

PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Katalin Novák skates with children in Zánka

UPCOMING EVENTS

PM gives interview to public radio

Events related to war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

‘PEACE NEEDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE’

Communication channels with regard to the war in Ukraine must be maintained to counter the risk of escalation, Péter Szijjártó said in Łódź, Poland.

Addressing a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the foreign minister added that Hungary “sends a message from the direct vicinity of the conflict that peace is needed as soon as possible”. A ministry statement noted that Szijjártó told the meeting that as a neighbouring state of Ukraine, Hungary was “directly and severely impacted” by the effects of the conflict, noting that Hungary is carrying out the largest humanitarian operation in its history.

The minister also noted that Poland was struck by missiles around two weeks ago, which may well have led to the outbreak of the third world war had Poland’s leaders not reacted “so calmly and responsibly”. Politicians and journalists who referred to a “deliberate missile attack”, he said, had acted “shamefully” by risking escalation. Similar risks remain as long as the war continues, he added. Referring to the thousands of Ukrainian families lacking electricity amid the winter, Szijjártó said this added urgency to the need to seek a peace settlement.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: 'WINTER THREATENS HUMANITARIAN DISASTER'

The approaching winter raises the spectre of a humanitarian disaster in Ukraine, where "peace must come as soon as possible," Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Geneva, adding that Europe also suffers from the "dual pressure from the consequences of war and illegal migration". Speaking at the general debate of a meeting of the UN International Organisation for Migration, the minister noted that Hungary is implementing the largest humanitarian action of its history to help the refugees fleeing the conflict in neighbouring Ukraine. It has accepted some 1 million people and offers schooling and provisions to those who want to stay, he said. At the same time, the coming winter is threatening with a humanitarian disaster and "the prospects are terrible" for Ukraine, Szijjártó said. "When, if not now, should we call for peace as soon as possible and warn those who escalate the war further rather than helping to stop it?" he said.

Meanwhile, Hungary also faces a "siege" at its southern border, where it thwarted 255,000 illegal entry attempts this year only, he said. "A new dimension of violence and aggression" has also emerged as armed migrants attacked each other and border patrols there, he said. The number of new arrivals is growing, as shown in the 1,500 actions authorities have

launched against people smugglers, a number "similar to those during the migration crisis of 2015", he said.

Hungary is ready to accept all refugees from Ukraine as the first safe country for those fleeing the war, but will reject those who have "crossed five or six states" to come to its southern border, he said. "We will always protect our borders, fulfilling our national and European Union obligations," he said.

He called for an end to the EU's "pro-migration" policy, calling for support to member states in protecting their territory. "Pro-migration" policies support the "business model" of people smugglers, he said. "The so-called NGOs bringing asylum seekers to the continent across the borders with safe countries or via dangerous routes across the Mediterranean also count as people smugglers," he said.

Later on Thursday, Szijjártó told the UN's Forum on Minority Issues that Hungary remained a staunch supporter of Hungarians living abroad and of persecuted Christians worldwide. The government sees the right to the free use of one's mother tongue as "one of the most fundamental rights" to be ensured by all states, he said. "Unfortunately, not all neighbours of Hungary share that approach, as opposed to Serbia where minority rights are enforced in an exemplary fashion," he said. Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world today, especially threatened by terrorist organisations, he said. The government-sponsored Hungary Helps programme has spent

some 80 million dollars on supporting 1 million people worldwide, ensuring they could make a living in their home countries or return there, he said.

ANTI-CORRUPTION TASK FORCE TO MEET ON DEC. 13

All positions on Hungary's new Anti-corruption Task Force, a 21-strong consultative body attached to the Integration Authority, have now been filled, and the body will hold its first session on Dec. 13. Ten members of the body have been delegated by state agencies, while another ten, reserved for NGOs and private individuals, have been chosen through a public selection process, the authority said in a statement. The representatives of 6 NGOs, including Átlátszo, Transparency International and K-Monitor, as well as four individuals, have secured seats on the team led by Ferenc Bíró, the head of the authority as a whole. The recently established Integrity Authority is tasked with probing any cases of fraud, conflict of interest or graft in connection with Hungary's European Union funding.

