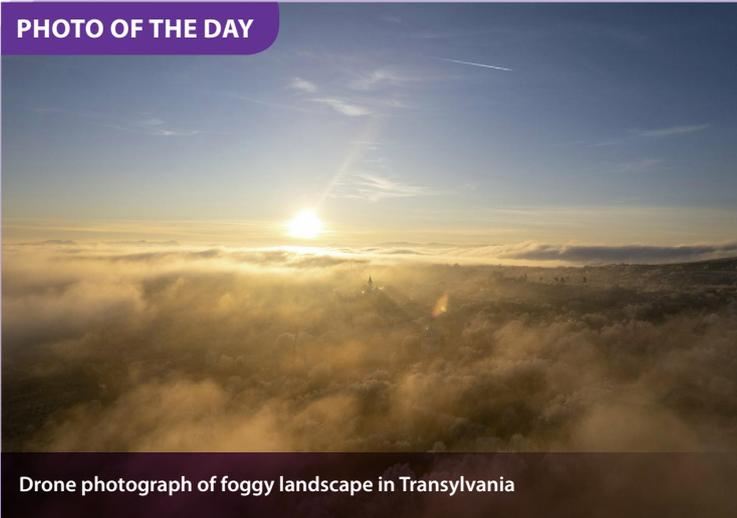


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Gábor Kiss

Drone photograph of foggy landscape in Transylvania

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

LMP presser on renewable energy

Cbank rate-setting meeting

TOP STORY

EU 'NOT HANDLING URGENT ENERGY ISSUES'

Instead of dealing with pressing energy issues such as the search for new energy resources and the development of infrastructure, the EU has wasted time in the last few months on moves to cap the price of gas, the foreign minister has said.

After a meeting of EU energy ministers, Péter Szijjártó said Hungary completely rejects introducing a "harmful, dangerous and totally needless" price cap, a ministry statement said. The bloc is acting on facts that were relevant in August, but Europe has managed well without the price cap in the meantime, the minister said, adding that the cap risked bumping up prices if less gas is available as a result or if the cap's threshold is above current market prices.

Szijjártó said this kind of market intervention was "dangerous and irresponsible", and he called for a thorough preliminary investigation before any action is taken. He called for an increase in the amount of gas but this, he said, required improvements to infrastructure, adding that there was little point in adding LNG ports in various parts of Europe if the pipeline network was insufficient. In a "test vote" on the proposal to cap the gas price, 9 member states including Hungary voted against, but this was not enough to form a blocking minority, he noted. "However many voting rounds there may be today, Hungary will vote no," he said.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: 'HUGE MISTAKE' EU NOT ADDRESSING PIPELINE CAPACITY

On the subject of central Europe's supplies of crude oil, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó noted that 19 million tonnes of Russian crude is delivered to Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia each year through the Druzhba pipeline. The only alternative route, the Adria pipeline, carries only 12 million tonnes annually, Szijjártó said. "This has been common knowledge for at least half a year, yet nothing has been done to expand it," he said, calling it a "huge mistake" on the part of the European Union.

Meanwhile, the minister said Croatia had made an "unfair" offer when it came to extending Hungarian oil and gas company MOL's contract which expires at the end of the year, noting that the transit fee would balloon by 80%. He accused the Croats of "abusing" the war situation and their monopoly, as well as the energy security vulnerabilities of Hungary and Czechia. Hungary has turned to the European Commission on creating a proposal on ensuring that prices related to routes necessitated by the war should not exceed the European average, he said.

GULYÁS: EC CRITICISM 'UNFAIR'

If Hungarian legislation adopted over the past few months is examined objectively and on a professional

basis, "then we can get Hungary's suspended EU money released in the next few months," the head of the prime minister's office told conservative German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) on Monday. In the interview, Gergely Gulyás noted that in August, after the government was formed, a strategic agreement was signed with the European Union with a view to concluding the conditionality procedure. "At the same time, we saw that there was a lot of pressure from the European Parliament on the Commission," he added. Hungary has already fulfilled the majority of the 27 "milestones" that the EC had set as conditions, he said. An Integrity Authority has been set up and already started operations, he added.

