

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán meets Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Doha

MTI/Prime Minister's Press Office/Vivien Cher Benkő

UPCOMING EVENTS

PM Orbán addresses Qatar Economic Forum

EU defence ministers meet in Brussels

Plenary session of parliament

Finance ministry releases detailed budget report for Jan-April

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: QATAR KEY FOR EUROPE

Qatar has been of crucial importance for Europe, since in the past year “a large part of the Russian gas missing from the European economy has been replaced by LNG from that country”, Viktor Orbán said in a video published on Facebook.

The prime minister announced that Hungary would also buy gas from Qatar in future. Orbán arrived in Doha on an official visit on Sunday and is scheduled to address the Qatar Economic Forum. In his video, he said he had held “long, comprehensive and successful talks” with the emir of Qatar. Orbán noted Qatar’s outstanding economic performance and its presence across the world. He also said Qatar was “in the peace camp”, which had an interest in an urgent settlement of the war in Ukraine, adding that Qatar was willing to mediate in the interest of peace talks. The prime minister said an agreement had been reached concerning Hungary’s gas purchases from Qatar, adding that “standing on several feet is better than on one foot”. “We have seen eye to eye in infrastructure projects, airport development, cooperation in the communications industry ... we even concluded agreements in agriculture,” he said. “Good perspectives have opened up for bilateral economic cooperation,” the prime minister said.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: EXPELLING PEOPLE SMUGGLERS ‘NOT DIRECTED AGAINST ANY COUNTRY’

Hungary’s expelling imprisoned people smugglers is “not directed against any of its neighbours”, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Brussels on Monday. Szijjártó said that Austria’s stepping up border controls was “no news”, adding that “Austria has been making entry increasingly difficult for months or years”. Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting of the EU’s Foreign Affairs Council, Szijjártó said he had talked to Alexander Schallenberg, his Austrian counterpart, who had indicated that Hungary’s expelling people smugglers was problematic for his country. Szijjártó said the Hungarian government had made a “sovereign Hungarian decision not directed against any neighbouring country” in particular. He said people smugglers “had better not even consider coming to Hungary” and pledged a continued stringent approach to border violators and to “people smugglers encouraging, helping or transporting them”. Concerning Austria, he said it was increasingly difficult for Hungarians and other nationals to enter Austria, whereas “Austrians can enter Hungary freely and without waiting [at the border], Hungarians have to wait, sometimes wait long, before they can enter Austria; their threatening to introduce border controls is no novelty”.

Szjijártó was asked about a proposal to replace the requirement of a unanimous decision by a supermajority in European foreign policy making, and he said “the abolition of a unanimous vote would obviously lead to the big countries passing the decisions while the small countries’ position would not count ... this would give a chance to decisions against Hungary’s national interests”. He added that the EU could “only be strong if its member states are strong” as against endeavours seeking to build a European superstate through weakening the position of members”. He insisted it was “not by accident” that the criteria of unanimous consent was included in the EU treaties. “If one seeks to change that, they will question the ideal of the European Union, casting doubt on the will of the founders,” he said.

Referring to press reports suggesting that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had alluded to a possible sabotage against the Druzhba oil pipeline, Szijjártó said in Brussels “they are trying to pretend not be aware as they usually do”, noting that the leaked US documents had not made the front page in the “liberal, fantastically objective and free European press”.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY COMMITTED TO PEACE DESPITE PRESSURE

Hungary’s government will not give up its commitment to peace or its national interests despite the “enormous pressure” concerning arms deliveries

to Ukraine and more sanctions, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Brussels on Monday. The atmosphere in the EU remains combative, Szijjártó told a press conference on the sidelines of a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, according to a ministry statement, adding that unlike the Hungarian government, most member states believed that a military solution to the war in Ukraine was possible. Szijjártó said this posed the risk of a protracted conflict, but several member states believed that Ukraine was fighting for Europe or “in the name of Europe”. “We believe that this is not our war; we are in no way responsible for its outbreak, but we’re also paying the price for it ... we continue to urge an end to the war and the start of peace talks,” the minister said.

Szjijártó said there was “enormous pressure” to approve another 500 million euro package for the European Peace Facility (EPF) as well as an eleventh sanctions package against Russia. “But in spite of the pressure, we will not give up our commitment to peace,” Szijjártó said. “We will not give up protecting the Transcarpathian Hungarian community and despite the pressure, we will not give up the representation of our national interests”. Szijjártó said that so far 5.7 billion euros from the EPF has been spent on financing weapons deliveries to Ukraine, and though Hungary believed this risked escalation, the government had not blocked the payments. But this time, he added, the government had made it clear that

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it will oppose further payments until Ukraine removes Hungary's OTP Bank from its list of "international sponsors of war". "The accusations against OTP are false and are not based on any sort of facts, therefore we demand that the Ukrainians remove OTP from the list of international sponsors of war," he said.

