

PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Katalin Novák attends Grain from Ukraine humanitarian scheme in Kyiv

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU development ministers meet in Brussels

Events related to war in Ukraine

Stats office prelim report on investment in Q3

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HUNGARY NOT TO GIVE IN

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán attended an executive committee meeting of the Centrist Democrat International (CDI), of which he is a vice president, in Panama City through a videoconference on Saturday, his press chief said.

Assessing the situation in Europe, Orbán said there were simultaneous challenges, including the war in Ukraine, the resulting economic crisis, illegal and increasingly violent migration, and the spread of western neo-Marxist ideologies, Bertalan Havasi said. Commenting on the war, Orbán said Europe was united regarding the goal to stop Russia posing a threat to the security of Europe, and this required a sovereign Ukraine. When it comes to the means to achieve this, especially sanctions, opinions differ, he added, saying that the debates would continue. Concerning economic issues, he said the short-term goal was to avoid a recession. Orbán said the central European countries would likely manage to avoid the recession even though soaring energy prices resulting from Brussels' sanctions make this very difficult. In periods of crises, he said, there is a need to take action, and Hungary would certainly not give in.

PRESIDENT NOVÁK: 'THOSE IN NEED CAN ALWAYS RELY ON HUNGARIANS'

"Those in need can always rely on Hungarians. This is why I came to Kyiv today and this is why we support the Grain from Ukraine initiative," President Katalin Novák said in Kyiv on Saturday. Novák has been invited by counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky to participate in the "Grain from Ukraine" humanitarian scheme launched on the 90th anniversary of the Holodomor, the great Ukrainian famine of 1932/1933, to promote grain exports to countries in Asia and Africa that are the most vulnerable to famine and drought. Novák said that being the president of a neighbourly country with Ukraine, peace and stability were crucially important for her. "Securing the food supply chain and the undisturbed flow of goods is not only a dry issue of free trade or market economy but a matter of life and death," she said. The president added that Hungarians were not only aware of the horrors of the Holodomor, but belonged to the few nations that commemorate the tragedy. She cited a memorial in central Budapest, near Elizabeth Bridge, and Hungarian parliament holding a commemoration on the anniversary. Parliament has given unanimous support to a resolution issued about the great famine, she added.

In order to guarantee the autonomy of ethnic minorities in Hungary, all ethnic minorities are represented by an advocate in parliament, she said. "I am proud to say that there is also a Ukrainian representative in Hungary's Parliament," she added. Novák said the tragedy which happened 90 years ago "reminds us all that there are many people, men, women and especially children, threatened by famine even today".

"Hungary always clearly stated that help must be taken to where it is needed. We, Hungarians are there when humanitarian aid is needed and when more than a million refugees need to be received from Ukraine. We are also there when it comes to medical equipment being sent or donated through the humanitarian scheme dubbed Hungary Helps. And we also offer help directly, as we are doing it today," Novák said. Hungary has offered to deliver 10,000 tonnes of grains worth 3.5 million dollars to Africa under the current scheme, she added. Hungary is also helping with logistics, with an intermodal terminal on the Hungary-Ukraine border which serves faster transport and, if necessary, storage of goods, she said. Novák added that the war in Ukraine was the most important and urgent challenge in the region. The two sides must return to the negotiating table, reopen diplomatic channels and the final goal should be signing a fair peace agreement, which she said would serve everyone's interest.

The president said she had been in office for six months and always condemned Russia's aggression against the independent neighbour country, Ukraine. "As a wife and a mother with three children, I am shocked by the events in the neighbourly country and deeply share the grief and pain of all parents, mothers, fathers, husbands, grandparents and children," she added.

Novák said it was everyone's duty to help victims and those in need, adding that the greatest humanitarian scheme in Hungary's history was under way, launched to help Ukrainians. "Vladimir Putin's responsibility for this war is crystal clear," she said. "We, Hungarians stood against unnecessary bloodshed, pain and suffering right from the start," she added. "Hungary and Ukraine are neighbours and our neighbour can always rely on our help," she added. Novák expressed hope that 2023 will be a year of peace.

PRESIDENT NOVÁK LIGHTS FIRST CANDLE OF ADVENT IN BEREHOVE REFORMED CHURCH

President Katalin Novák attended a mass for Advent at the Berehove (Beregszász) Reformed Church in western Ukraine on Sunday and said it was a privilege to light the first candle of Advent in the company of ethnic Hungarians from Transcarpathia. She prayed together with members of the local community at a mass delivered by

Fábián Sándor Zán, the bishop of the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia. Novák said that this March, soon after the start of the war, she had been praying for peace in the company of seventy reformed pastors in the same church. "There are fifteen million Hungarians here now in spirit from Hungary, all parts of the Carpathian Basin and from the diasporas," she added. The president assured the ethnic Hungarians that "we are together and we will stay together, no matter how difficult life is in Transcarpathia, no matter how difficult and challenging it is to be Hungarian". Novák said that during the past nine months, the war could destroy homes, roads and lives but "the war cannot destroy love". "Hungary will give shelter to all refugees and they can stay as long as they have to," she added. During her visit in Berehove, she laid a wreath at the memorial plaque of former President Ferenc Mádl at the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: 'WHAT WE WANT IS NOT ANOTHER PACKAGE, WE WANT PEACE'

"We are neighbours of Ukraine, we are a direct neighbour, so the impacts of the war on us are immediate and severe ... what we want is not another package, we want peace," Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said

in an interview with France24 on Saturday. Szijjártó said in the interview, conducted in English in the political programme Talking Europe and posted on his Facebook page, that "we have allowed one million refugees already from Ukraine to enter the territory of Hungary, our inflation is skyrocketing ... last year we had to pay 7 billion euros for our imported energy, this year we have to pay 19 billion".

