

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVI/Zoltán Balogh

Hungary's Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund MTVA opens bureau in Brussels

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Parlt Sustainable Development Cttee head's presser on World Water Day

Parlt Budget Cttee meets

Mi Hazánk's presser on Hungary trade unions in light of French protests

TOP STORY

GOVT 'WON'T ABANDON UKRAINE HUNGARIANS'

The government will never abandon efforts to protect ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia "even in the face of massive pressure from both sides of the Atlantic", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Tuesday.

Speaking after talks with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on the sidelines of a meeting of European Union foreign ministers, Szijjártó said NATO's plans to convene a ministerial level meeting of the NATO-Ukraine committee undermined NATO unity. He added that the Hungarian government would withhold support for Ukraine joining NATO until "Hungarian minority rights are restored" there. Concerning his talks with Stoltenberg, Szijjártó quoted the NATO chief as saying that "Hungary is a reliable NATO ally that contributes to the security of the European and Transatlantic community." He added that the Hungarian government considered NATO a "community of values" and only countries that honour the rights of ethnic minorities "should get close to NATO". "Regrettably, this is not the case in Ukraine," he said. "The rights of ethnic minorities, including those of the Hungarian community, have been continuously eroded since 2015," he said. That is why the Hungarian government has been blocking proposals to convene the NATO-Ukraine committee in recent years, he added.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY'S CONCERNS OVER RIGHTS OF UKRAINE MINORITIES TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY NATO CHIEF

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg had taken the Hungarian government's concerns over the rights of ethnic minorities in Ukraine seriously at their talks on Tuesday. The NATO secretary general said he would convene a ministerial level meeting of the NATO-Ukraine committee during a council of foreign ministers meeting scheduled for April 4, "despite Hungary's ... position that the meeting should only be convened unanimously," he said, adding that Hungary nevertheless acknowledged Stoltenberg's decision, and a discussion of minority issues would be on the agenda of the meeting.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said the government was proud of Hungarian military developments, adding that Hungary would soon meet NATO's expectations to spend 2% of GDP on defence. He added that Hungary was already spending 20% of its defence budget on developments. Szijjártó noted that NATO's Europe commander is scheduled to visit Hungary at the end of the month.

Referring to his talks with EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson, Szijjártó said Hungary's energy supplies were safe "thanks to brave investments in recent years". "Had we not built a south-southeast gas pipeline, the supply of

natural gas to Hungary would now be physically impossible." He added that Hungary would cooperate with Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania to increase diversification through joint infrastructure developments. "I asked the commissioner to treat this as a European issue ... Brussels keeps pushing members to buy gas from sources different from the ones we have had; but we know that gas purchases require not only gas but pipelines too," he said. Szijjártó slammed Croatia's oil company for turning down a Hungarian offer for a long-term purchase deal, adding that INA "is exploiting the war situation and charging many times the transit fee for oil supplies through the Adria pipeline". He added that Croatia "has done nothing" to boost the pipeline's capacity, despite repeated pledges to do so.

ORBÁN: HUNGARY STANDS BY PEACE TALKS, TRANSCARPATIA HUNGARIANS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Tuesday held talks with European Council President Charles Michel as well as his Greek, Slovenian, Slovak and Latvian counterparts in a videoconference in preparation for this week's summit of European Union leaders, the PM's press chief said. The two-day summit on Thursday and Friday will focus on the war in Ukraine along with economic issues such as European competitiveness, the state of the internal market and energy issues.

In the videoconference, Orbán said Hungary was pro-peace and urged an immediate ceasefire and peace talks in respect of the conflict. He said Kyiv should always be reminded at EU talks that if Ukraine aspires to join the bloc it cannot ignore the rights of its ethnic minority groups, including those of ethnic Hungarians. As regards global economic affairs, Orbán said Hungary favoured economic links and relations over the re-emergence of major blocs.

