

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Blaha Lujza Square in central Budapest after revamp

MTI/Zoltán Balogh

UPCOMING EVENTS

European affairs ministers meet in Brussels

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

GULYÁS: 'GOAL IS TO PRESERVE EUROPEAN UNITY'

Recent controversy in the European Union has shown that “if debates are based on feelings towards a country, rather than facts, that will dismantle the European Union,” the prime minister’s chief of staff said on Monday.

Speaking on The Bold Truth about Hungary, a podcast of state secretary Zoltán Kovács, Gergely Gulyás said the European Commission had launched its conditionality procedure against Hungary after the general elections there, “making political motivations all the more likely.” Hungary, “trying to handle the situation on legal terms”, specified 17 requirements with the European Commission and subsequently fulfilled them, Gulyás said. A political debate ensued, which the EC couldn’t stay away from, he said. “If issues like this are judged not by the facts but by whether a member state’s government is likeable, or whether they are close to the mainstream or not, that will sooner or later dismantle the EU,” Gulyás said. The EU’s primary interest should be to preserve the unity needed for decision-making, he added. Hungary has done more than enough to reach an agreement with the EC, “but it seem the body is unable to form an objective opinion, and so the European Council will be hopefully more reliable in the conditionality procedure,” Gulyás said.

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GULYÁS ON UKRAINE WAR, EU SANCTIONS

Russia's attack on Ukraine was "doubtless aggression", a breach of international law, Gergely Gulyás, the prime minister's chief of staff, said in a podcast on Monday. But the EU's sanctions have put the European economy in an impossible situation, "or at least in a very difficult one"; Hungary and the EU are in disagreement on the latter point, he added. As a result, the European press has cast Hungary as having "some sort of special relation with Russia, that [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and the prime minister have a special relationship, which is not true." Central European countries are generally more dependent on Russian energy sources than others, Gulyás said, insisting that "the Czechs and Slovaks, while failing to fight for exemptions [from the sanctions], were happy to get them thanks to our fight." Democracy, a common European value, should mean that Hungary's government is respected as the one commanding the strongest mandate from voters since 1990 in Hungary, Gulyás said.

The European press, however, "can only speak in one voice and pushes a left-liberal green ideology everywhere." Hungary's multifaceted press allows more varied political opinions than anywhere else in Europe, and offers real alternatives for the people, he said. Regarding the campaign

financing of the opposition, Gulyás said that a party coalition had accepted billions of forints worth of funding from abroad during the election campaign. The goal of their financiers was to topple the incumbent government, he said. The scandal "would be all over the major news outlets of the world had it involved the government parties," he said. Instead, the "clear and gross violation of the law" is being swept under the rug in the western press, he said.

ORBÁN TO SIGN AGREEMENT ON AZERBAIJAN- HUNGARY ELECTRIC LINE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is slated to sign an agreement on joining a network delivering electricity from Azerbaijan to Hungary via Georgia and Romania, the prime minister's press chief said on Sunday evening. The signing will take place on December 17 in Bucharest, Bertalan Havasi said, confirming Romanian press reports. In August, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said Hungary would join the project so that it can receive European Union funding, which is conditional on at least two member states participating. The network would deliver green electricity through Georgia, under the Black Sea to Romania and Hungary, which could use some of the energy and also use the grid to transfer its own, he said in a Facebook post.

ORBÁN ATTENDS PREPARATORY MEETING FOR EU SUMMIT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán joined a video conference in preparation to the two-day European Union summit starting on Thursday, the prime minister's press chief said on Monday. The meeting was initiated by European Council President Charles Michel and joined by the prime ministers of Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Slovakia and Sweden, as well as the Bulgarian president, Bertalan Havasi said. The summit is scheduled to address the war in Ukraine and issues pertaining to energy policy, economy, security and defence, he said.

STATE SECY: HUNGARY READY TO FURTHER AID UKRAINE

Hungary is ready to continue to provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine, a state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office said, on the occasion of a consignment of the Hungarian Red Cross sent to the war-torn country on Monday. Miklós Soltész, who also heads the National Humanitarian Coordination Council (NHKT), told reporters that Hungary is conducting its largest humanitarian aid programme of the past 30 years in partnership with six charity organisations since the outbreak of the war in the neighbouring country.

Under the programme, 3,100 tonnes of aid worth 7.2 billion forints (EUR 17m) have been provided to Transcarpathia, helping 460,000 people so far, he said. Soltész noted that the government's Bridge for Transcarpathia programme has so far collected more than 1 billion forints in donation. István Kardos, the director general of the Hungarian Red Cross, said that Monday's 100 million forint shipment included a mobile blood donation unit.