"We support and stand up for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine", he said. In response to a question concerning whether Hungary would veto a ninth package of sanctions, he said "there is no proposal on the table yet."

HUNGARY, FAO TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION

Hungary as a committed member of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) helps attain the goals of sustainable development by offering a scholarship programme to nearly 50 countries and financing joint projects, Minister of Agriculture István Nagy told Qu Dongyu, FAO Director-General, in Budapest, the ministry told MTI in a statement. During his stay in Hungary from November 25 to 27, the director-general held talks with the minister and visited FAO's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and Shared Service Centre, which have been operating in Budapest for nearly 15 years. Nagy assured

Qu Dongyu that Hungary would continue to grant scholarships to youths from developing countries for their masters studies, and provide Hungarian experts for FAO projects. They agreed that the Ukraine-Russia war waged in Hungary's neighbourhood was a grave threat to global food supply.

Qu Dongyu invited the minister to FAO's Rome Headquarters to present Hungary's experience in water management.

SOCIALISTS: HUNGARIAN PEOPLE NEED EU FUNDS

Hungarian families badly need European Union funds to tackle the current cost-of-living crisis, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) told MTI after talks with the European parliamentary leader of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in Madrid. The Hungarian delegation attending a Socialist International congress has asked Iratxe García Pérez to help develop a "uniform Socialist position" on the funds due to Hungary. The delegates also asked the European Socialists to develop a timetable for "forcing" Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to comply with rule-of-law norms and eliminate corruption. The Socialists and Social Democrats have arrived at the conclusion that the crises should be overcome with more welfare payments and state intervention as neoliberal economic policies always generate inequalities and the

related costs have to be borne by the common people. MSZP co-leader Ágnes Kunhalmi has called for joint efforts to protect employees, ensure housing security, guarantee the future of families and young people, and tackle climate and environmental problems. "We have to fight for human rights, social security and democracy again and again," she said.

DK: GOVT WOULD SEND MAN INTO SPACE DESPITE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

It is unacceptable that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government would send a man to space for 40 billion forints (EUR 97m) while it is unable to set aside funds for raising teachers' salaries and subsidising utility bills, Zoltán Varga, a lawmaker of the opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), said on Sunday.

Citing foreign press reports and space industry portals, he said that Orbán's government is going to spend 100 million dollars on sending a Hungarian into the outer space with the help of the US company Axiom Space. This is unacceptable in a period when the country "is plunging into a cost-of-living crisis caused by ruling Fidesz," Varga told an online press conference.

"If this happens, Hungary is indeed light years away from a true European democracy," he said. A responsible government would never do such a thing in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, the DK lawmaker said.

UKRAINE FAMINE-GENOCIDE COMMEMORATED WITH CANDLE-LIGHTING

Candles were lit and the Danube-facing side of Parliament plunged into darkness on Saturday to mark the 90th anniversary of the 1932-1933 famine-genocide in Ukraine (Holodomor), Parliament's press office has said.

The Ukrainian victims of communist terror were commemorated with candles placed on the steps of Parliament and in Budapest's Petöfi Square, the office told MTI. The commemoration which also marked the 19th anniversary of the adoption of a solidarity resolution condemning Stalinist crimes and declaring that the 1932-33 famine was a genocide was initiated by Liliana Grexa, spokesperson of the ethnic Ukrainian minority in parliament.

The statement noted that Hungary's parliament was among the first to recognise the Holodomor as a genocide when it adopted its solidarity resolution on November 26, 2003. Members of the Ukrainian minority also commemorated the genocide at the Holodomor memorials in Szeged, in the south, and Nyíregyháza, in the east.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: BMW RAISES INVESTMENT IN DEBRECEN PLANT

German carmaker BMW is adding a battery assembly plant to its electric vehicle factory being built

in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary, bringing its investment in the project to 800 billion forints (EUR 2bn), the minister of foreign affairs and trade said on Friday. The addition of the battery plant makes the factory the third biggest greenfield investment in Hungary's history, Péter Szijjártó said in Debrecen. The construction of the new plant will create 500 jobs in addition to the 1,000 originally planned, the minister said, adding that the government is supporting the investment with a 13.5 billion forint grant. Szijjártó praised the Debrecen plant, saying its operation will completely exclude the use of fossil fuels. He welcomed that BMW will build its first full platform for electric models at the east Hungarian factory and even produce the batteries for them there. The investment will give further momentum to Hungary's car industry, whose output increased by 23% in the first nine months of the year, exceeding 8,700 billion forints, Szijjártó said. He added that the sector's output could exceed 10,000 billion forints for the first time this year. "Hungary by now has become the European champion of the automotive sector's transition to electric vehicles, and we are rightfully being touted as the favourite for the world championship title, too," the minister said. He praised the Hungarian government's strategic decision to set the goal of making Hungary the leader of the European and eventually the global electric vehicle industry. The number of