See the full interview at <https://zeitung.faz.net/faz/politik/2022-12-19/die-kritik-der-eu-kommission-ist-nicht-korrekt/840303.html>

JUSTICE MIN OFFICIAL: GOVT REACHED GOAL AT EU COUNCIL DEC MEETING

Hungary will enter next year without losing its EU funding, a justice ministry official has said, adding that the government reached its goals at the Dec. 15 meeting of the European Council. The EU Council has accepted Hungary's recovery plan, János Bóka, the state secretary of the ministry of justice responsible for EU affairs, told a meeting of parliament's European affairs committee on Monday. The deal means that the government's

development plans for the next few years can be implemented with EU funding. Meanwhile, Bóka noted that at the meeting Hungary made its disapproval of the rejection of Bulgaria and Romania's Schengen membership.

BUDAPEST TRANSPORT COMPANY DONATES BUSES TO UKRAINE

Budapest Transport Company (BKV) has donated buses to Ukraine, the company said on Monday, adding that the buses were in good working order but had been withdrawn from circulation in Hungary's capital. The fifteen buses, including five solo Volvos and ten articulated Ikras, were handed over in a ceremony to Ukraine's charge d'affaires by Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony and BKV managing director Tibor Bolla. BKV has already donated a bus to refugees in Hungary, which is being used as a warm-up shelter, as well as other humanitarian aid, the company added.

DEATHS OUTPACE BIRTHS IN NOVEMBER

Preliminary data show that 7,040 children were born and 10,220 people died in November 2022, with the number of live births decreasing by 5.2% and deaths by 11% in December 2021-November 2022 compared with the same period a year earlier, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The natural population loss was 3,180 in November this year as against

7,826 in November 2021, KSH said. In November 2022, 3,177 couples tied the knot, down 18% from November 2021. In the past 12 months, 88,118 children were born, down 5.2% from the same period of last year, while 139,324 people died, 11% fewer than in the previous year. The natural population loss came to 51,206 compared with 63,381 in the same period of last year, a drop of 12%.

MORE THAN 9,500 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON SUNDAY

Fully 5,902 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Sunday, while 3,782 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 228 people. Altogether 60 refugees, 29 children among them, arrived in Budapest by train, ORFK said on Monday.

FIRST DAY OF HANUKKAH MARKED

“Waiting for a miracle is not the antidote to action, but a prerequisite,” the chief rabbi of the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation (EMIH) said late on Sunday, the first day of the Jewish holiday Hanukkah. “If we work for a miracle, it will happen,” Slomó Köves said, lighting the first candle for the eight-day holiday in Budapest’s Nyugati Square. The Hungarian Jewish community knows that “the past 25-30

years are a real miracle,” Köves said. It is a miracle that Jews in Hungary can proudly practice their faith and it is the Jewish community itself that needed to make this happen, he added.

Balázs Fürjes, a state secretary at the Prime Minister’s Office, wished the Jewish community a happy holiday on behalf of the government. He said the country’s Christian and Jewish communities “somewhere deep down are one”. Fürjes said he was convinced that there would come a moment “when we will be fully one”. But, he added, “we can already say today that there is a lot more that unites us than divides us.”

The celebration of Hanukkah -- the Festival of Light -- goes back to the Jewish retaking of the Temple of Jerusalem from the Greeks in 165 BC.

PUBLIC MEDIA RAISES OVER HUF 180 M FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Hungary’s public media has raised more than 180 million forints (EUR 443,000) for the Hungarian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (MVGYOSZ) as part of its annual “Good to be Good” charity campaign, public current affairs channel M1 said. “Sunday was a very difficult but glorious day,” MVGYOSZ head Sándor Nagy said of the closing day of the campaign. “It was uplifting to see people supporting the cause, the Good to be Good programme and the visually impaired through the federation.” Citing census data, Nagy

said some 82,000 people in Hungary have severe visual impairment. The services provided by MVGYOSZ serve to improve their quality of life and help with their movement and education through various assistive tools and applications, he added.

Beatrix Siklósi, the manager of the campaign, said donations had also flowed in from abroad. “This was the campaign of small and medium-sized businesses and simple, everyday people, not large companies,” she said, expressing thanks to public media viewers, listeners and those who donated.

BUDA CASTLE RECONSTRUCTION PRESENTED AT NEW VISITOR CENTRE

A visitor centre presenting the ongoing reconstruction of the Buda Castle with architectural models and digital displays opened in the Hunyadi Courtyard on Monday. The exhibition presents preparatory work and more than 100,000 archived documents researched so far in connection with the project, Róbert Gutowski, the project’s chief architect, said at the opening. Krisztina Sikota, the deputy director of the Castle District Directorate for tourism, culture and communications, said the visitor centre provides up-to-date information about the reconstruction process and programmes in the Castle District. Tickets for these programmes are also sold at the centre.

