians have sent clear messages through democratic elections several times that they do not want them," Fidesz said.

SOCIALISTS ELECT KUNHALMI, KOMJÁTHI CO-LEADERS

The opposition Socialist Party elected Ágnes Kunhalmi and Imre Komjáthi co-leaders at its congress in Budapest on Saturday. Kunhalmi and Komjáthi were the only two candidates for the posts. Kunhalmi, who was re-elected after serving as co-leader alongside Bertalan Tóth since 2020, received 90% of the vote and Komjáthi 89%. Of the 237 valid votes cast, Kunhalmi received 214 and Komjáthi 211.

In his speech streamed on the party's Facebook page, Komjáthi urged the opposition parties to cooperate in the 2024 local elections the same way they had done in 2019 and to field candidates on a joint list in the European Parliament elections. He said he wanted the Socialist Party to be the voice of the working people who had yet to be heard by those in power. He said that in addition to the global crisis, Hungary was also plagued by a "private crisis called the Fidesz government". He said the party needed to stand up for those who "had no hope" and also had to represent those who did not vote in the spring but now felt "deceived, disappointed and lost".

Komjáthi said the Socialists were "the only purely left-wing party" and their platform was based on saving freedom, legal certainty and democracy, creating equal opportunities and social security and ending social injustice, as well as strengthening environmental protection and enforcing climate justice.

Kunhalmi said the party needed to break with crisis-management policies based on austerity and reforms forced onto society from above. Hungary today was plagued by crises to which ruling Fidesz has responded with austerity measures, she added.

GIORGIA MELONI ASSURES ORBÁN OF COOPERATION

Italy's new prime minister, Giorgia Meloni assured Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of her cooperation in a message on Twitter. The leader of the Brothers of Italy party, who took her oath on Saturday, responded to Orbán's congratulations. "Thanks, Viktor Orbán! Ready to cooperate to find common and effective solutions to the economic, energy and security challenges Europe is now facing. Let's do our best." Orbán called Meloni's installation as PM a "big day for the European Right."

TEACHERS' UNION CALLS ON GOVT TO RESTORE RIGHT TO STRIKE

Teachers' union PSZ has called on the government and parliament to restore education workers' right to strike and

"put an end to the intimidation of teachers". In a statement approved by its congress in Hajdúszoboszló, in eastern Hungary, this weekend, PSZ repeated its demand that the government should immediately raise wages in the sector and restore the status of vocational training as part of public education. The union stressed the need to set up a separate ministry of education, and called on Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to appoint a commissioner who has expertise in all areas of education to be a partner in talks on structural changes, managing the shortage of teachers, modernising the education system, and a review of the national curriculum. Further demands include decentralisation, guaranteeing the professional autonomy of schools and teachers, a free choice of textbooks and restoring the rights of headmasters. The union "will not let the Hungarian government sacrifice the next generation", the congress concluded.

STUDENTS HOLD SYMPATHY DEMO FOR TEACHERS' RIGHTS IN BUDAPEST

A demonstration was held on Sunday in Budapest in solidarity with teachers' demands for higher wages and better work conditions. At the protest organised by the Adom student organisation and teachers' union PDSZ, Erzsébet Nagy, a senior official of the union, said the movement was fighting not only for

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higher wages and a smaller workload but also “against unlawful measures by the employer”, which she said were designed to “trammel dissent”. Nagy said teachers were leaving the profession in droves, leaving a shrunken workforce. “Everyone can see that, but the government refuses to listen,” she added.

The demonstrators demanded linking teachers’ pay to the minimum wage, restoring the mandatory limit on working hours, and paid overtime. They also called for “more usable material”, and “a liveable school environment”, she said.

Zsuzsanna Szabó, an official of the PSZ union, said a wage hike was necessary but not enough to solve the sector’s problems. Thousands of teachers are retiring every year, and there are not enough young professionals to take their place, she warned. Thus 16,000 teachers missing from Hungarian schools and kindergartens, while one-fifth of schools resort to employing teachers without appropriate training, violating children’s right to an education, she added.

Adom leader Fruzsina Schermann said: “We’re not afraid, we will not back down, and we are right.” The “oppressing power ignores us and mocks us, but we have to persist stubbornly,” she said. Talks with the education authorities, she added, were needed, but she also demanded guarantees for wage hikes and for the teachers fired after earlier protests to be reinstated in their jobs.

Demonstrators gathered on Calvin Square and walked to the square in front of the University of Technology on the Buda side of the Danube.

KARÁCSONY CALLS FOR SCHOOLS TO BE ‘RETURNED’ TO LOCAL COUNCILS

All 3,200 localities in Hungary would happily take back their schools so that they can serve the local community, Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony said at a demonstration in Budapest on Sunday. Karácsony spoke at a protest organised in solidarity with demonstrations held nationwide by students, parents and the PDSZ teachers’ union. The demonstration started at Calvin Square and progressed to the Budapest University of Technology and Economics on the Buda side of the Danube. Karácsony said the “dismantling of educational freedom started when schools were taken away from local authorities, then they were stripped of the free choice of textbooks, and now they are trying to take teachers away from the children.”

Referring to a part of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s speech commemorating 1956 earlier in the day in western Hungary, in which he said “they don’t understand that Budapest isn’t identical to the country”, Karácsony said: “It is true that Budapest does not speak for the whole of Hungary, but neither

does the government. There’s only one thing that is the equivalent of the country: schools, because teachers belong to all of us,” he said. The Budapest municipality originally planned to hold its commemoration of the 1956 anti-communist uprising in front of the university, “but the issue of education is more important now,” Karácsony said, noting that it yielded the space to the student protest.

PARLT DEPUTY SPEAKER HAS TALKS IN KAZAKHSTAN

Sándor Lezsák, the deputy speaker of parliament, held talks with Yerlan Koshanov, speaker of the Kazakh parliament, in Astana, Parliament’s press office said. The two officials marked the 30th anniversary of the two countries’ diplomatic relations and discussed bilateral ties, which are at the level of a strategic partnership, the statement said. They hailed Hungary and Kazakhstan’s strong parliamentary ties, noting that the Kazakh house speaker will pay an official visit to Budapest in the first half of 2023. Meanwhile, Lezsák also held talks with Darkhan Kydyrali, Kazakhstan’s minister of information and social development, Sayasat Nurbek, the minister of science and higher education, and leaders of Astana’s Nazarbayev University. Lezsák’s talks with the university leaders touched on the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarships offered by

Hungary to Kazakh students and cooperation between Hungarian and Kazakh universities.

At his meetings, Lezsák also talked about the memorial year dedicated to the bicentenary of Hungarian poet and revolutionary

Sándor Petőfi in 2023 as part of which central Hungary's Lakitelek Folk School will cooperate with the International Organisation of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) in holding an international literary translation competition involving Petőfi's works.

The deputy speaker also visited the site of the Alzhir labour camp where he laid a wreath at the memorial honouring the Hungarian women who were imprisoned there in the Stalinist era, the statement said.