

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Participants at the seventh Santa Claus Run in Budapest

MTI/Zoltán Balogh

UPCOMING EVENTS

Szijjártó starts two-day visit in Bratislava

Parliament holds plenary session

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Stats office prelim report on retail trade in Oct 2022

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HUNGARY-SLOVENIA ENERGY LINK 'SYMBOL OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE'

The linking of Hungary and Slovenia's energy infrastructures is a symbol of the two peoples' hope for the future, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said at a ceremony marking completion of the construction of the cross-border Cirkovce-Pince electrical transmission line, in Slovenia's Cirkovce on Friday.

Hungarians and the peoples living in the territory of the former Yugoslavia used to be cut off from each other, the prime minister said. Hungarians therefore built all of their links in an East-West context, whether it be gas, oil or electricity, he added. This separation remained after the breakup of Yugoslavia, making Slovenia the only one of Hungary's neighbours with whom it had not had its gas, oil or electrical grids linked, Orbán added. He noted that it was his first government in 1999 which had extended the power transmission line to the border and linked it with Croatia's network. Orbán thanked the Slovenian governments that had helped link the transmission lines and the Slovenian people who had supported the project. He said Hungary needed to do everything in order to link the remaining energy infrastructures with Slovenia. Orbán said he believed central Europe had a bright future ahead of it. "Though we speak different languages, our life instincts bind us together," Orbán said.

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ORBÁN: GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS EVEN MORE VALUABLE IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

Europe, and Hungary face security, economic and energy supply risks, and good neighbourly relations become even more valuable in times of uncertainty, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told a press conference in Slovenia on Friday.

He underlined the value of Hungary and Slovenia's good relations, noting Hungary and Slovenia's cooperation in air policing as part of their NATO missions. Economic ties between the two countries are also "excellent", the prime minister said, noting that bilateral trade turnover had risen by 35%. Investments between the two countries are also up and a joint fund has been set up for border region developments, he added. Hungary and Slovenia are also connected by the fact that they both view the minority communities in each other's countries as assets, Orbán said. Support for the ethnic Slovene community in Hungary has risen six-fold since the Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance came into power in 2010, and Slovenia also sees ethnic Hungarians living in its territory as assets, he added. Answering a question, the prime minister said the aim of the cooperation between Serbia, Austria and Hungary was to jointly protect their borders against migration, adding that they welcomed help from other

countries, too, including Slovenia. This, he said, would boost the protection of Europe's external borders and push effective border control as far south as possible. As regards plans for a Slovenian-Hungarian natural gas pipeline, Orbán said the two countries were in agreement on the need to link their gas networks. Hungary has a larger-capacity pipeline in mind, while Slovenia wants to start smaller before increasing capacity, he said. This can be resolved, as Hungary can accept starting out with a smaller-capacity pipeline, he added. Meanwhile, Orbán said Hungary can look to Romania, Croatia and Slovenia if it wants to further reduce its dependence on Russian energy. Hungary is interested in all three directions because it wants to end its dependence and wants as many options as possible. The prime minister added that he was prepared for pragmatic cooperation with his Slovenian counterpart. Asked about energy exchange prices, Orbán said that though unlike Slovenia, Hungary imports most of its energy from Russia, the prices on the energy exchange also impact energy prices in Hungary through the agreement signed with Russia.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY RECEIVED EXEMPTION FROM USING OIL PRICE CAP

Hungary has received exemption from the use of the oil price cap, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook on Saturday. The European

Union will introduce a price cap on oil, yet it would be high time for Brussels to realise that such measures hurt Europe's economy the most, he said. Szijjártó said that increasing energy volumes would be required in order to reduce prices. "During the talks about the oil price cap, we were fighting hard for Hungarian interests and we succeeded in the end. Hungary has received exemption from the use of the oil price cap," he added. As a result, the security of Hungary's energy supplies has been again successfully protected, he said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: INCREASE IN ELECTRICITY IMPORTS CAN REDUCE NATURAL GAS CONSUMPTION