FOREIGN MINISTRY DISMISSES REPORTS ON HUNGARY 'VETO' OF EU'S ICC STATEMENT

The foreign ministry on Monday rejected "mendacious" reports that Hungary had vetoed a joint European Union statement welcoming the International Criminal Court's decision on Russian officials suspected of war crimes. In a statement to Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, Hungary said it accepted the ICC's decision to issue a warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's commissioner for children's rights, on suspicion of their direct responsibility in the unlawful deportation and transport of Ukrainian children to Russia. Hungary does not wish to comment on the warrant in any way, foreign ministry spokesman Máté Paczolay said in a statement late on Monday, but it will not object to statements made by the high representative or individual member states on the issue, he added.

HUNGARY DEFMIN IN TALKS WITH KENYA, NIGER COUNTERPARTS

Since illegal migration traces its roots to Africa, Hungary's defence minister said he had held talks with his counterparts from Kenya and Niger in Brussels with the aim of "protecting the Hungarian people and Europe". Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said in a video posted on Facebook on Tuesday that Hungary's security went far beyond protecting its borders, and he noted "the constant pressure of illegal migration" at the country's southern borders. He said this pressure could be traced back to Africa, so it was "highly important to monitor what's going on in these countries". As well as the meeting of EU defence and foreign ministers, a security policy conference is taking place in Brussels, attended by representatives of many African countries, he noted.

DEP FORMIN MAGYAR HOLDS TALKS WITH FORMER UKRAINE MINISTER KLIMKIN

Levente Magyar, the deputy foreign minister, on Tuesday met former Ukrainian foreign minister Pavlo Klimkin in Budapest, for talks on the last ten years in Hungary-Ukraine relations, the foreign ministry said in a statement. Ties between Hungary and Ukraine have been burdened by serious disputes surrounding the rights of Ukraine's

ethnic Hungarian minority, the ministry cited Magyar as saying. Magyar said he and Klimkin had discussed the steps the two countries could take now and in the near future "to restore bilateral relations on a political level to the healthy situation they had been in before the mid-2010s". "We concluded that there are no insurmountable obstacles preventing this," Magyar said. The two countries have to settle the issues around the situation of Transcarpathia Hungarians, "which we believe there is every chance to accomplish", he added. Magyar said he will pay a visit to Kyiv early next month for talks with partners he expects to take steps concerning this issue. Talks will also touch on the humanitarian assistance Hungary is providing to Ukraine, he added. "We will explore how we can deepen and broaden this activity in the interest of mitigating the effects of the destructive war" and reducing the suffering of the people, Magyar said.

DEFMIN: HUNGARY WON'T SEND AMMUNITION TO UKRAINE

Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky has underlined Hungary's opposition to sending weapons and ammunition to Ukraine. After a meeting of EU foreign and defence ministers in Brussels, he said arms deliveries would only serve to broaden and exacerbate the war. Proposals in Brussels include handing over existing stocks of ammunition to Ukraine, and Hungary will not participate in this

initiative, the minister emphasised. He said Europe's armed forces were developing apace, and investments in the defence industry had also grown, and Hungary was well-positioned to take advantage of the situation. Many of its investments which are either planned or are under way could play a role in joint EU projects, he said. Szalay-Bobrovniczky noted that ministers at the meeting evaluated Strategic Compass, the guidelines adopted in 2022 for the EU's security and defence policy. The minister said Hungary was in favour of the EU assuming a global role in security, especially in regions where the security situation affected Europe directly. It was highly important, he added, to strengthen the security of the Western Balkans and the Sahel region in Africa with a view to stopping new waves of illegal migration.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: UK INVESTMENTS IN HUNGARY KEY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Investments in Hungary from Britain play an important role in maintaining Hungary's economic growth, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Tuesday. British companies employ more than 50,000 Hungarians, Szijjártó said on Facebook, adding that trade turnover between Hungary and the United Kingdom reached a record high level last year. "We therefore welcome the Windsor Framework, which is an important step towards the full implementation of the

trade and cooperation agreement," the minister said. Szijjártó called Brexit "one of the saddest stories" in the European Union's history, saying Britain's departure had left the bloc significantly weaker. "We have always argued in favour of the closest possible cooperation between the EU and Britain, which is of great importance amid the current security and economic conditions," Szijjártó said.