TEACHERS' UNION CALLS FOR ALL-ROUND CONSULTATION WITH EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Teachers' union PSZ has called on the government to set up a national education roundtable for consultations with all players of the sector. In accordance with the demands of demonstrators for better conditions in education, the union is calling on the government to sit down with trade unions, professional associations, NGOs and representatives of students and parents. Education is a national issue, and the serious crisis can only be resolved with cross-sector cooperation, PSZ said in a statement on Monday.

The government's aims in current consultations have been "murky", PSZ said. The contents of a cabinet meeting on Saturday, attended by education state secretary Zoltán Maruzsa and national teachers' association Péter Horváth, have not been disclosed to

the public, it said. The government has also failed to appoint a commissioner to tackle the sector's issues, PSZ said. PSZ will continue to negotiate with the government as a member of the strike committee, but also calls for public, transparent and wide-reaching consultations, the statement said. Protests will continue until the government sees those fighting for reforms as partners, the statement said.

AGRICULTURE MINISTER CALLS FOR EXTRAORDINARY EU AID TO FARMERS

Hungarian farmers need extraordinary subsidies from the European Union due to the war in Ukraine and the EU's sanctions, so that they can ensure safe food supplies, Agriculture Minister István Nagy said in a statement on Monday. Speaking after a meeting of his European counterparts in Brussels, Nagy said most of them had asked the European Council to activate a reserve fund of 450 million euros set up for agricultural emergencies.

The minister said soaring energy prices had increased the cost of food production, which could no longer be covered even by higher producer prices. He insisted that "agriculture had nothing to do with causes of the crisis" and "farmers cannot be expected to manage the situation by themselves, left without assistance". Nagy said he hoped the commission "would hear the request of most member states" and make a proposal to activate the

reserve fund in the first months of 2023.

GOVT SPOKESWOMAN: TICKET SALE FOR HUNGARY'S WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS BEGINS

Ticket sales began on Monday for the World Athletics Championships (WAC), the biggest sporting event in Hungary's history, held between 19 and 27 August 2023, the government spokeswoman said. The event, the third biggest sporting event in the world, is expected to draw some hundred thousand tourists from abroad, Alexandra Szentkirályi, who also sits on the board of the event organiser, told a press conference. Ádám Schmidt, the state secretary in charge of sport and a government commissioner for WAC Budapest, said 2,000 athletes and 3,000 journalists will be hosted at the event and news coverage will reach some one billion people worldwide.

DK DEMANDS STATE ASSISTANCE TO RESCUE DUNAFERR STEELMAKER

DK lawmakers have demanded immediate government intervention to rescue troubled steelmaker ISD Dunafer in Dunaújváros, in central Hungary. László Kordás, deputy mayor of the city, told a press conference that "we are in the twelfth hour," concerning the plant's future. He called

on the government to set up a fund to cover the full wages of the plant's employees and payments to suppliers. Zsolt Mezei, another deputy mayor of the city, said "it turned out last week that Dunaferr can only pay a part of the employees' wages and it might turn out this week that the company has to be shut down for good". He said Dunaferr, one of Hungary's biggest industrial companies that employs some 4,500 people, was in "such a situation because the government has failed to provide any support".

RULING PARTIES FILE CRIMINAL COMPLAINT OVER RUMOURS AROUND BANK DEPOSITS

The ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat parties have filed a criminal complaint concerning messages suggesting that individuals' bank deposits were "in danger" and urging owners to withdraw them, Christian Democrat group spokesman Lőrinc Nacsa said on Monday. Nacsa said in a statement that "an unprecedented

attack has been launched on Hungary's financial system" referring to posts on social media and text messages on Friday, which he said were "generating panic". Nacsa also slammed the leftist parties and said Democratic Coalition deputy leader László Varju had "in fact confirmed the rumours" at a press conference on the subject, held later on Friday. "Many Hungarians received the messages, which makes the matter serious," Nacsa said.

MORE THAN 8,600 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON SUNDAY

Fully 4,670 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Sunday, while 4,003 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 230 people. Altogether 21 refugees, 12 children among them, arrived in Budapest by train, ORFK said on Monday.

PÉCS UNIVERSITY WORLD'S 21ST GREENEST

The University of Pécs (PTE) has been placed 21st in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings programme evaluating 1,050 universities worldwide.

"As the greenest university in Hungary, PTE has made achievements, but it is clear that it must stay open for further innovations aimed at reducing the ecological footprint," Katalin Szili, a member of the university's sustainability board, said on Monday. PTE rector István Decsi said the university would continue to work for sustainability and promote "environmental awareness in all sectors".

According to the rankings, the world's greenest university is Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands, followed by Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham in the UK.