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electric cars on the roads could reach 300 million by 2030, with these types of vehicles making up 60% of new car sales by then, Szijjártó said. This means that demand for electric batteries will rise to around 5,600 GWh by 2030 from 340 GWh in 2021, he added. The minister underlined the importance of Hungary having established the most favourable investment environment for EV companies and having formed alliances with the sector's biggest Eastern and Western players. Hungary today is the meeting point for the Eastern and Western EV industries, he added. Szijjártó noted that Hungary was the only country besides Germany and China to have plants from all three big German premium carmakers and that three of the leading Chinese and South Korean battery makers have decided to set up their European production centres in Hungary. BMW production chief Milan N Nedeljković said the company was planning for the long term and was strongly committed to Debrecen and Hungary. He said the Debrecen base would be the first BMW plant to fully embody the concept of the iFACTORY. Hans-Peter Kemser, the director of the Debrecen plant, said construction was on schedule, adding that BMW was currently recruiting its staff for the factory. BMW's training centre will launch its dual training programmes next autumn in cooperation with its regional training partners, he said. Markus Fallböhrer, BMW's senior vice president for battery production, said battery and vehicle production at the

plant will both begin in 2025, adding that construction on the 140,000 sqm battery assembly plant had recently got under way.

INTEGRITY AUTHORITY: 24 NON-GOVT ACTORS APPLY TO JOIN ANTI-CORRUPTION WORKING GROUP

Hungary's Integrity Authority on Friday said it has received 24 applications from non-governmental actors to its anti-corruption working group. Under the law establishing the authority, the body has until Dec. 1 to select the ten non-governmental experts or representatives of civil organisations that will make up the anti-corruption working group along with government officials, it noted.

The authority said it began assessing the applications on Friday following the expiration of the Nov. 24 deadline for submitting them. The anti-corruption working group will act as the Integrity Authority's independent analytical, advisory and decision support body. Besides its chairperson, it will have ten members representing state bodies and ten representing non-governmental actors. Parliament passed the law on establishing the Integrity Authority as an autonomous public institution to investigate fraud, conflict of interest, corruption and other crimes in connection with the use of European Union funds in Hungary on Oct. 4.

TEACHERS' ORGS, CIVILIANS HOLD PROTEST IN BUDAPEST

Organisations representing teachers' interests and civilians held a demonstration in central Budapest on Saturday afternoon. The protesters gathered at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences headquarters and a group marched to the nearby Interior Ministry building to submit a nine-point list of demands in the form of a petition, originally compiled by the Civil Public Education Platform organisation in October. The demonstrators then moved to Kossuth Square near Parliament where students and teachers gave speeches and representatives of the United Students' Front also addressed the crowd. Flags of teachers' trade union PSZ, other professional interest representation organisations and Amnesty International were on display, as well as signs showing slogans of the series of demonstrations which started in September.

Greeting the participants in a video message, Graphisoft CEO Gábor Bojár, founder of the noÁR movement, said that education was a common national issue, which does not belong to the political Right or Left. He proposed that politicians should offer their 2022 salary increase to teachers.

The demonstrators expressed their support for a public dialogue to be launched by the government, the right to strike to be restored in public

education, a dedicated ministry of public education to be set up and competitive wages to be introduced in the sector.

MORE THAN 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON SATURDAY

Fully 5,857 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Saturday, while another 4,253 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued 30-day residency permits to 244 people, ORFK told MTI on Sunday. Budapest received 160 people, 60 children among them, who travelled by train, ORFK said.

POTÁPI: EQUESTRIAN PROGRAMMES MUST CONTINUE

Support for equestrian programmes should continue, no matter how hard times are to come, the state secretary for policy for Hungarian communities abroad in the Prime Minister's Office said in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely) on Friday. "A love for horses is part of the Hungarian and Szekler identity," Árpád János Potápi told the 3rd Szekler Land's Equestrian Forum, a closing event of the Transylvanian Equestrian Programme supported by the Hungarian government.

Potápi noted that his office had allocated 220 million forints (EUR 533,000) to support 80 equestrian associations in Transylvania this year. "Besides financial support, the equestrian sector can thrive through a cooperation of its players and through sharing experience," he told public media after the forum. Tibor Kolozsvári, a municipal councillor for Harghita County and the local commissioner of the programme, said "equestrian sport is undergoing a Renaissance in Szekler Land" with 2,000 children active in horse-riding in Transylvania and over 10,000 people participating in horse-riding events.