Natural gas plays a crucial role in Hungary's energy supply, but one way to reduce this dependency is by increasing electricity imports, which the government is working on, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said in Slovenia's Cirkovce on Friday. One of the most oft-repeated words in the European debates on energy is "diversification", which to Hungary means procuring as many types of energy sources from as many resources and via as many routes as possible, a foreign ministry statement cited Péter Szijjártó as saying. Hungary has therefore launched two critical projects aimed at guaranteeing the country's long-term electricity security, Szijjártó said. He welcomed the successful completion of one such

project with the linking of Hungary and Slovenia's electrical grids. The second one entails the supply of green electricity to Hungary from Azerbaijan via Georgia and Romania, the minister said, adding that the agreement on the transmissions will be signed in Bucharest in two weeks' time. "This will not only boost the security of our energy supply but also allow us to consider environmental protection aspects and maintain Hungary's lead position when it comes to responsible, eco-friendly energy consumption," Szijjártó said. Hungary's import and consumption of electricity will now become more secure and balanced, he added. Szijjártó noted that Slovenia was the only one of Hungary's seven neighbours with which it had yet to link its gas supply network. "I have to say that this hasn't been and isn't up to us," Szijjártó said. "We've initiated this several times." Slovenia's past governments "did not support these plans that much" but it appears that the country is now more "politically receptive" to them, Szijjártó said. He added that there "isn't really a point in building these pipelines under a capacity of about 2 billion cubic metres".

DK CALLS FOR RECOVERING ADVANCE PAYMENTS TRANSFERRED TO 'FIDESZ BILLIONAIRES'

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) calls for recovering advance payments of European Union support transferred by the government to "Fidesz billionaires". Party MEP Sándor

Rónai said the European Commission had recently proposed suspending the payment of several billion euros in EU support to Hungary as a result of the Orbán government's "stealing of EU monies" over the past twelve years. The Hungarian government regularly makes advance payments using taxpayers' monies for projects funded by the EU even before the transfer arrives in the budget. "If the EU funding does not arrive, then the monies already paid to [businessman] Lőrinc Mészáros and other Fidesz billionaires will be doubly missing from the Hungarian people's pockets," he said. According to DK, the advance payments must be immediately recovered and transferred to Hungarians SMEs to help them pay their utility bills, Rónai said.

LMP CALLS FOR INTRODUCTION OF GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX

The opposition LMP's co-leader called for the introduction of a global minimum tax and the taxation of foreign-owned large companies at a press conference on Saturday. Responding to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's radio interview on Friday, Máté Kanász-Nagy said that taxation in Hungary almost exclusively favours large companies and multinationals. The government has "created a tax haven for global corporations" and that is why the prime minister called the global minimum tax a "job killing tax hike", he added. In this context, LMP

made an amendment proposal to the corporate tax act, which would make the corporate tax fairer by introducing a second bracket. According to their plan, the current 9% tax would remain unchanged up to sales revenue of 500 million forints, and a 25% tax bracket would be introduced above that limit.

SOCIALISTS CALL FOR REINSTATING TEACHERS FIRED FROM THEIR JOB

The opposition Socialists on Sunday called for reinstating teachers fired from their job, and asked the government to establish the conditions of free education and create a budget allocation for teacher wage hikes. In reaction to the termination of the employment of eight teachers in three secondary schools in Budapest as of Dec. 1 on the ground of dereliction of duty, party co-leader Ágnes Kunhalmi told an online press conference that some of the best teachers had been fired from the best secondary schools. The firing of teachers demonstrated that "the authoritarian regime built by [ruling] Fidesz in the past 13 years reached a new level" and "practically, steps are being taken towards a dictatorship", she said. Fidesz wants to show that "anybody daring to express dissatisfaction with NER [System of National Cooperation] will fare ill", she added. The interior ministry, which is in charge of public education, said on Wednesday that the teachers had taken unlawful strike action and participated in a demonstration. They had been

previously informed by their employers, the school district directorate, that they would be relieved of their positions if they unlawfully neglected their teaching duties for any reason, the ministry said in a statement.

FINMIN: HUNGARY ECONOMY FACES TOUGH TIMES

Hungary's economy and its players must prepare to perform in an increasingly difficult international environment, Mihály Varga, the finance minister, told an annual event of the National Association of Businesses and Employers (VOSZ) in Budapest on Friday. The Hungarian government's goal is to sustain the country's economic growth which requires measures that include protecting jobs and local businesses, Varga told the 23rd Entrepreneurs' Day business event. The government will continue to take these protective measures in future, too, he said. "We hope that cooperation with businesses will help the country emerge stronger from the current crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine and related sanctions, just as it was the case in the previous two crises," said Varga.