DEFENCE MINISTER ADDRESSES BERLIN SECURITY CONFERENCE

The world faces a new era of security and defence, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky, the defence minister, told the Berlin Security Conference / 21th Congress on European

Security and Defence on Thursday, the ministry said. Threats appear in the form of war from the east and waves of illegal migration from the south, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said at the event also addressed by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. The strengthening of NATO is a common interest and Hungary's position is that NATO is a defence alliance of independent states, and the alliance can only be built on strong national defence forces, he added. Hungary is carrying out one of the largest defence force developments in Hungarian history, involving the acquisition of new equipment and greater attention paid to personnel, to create a structurally modern and effective army, he added. Also, developments in the country's defence industry are aimed at creating a defence ecosystem involving innovation and building links with the international defence industry network, he said.

Hungary is a dedicated and reliable NATO ally, as proven by its participation in international operations, Szalay-Bobrovniczky said. Hungary's participation in international missions is among the highest in NATO, he added.

During his stay in Berlin, Szalay-Bobrovniczky held talks with counterpart Christine Lambrecht, Tobias Lindner, minister of state at the Federal Foreign Office, and several representatives of the Bundestag.

SZITA DISSATISFIED OVER VON DER LEYEN'S LACK OF RESPONSE TO SANCTIONS LETTER

The head of a body which represents the views of 80% of all Hungarian settlements has expressed dissatisfaction over not receiving a response from EC President Ursula von der Leyen to a letter urging the EU to change its policy of sanctions against Russia and also unlock EU funding for Hungary. The letter sent by the head of the Association of Cities with County Rights was attached to a petition signed by 2,551 local councils. The association's head, Károly Szita, has approached the head of the European Commission's representation in Budapest asking him to mediate concerning the letter, saying he had written to the EC president more than a month and a half ago. "It's now clear that the flawed sanctions policy will bring Europe to ruin," Szita, who is also the mayor of Kaposvár, in south-western Hungary, told a press conference held in front of the EC representation. He also said Hungarians were entitled to the EU funds being withheld.

Meanwhile, he noted that Budapest had not been among the petition's signatories, and he urged the capital's leadership to join the initiative. "We ask Budapest's leadership to put aside everyday politics and join our petition," he said. "Let's stand shoulder to shoulder in this struggle to get Brussels' sanctions policy to aid rather than hurt Hungarian localities."

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, ARMENIA AGREE TO RESTORE DIPLOMATIC TIES

Hungary and Armenia have agreed on re-establishing diplomatic relations, Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's foreign minister, said on Facebook on Thursday. The minister held talks with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan on the sidelines of a Council of Ministers session of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Łódź, Poland. Szijjártó noted that diplomatic relations between the two countries were broken off over ten years ago.

"After several rounds of preparatory talks and mutual gestures, I have agreed with my Armenian colleague on restoring diplomatic relations. This is fitting in the case of two Christian countries," he wrote.

The minister called Hungary's ethnic Armenian community an important link between the two countries, adding that the government had considerably increased support for that community. Restoring diplomatic relations will open up possibilities for commercial, cultural, educational and touristic cooperation, Szijjártó said.

OFFICIAL: NO DECISION ON CENTRALISATION OF OUTPATIENT CLINICS

The government has not made a decision yet whether to take outpatient clinics over from municipalities, László Felkai, state

secretary at the interior ministry, told parliament's legislative committee on Thursday. In his response to concerns raised by opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), Párbeszéd, and LMP, Felkai said the government would first review those facilities and make a decision "around March". András Jámbor of Párbeszéd asked the state secretary about a recent government decree under which welfare institutions were no longer required to provide a minimum of services. Felkai said the decree was aimed at saving those facilities from closure in view of soaring energy prices, adding that the measure would only be in effect in the winter.

Péter Takács, the ministry's state secretary for health, said patients whose state of health is such that they cannot get by on social care would still have access to hospital care.