NOVÁK MARKS 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

President Katalin Novák on Tuesday attended a ceremony marking the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian National Archives. The archives "preserve the memories of Hungarian families, therefore the memory of the whole nation," she said in her address. Learning the history of families will get readers closer "to the past and present of Hungary", Novák said, adding that the knowledge of history "enables us to win the challenges of the future". "Studying the present and the past is key for the future," she said. An act of 1723 by the Habsburg emperor Charles III stipulated that all public documents should be deposited in a new institution.

DK: JUSTICE MIN DID NOT SIGN RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT FOR ICC

Hungary's justice minister was the only EU minister not to sign the joint resolution on supporting the

International Criminal Court's decision to issue an arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is accused of war crimes, opposition Democratic Coalition party MEP Sándor Rónai said on Tuesday. Rónai told an online press briefing that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was "discrediting Hungary by defending" Putin, and "cementing Hungary's isolation" from the rest of the European Union, thereby compromising its EU funding. He said that far from benefiting from Putin's support, Hungary was being gravely damaged as a result.

NAVRACSICS: 'MORE RESPECT FOR EUROPE'

Tibor Navracsics, the minister for regional development, called for "more respect for Europe" at an event on Monday. "We must understand Europe if Europe is ever to understand us," he said at a presentation of Mathias Corvinus Collegium's (MCC) *Europica Varietas* book series. Europe is primarily a cultural unit, Navracsics said, emphasising the importance of a shared European culture. "Europe is increasingly becoming synonymous with the European Union," he said.

"Right now we're experiencing the birthing pains of a shared European political formation, but it's unclear how it'll turn out," Navracsics said. He said it was clear that European institutions "aren't where they're supposed to be", arguing that neither the European Commission nor the European Parliament were "moving along the path set out by the founding treaty".

At the same time, the minister said European public opinion was taking shape. He cited migration and climate change as examples of issues that had become Europe-wide issues by the 2019 European parliamentary elections, warning that the same could happen regarding the question of Hungary and democracy in the 2024 elections. "A shared European political space is taking shape, and we'd better learn its language if we want to enforce our interests," the former European commissioner said.

Though the EU may want to be a democracy, until it has a political community behind it, "it will not have democratic political legitimacy", Navracsics said. He added, however, that rather than the EU wanting to become a democracy, it was demanding that member states fulfil "some sort of vague criteria of democracy". Concerning the idea of European federalism, Navracsics said the EU was not heading towards becoming a European super-state, but rather a community that transcends nation states.

RÉTVÁRI: MUNICIPALITIES SATISFIED WITH POLICE

Local governments asked in a recent survey to evaluate the work of the police on a scale of 1-5 have given an average 4.4, Bence Rétvári, state secretary at the interior ministry, said on Tuesday. In the survey, conducted by the police every four years, 1,338 municipalities returned questionnaires,

Rétvári said. Municipalities awarded 4.5 points for crime prevention activities, 4.6 for hotline services, and 4.3 for the effectiveness of investigations. In the past 12 years the number of crimes reported has been reduced by nearly two thirds “thanks to new legislation and efforts to reinforce the police”, Rétvári said. He noted that the number of crime cases had fallen from 447,000 in 2010 to 154,000 last year. He added that police officers would enjoy a pay hike in September costing the central budget a total 49 billion forints (EUR 125m), while they would get another 32 billion forints in January.

CONFERENCE HELD MARKING NEUMANN MEMORIAL YEAR

The government aims to turn Hungary into the fastest developing knowledge hub of central Europe by 2030, the state secretary for innovation and higher education said on Tuesday, at a conference held to mark the Neumann memorial year. “Our job is to provide the circumstances and the supportive environment necessary to produce the John von Neumanns of the future,” and so the government is focusing on universities and on grasping every opportunity to make progress, Balázs Hankó told the conference at the pioneer computer scientist’s alma mater, the Budapest-Fasor Evangelic Secondary School, held to celebrate the 120th birth anniversary of the mathematician.