GOVT OFFICIAL MARKS INT'L DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

"We are working for a society in which both people with disabilities and able-bodied people can find their place,"

prime ministerial commissioner for social policy Zsolt Nyitrai said in a telephone interview with MTI on Saturday, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Nyitrai said the government has been working with the organisations representing people with disabilities as strategic partners for many years, always consulting them on issues affecting people with disabilities and trying to take their comments into account when making decisions. He noted that there were more than 600,000 Hungarians with disabilities and including family members, the number of people affected was more than one million. Support for organisations of persons with disabilities has tripled in the past twelve years, he said. The government supports the employment of around 33,000 people with disabilities at about 1,100 sites across the country, and their employment rate has increased to 44 percent from 18 percent in 2010, he added. The government has introduced payment to parents taking care of their disabled children at home (GYOD), new rehabilitation centres have been set up to help visually impaired people, and ICT services providing assistance to people with disabilities are constantly being developed, he said.

DÖMÖTÖR: GOVT MUST GUARANTEE SECURITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY

In addition to fighting against the rise in the price of oil and gas, the government must also guarantee

the security of supply, a state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office told public radio on Sunday. Fortunately, in the case of gas, the long-term gas purchase contracts are a guarantee for Hungary, Csaba Dömötör said. Other countries are not only facing price increases, but cannot be sure whether there will be sufficient gas in the heating season, he added. "This is why we say that the voices demanding change must be amplified. Our amplifier is the National Consultation survey, which is why it is very important that more than a million people have already filled it in," he said. Dömötör added that the decision on the oil embargo made in the summer was taking effect in the coming days. Hungary achieved an exemption from the embargo and will continue to receive Russian oil through the pipeline so it can escape the supply restrictions but unfortunately not the price increases, he said. If less Russian oil arrives in Europe, the price will increase, so Hungary, too, might have to pay more for oil and indirectly we will also pay the sanction premium, he pointed out. Dömötör added that in Brussels they were already working on the ninth sanction package, which, according to reports, would affect nuclear energy. This would cause serious damage to Hungary, partly because the Paks nuclear power plant works with Russian technology, and partly because it would create an obstacle to the Paks expansion, he said.

FIDELITAS HOLDS XIXTH CONGRESS

Fidelitas is Hungary's biggest, strongest and most active political youth organisation, which made an important contribution to the victory of Fidesz in the April general election, prime ministerial commissioner Zsolt Nyitrai said on Saturday, addressing the XIXth congress of Fidelitas, the youth arm of the ruling Fidesz party. Nyitrai said there were great tasks awaiting Fidelitas in the future. "They have to appeal to young people, form a clear picture in their minds, tell them that they would be worse off in every area of life if the left were to form a government," he said. He emphasised that the government supported young people with a personal income tax exemption, a tax allowance for young married couples, and the family home-creation scheme, while the left, when they

had been in government, introduced a tuition fee and abolished the system of home-creation subsidies. Nyitrai noted that people who started their political career in Fidelitas now play an important part in public life and the work of the government, citing Antal Rogán, the prime minister's chief of staff, Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, campaign chief András Gyürk, and government spokesperson Alexandra Szentkirályi, among others.

UKRAINE CRISIS - ALMOST 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON SATURDAY

Fully 5,961 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Saturday, while another 3,380 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued 30-day residency permits to 170 people, ORFK told MTI on Saturday.

Budapest received 257 people, 83 children among them, who travelled by train, ORFK said.

JUDIT POLGÁR INDUCTED INTO WORLD CHESS HALL OF FAME

Hungary's Judit Polgár, the strongest female chess player of all time, was inducted into the World Chess Hall of Fame in St. Louis, Missouri, on Saturday.

"It is a great honour to be recognised for my decade-long contributions which include my achievements as a chess player, as well as my work promoting chess as an educational tool, and encouraging women's orientation towards chess," Polgár said at the ceremony. Polgár is the only woman to have ever reached the candidates stage of the world championship cycle, to have been ranked in the top ten players in the world, and to have been rated over 2,700, reaching a peak of 2,735 in 2005.