The committee adopted an amendment to the Health Act aimed at allowing the broadening of GP practices to include outpatient specialist care services.

HUNGARY GRIPENS CONCLUDE MISSION POLICING BALTIC AIRSPACE

The Gripen fighter jets of the Hungarian air force have concluded policing Baltic airspace, a task they performed over the past four months as part of a NATO mission. "The Hungarian air force's fighter jets performed their duty in a war-time situation when there is a war

in Ukraine and the tension between NATO and Russia is the highest since the cold war," Gábor Gion, the foreign ministry's state secretary for strategic analysis, said at the Siauliai airbase in Lithuania on Thursday. As the Hungarian air force proved its skills in the Baltic Air Policing mission (BAP), Hungary indicated willingness to participate again in 2025, he said.

BAP Commander Attila Vanyik noted that the current mission has involved 4 Gripens and 77 troops serving as part of the Quick Reaction Alert protocol, with Czech support. Under the protocol, the jets must intercept unidentified aircraft within 15 minutes of receiving an alert. The Gripens responded to 19 alerts, all due to unidentified Russian planes, including fighter jets and military transport planes, entering international airspace surrounding the Baltic states without submitting a flight-plan, Vanyik said. Hungary has already participated in the mission in 2015 and 2019.

ORBÁN MEETS FORMER CZECH PRESIDENT IN BUDAPEST

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met former Czech President Václav Klaus for talks in Budapest on Thursday. According to the prime minister's press chief, the talks focused on the war in Ukraine and the economic crisis threatening recession and an energy shortage. Klaus also presented his book "Inflation returning: A slippery road to indebtedness" to Orbán.

LAWMAKER: DUNAFERR ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES SECURE

Electricity supplies for steelmaker ISD Dunafer will be guaranteed for a temporary period thanks to a government decree instructing the electricity operator not to disconnect a supplier from the grid, a ruling Fidesz lawmaker has said. Lajos Mészáros told a press conference on Thursday that Dunafer, which employs thousands of people, operated in a very energy-demanding sector and has been weighed down by energy price hikes caused by the Russia-Ukraine war. The company has accumulated significant debt, and E.ON had been planning to disconnect ISD Power, ISD Dunafer's current electricity supplier, from the grid at 12.30pm on Thursday, which would have resulted in an emergency, he added. The situation has been resolved for the time being, with energy supplies guaranteed until operations can be securely phased out in areas where a sudden stoppage could cause damage or industrial accidents, he said. Dunafer's years of troubles, he added, were due to a botched privatization carried under Fidesz's governing predecessors, and it had lost ground during the boom in the steel industry, by failing to make investments that would shield it from crises and raise its environmental protection profile.

The government recently said it was examining how to save the troubled steel plant which recently shut down both blast furnaces, but it was constrained by the fact that Dunafer is a private company. A further complication is that it is impossible to establish who the actual owner of the plant is, while the company has no legitimate management.

Donau Brennstoffkontor GmbH (DBK), which has been supplying coke for production for decades, unexpectedly refused to deliver, the company said, explaining its move to shut down the furnaces. The company's survival depends on maintaining production and restarting its blast furnaces, but this depends on securing the right amount and quality of coke within a week, it added. Technical risks associated with a longer shutdown and the huge costs of restarting operations mean a quick resumption is indispensable to the company's future viability, the company said.

HUNGARY GDP UP BY 4.0% IN Q3

Hungary's GDP grew by an annual 4.0% in the third quarter, slowing from 6.5% in Q2, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) confirmed in a second reading of data released on Thursday. Adjusted for seasonal and calendar year effects, Q3 GDP growth was 4.1%. Quarter on quarter, adjusted GDP fell by 0.4%. GDP growth in Q1-Q3 climbed by an annual 6.1%.

On the production side, services added 3.4 percentage points to third-quarter year-on-year headline growth, while industry contributed 1.7 percentage points and construction 0.1 percentage point. The farm sector, hit by drought, shaved 1.8 percentage points off headline growth. On the expenditure side, final consumption contributed 2.3 percentage points to growth, while gross capital formation cut 0.8 percentage point off the headline figure. The trade balance added 2.5 percentage points to headline growth.