HUNGARY PUBLIC MEDIA OPENS BUREAU IN BRUSSELS

Hungary’s Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund MTVA has opened a bureau in central Brussels to provide reporting about news and events involving Hungary, European political developments, European Union affairs and topics of public interest, MTVA’s press office said on Tuesday. The bureau has a staff of six correspondents for Hungarian news agency MTI, public television news channel M1, public news broadcaster Kossuth Radio and the news website hirado.hu, the office said in a statement. It said that the bureau’s central location and its highly modern technology infrastructure meeting 21st century standards ensure “an excellent opportunity to facilitate the work of the correspondents and provide to the viewers and listeners of the public media a service at an even higher level”.

Opening the bureau, Dániel Papp, the chief executive of MTVA, said it was particularly important for the Hungarian public media operator which has a global network of correspondents to have an office in Brussels, “the capital of the European Union”. He called it MTVA’s duty to report about every event affecting Hungary and provide a platform for all the participants to present their views. “Our credo is to continue innovation ... we have taken creative efforts to

ensure that the Hungarian public is informed about affairs affecting them in the fastest and most accurate manner, and first hand,” Papp said.

Anita Altorjai, chief executive of Duna Médiaszolgáltató, the public service media service provider, called it one of the most important tasks of public media to provide to the public authentic information as quickly as possible at a high professional level. “To fulfil this task, our presence [in Brussels] is indispensable.” She said that “by opening the bureau, we are already preparing for next year’s EP elections and the subsequent Hungarian EU presidency”.

MOL GROUP SHIPS AZERI CRUDE TO BRATISLAVA REFINERY

Hungary’s MOL Group on Monday said it has started delivery of crude from a field in Azerbaijan to its refinery in Bratislava. The Azeri Light is from a field in which MOL owns a 9.57% stake. The 90,000 tonnes of seaborne crude has arrived in Croatia and is being delivered to the Slovnaft refinery via the Adria pipeline. “This is another important milestone in Slovnaft’s and MOL Group’s journey toward greater crude sourcing flexibility amid European sanctions prohibiting the export of petroleum products from EU member states,” MOL Group said. “MOL continues to import Russian Export Blend via the Druzhba pipeline, as it is convinced that the best way to guarantee the

security of the fuel supply in the Central and Eastern European region is to keep traditional supply channels intact while exploring and securing alternative ones," it added.

HUNGARY ACQUIRES INDIRECT MINORITY STAKE IN YETTEL

State-owned Corvinus Nemzetközi Befektetési has acquired an indirect minority stake in mobile telco Yettel through a share swap deal with Antenna Hungária, a unit of listed IT company 4iG, the economic development ministry said on Monday. The transaction further increases the state's share and role in the "strategically important telecommunications sector" and gives it a minority stake in two of the sector's leading players, the ministry said in a statement. In addition to further diversifying the state's investment portfolio in the telecommunications sector, the

transaction "enables it, as an owner, to contribute more strongly and efficiently to the development of the sector ... ensuring further advantages to subscribers, the performance of the Hungarian economy and the country's competitiveness", it added.

4iG said in a statement that Antenna Hungária had raised its stake in Vodafone Magyarország to 70.5% after acquiring a 19.5% stake in Vodafone Hungária from Corvinus in a swap for 25% of the subsidiaries of PPF Telecom Group: Yettel Magyarország, Yettel Real Estate and CETIN Hungary.

As a result of the transaction, Corvinus's stake in Vodafone Magyarország was reduced to 29.5%. 4iG said Vodafone Magyarország's board will be expanded to seven members from five at present. Representatives of Antenna Hungária will sit in five of the seats. Antenna Hungária and Corvinus closed the acquisition of Vodafone Hungary for a consideration of 660 billion forints (EUR 1.7bn) in January. The economic

development ministry said the deal would have no direct impact on Vodafone Magyarország or Yettel Magyarország clients.

OPERA HOUSE ANNOUNCES SLAVIC THEME FOR 2023-24 SEASON

The Hungarian State Opera has announced that it is dedicating its 140th season in 2023-24 to Slavic music, with 14 premieres and 40 works connected to Slavic culture, General Director Szilveszter Ókovács said on Tuesday. Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's *Rusalka* and Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* will be on the programme, as will a concert performance by tenor Plácido Domingo and soprano Anna Netrebko, Ókovács said. The house orchestra's concerts will also focus on Slavic composers, he added. The season will start with two guest performances on Sept. 9 and 10, he said.