PMI DOWN AT 54.7 IN NOV

Hungary's seasonally-adjusted Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) fell to 54.7 points in November from 56.4 in October, showing slowing expansion in the manufacturing sector, the Hungarian Association of Logistics, Purchasing and Inventory Management (Halpim) said on Thursday. A PMI over 50 signals expansion in the sector. Among the PMI sub-indices, the new orders index fell from the previous month but remained over the 50-point mark. The production volume index also declined but was over 50. The employment index indicated growth for the fourteenth month in a row. Delivery times were longer in November. The gauge of purchased inventories dropped but was above the 50-point mark.

TRADE DEFICIT AT EUR 745 M IN SEPT

Hungary had a 745 million euro trade deficit in September, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data on Thursday. The gap - revised from 652 million euros in the first reading - was well under the 1.580 billion one in August, the largest in a series of consecutive monthly deficits running for more than a year, an anomaly for Hungary, an export-driven economy where trade surpluses are the norm. Exports rose by an annual 29.0% to 13.367 billion euros, while imports increased by 35.1% to 14.112 billion euros.

BUDAPEST AIRPORT CUTS 2023 PASSENGER FORECAST BY 2M

Liszt Ferenc International operator Budapest Airport on Thursday said it cut its forecast for passenger numbers next year by 2 million because of a windfall profit tax on airlines, high inflation and an economic slowdown. Budapest Airport had earlier forecast passenger numbers would return to 2019 levels -- close to 16.2 million -- in 2023. Budapest Airport blamed the windfall profit tax on airlines for cancelled capacity for autumn and the winter season. That downturn affects the entire tourism industry and results in potential revenue loss of over 100 billion forints, it said, adding that passenger numbers reached 10,230,400 in January-October.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.



SOME 13,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON WEDNESDAY

Fully 4,883 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Wednesday, while another 8,160 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued 30-day residency permits to 188 people, ORFK told MTI on Thursday. Budapest received 89 people, 29 children among them, who travelled by train, ORFK said.

DÖMÖTÖR: OVER ONE MILLION SO FAR RESPOND IN NATIONAL CONSULTATION SURVEY

Some 1,023,000 people have participated so far in the government's National Consultation survey, Csaba Dömötör, a state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, said on Thursday in a video on the government's Facebook page. The robust feedback, he said, showed that the survey's questions concerned issues "that affect all of us, and everyone has an opinion". He said

that the sanctions were supposed to bring an end to the Russia-Ukraine war but "this did not happen". "Instead, we have received increasingly large economic storm clouds". Energy and food prices have soared, and inflation has been stubbornly high, he said, adding that a change of direction was needed, and "if many of us speak up, we can achieve what we want together".

HUNGARY AIMS TO BE AMONG FIVE MOST LIVEABLE COUNTRIES IN EUROPE BY 2030

The government's aim with Hungary's recently approved recovery plan is for the country to become one of the five most liveable countries in the European Union by 2030, the state secretary in charge of regional development, Csaba Latorcai, told an event organised by the alliance of entrepreneurs. Following 18 months of consultations, the European Commission has approved adoption of Hungary's Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). No other country received a better assessment of its RRF than Hungary, he added.

HUNGARIAN STRING BAND, LIPIZZAN HORSE BREEDING ON UNESCO LIST

The Hungarian string band tradition and Lipizzan horse breeding traditions are among new inscriptions on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the Directorate of Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Skanzen Open Air Museum in Szentendre said. The Hungarian string band tradition had been submitted for inscription independently by Hungary and the Lipizzan horse breeding traditions were submitted jointly by Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, the statement said.

The UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity also includes from Hungary the Busó festivities at Mohács, folk art of the Matyó embroidery, falconry and indigo dyeing. The UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices includes from Hungary the Táncház method and the folk music heritage according to the Kodály concept.