Concerning the plans for the next sanctions package, Szijjártó said the EU should learn from the "failed sanctions" imposed so far, arguing that they "have hurt Europe more than they have Russia", and the newest sanctions would cause even greater problems. Szijjártó said the new sanctions would make the export activities of European businesses outside Russia more difficult, hurting their competitiveness. He said it was also "dangerous and irrational" that the EU wanted to sanction eight Chinese companies as part of the latest package. Sanctions against Chinese companies would have a serious effect on EU-China relations, he said, adding that ruining economic cooperation with China would result in a serious loss for the bloc. He said that instead of conflict, the EU should strive for cooperation with China based on mutual respect and benefit. Meanwhile, Szijjártó said that several member states had again urged imposing sanctions on the nuclear industry, but the government was resisting such a move in the interest of guaranteeing energy security.

Concerning the situation of Transcarpathian Hungarians, Szijjártó said Hungary would only approve the

advancement of Ukraine's EU accession talks if Kyiv restored the rights of the ethnic Hungarian community. He said he had heard from a participant at the meeting that Ukraine was claiming that the Venice Commission had already approved the country's minority law, but added that the body had yet to even adopt an opinion in the matter. "Ukrainian propaganda is working when it comes to the minority law," Szijjártó said, adding that the reality would become clear in a few months when ethnic Hungarian schools would no longer be able to operate in their current form from Sept. 1.

JUSTICE MINISTER: HUNGARY 2024 EU PRESIDENCY PREPARATIONS ON TRACK

Preparations for Hungary's presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2024 are on track, Justice Minister Judit Varga told parliament's European affairs committee on Monday. Outlining the priorities of the presidency, Varga mentioned the improvement of the EU's competitiveness, the management of demographic challenges, progress in enlargement, the fight against illegal migration, boosting border protection policy at the EU level, cohesion policy and the bloc's next seven-year budget.

Boosting the competitiveness of the EU and its member states and incorporating it into policies is of strategic importance, the minister

said. The EU's demographic crisis has a serious effect on competitiveness, making it all the more important to support family policy at the EU level, respecting the competencies of member states, she added. As regards EU enlargement in the Western Balkans, Varga said Serbia's accession to the bloc was crucial to speeding up the process. On the topic of illegal migration, she urged a review of links between the asylum and security aspects of migration. Varga also highlighted the importance of strengthening the industrial and technological base of the defence sector as well as the importance of EU cooperation in the procurement of defence equipment. Concerning cohesion policy, she said a midterm review of cohesion programmes would be needed during the Hungarian presidency. Directing the work of the European Council during preparations for talks on the EU's next seven-year budget will also be one of Hungary's main tasks, the minister said. Varga also noted that the current European Commission's term is set to end in October 2024, followed by that of the European Council president in November.

András Fekete-Győr of opposition Momentum asked the minister how the government intended to resolve the "crisis of confidence" between the EU and itself with a view to unlocking Hungary's EU funds. Fidesz MEP Enikő Győri said the 2024 Hungarian EU presidency would be significantly different from the one in 2011, arguing

that the European Parliament was a “loose cannon”, and the Hungarian opposition was doing everything in its power in the EP to make sure Hungary does not get the monies it is entitled to. “The opposition should decide if it even wants the Hungarian EU presidency to be successful,” Győri said. In her response, Varga said the opposition was undermining its own country in the EP when they should be working in its interest. She said some 800-900 professionals will be working to ensure that the presidency is a success. Justice ministry state secretary János Bóka said the main reason for the crisis of confidence between the Hungarian government and EU institutions was that the government “says what it thinks while EU institutions are hypocritical”.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINISTER HAS TALKS IN QATAR

Economic Development Minister Márton Nagy held talks with Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Qassim Al Abdullah Al-Thani, Qatar’s minister of commerce and industry, in Qatar on Monday, his ministry said. The ministers reviewed bilateral economic relations, with a focus on industry and trade cooperation and potential investment areas, the economic development ministry said in a statement. They were in agreement that bilateral economic ties have been developing continuously in recent years and that this trend was set to continue. Trade

turnover between the two countries increased by 24 percent last year, exceeding 76 million US dollars, the ministry said. Nagy said Qatar was one of the fastest-developing countries in the Persian Gulf region, praising its “exemplary” growth in areas like the food industry, the pharmaceutical industry and the financial sector. Qatar can also be a key partner to Hungary when it comes to ensuring its uninterrupted energy supply, he said. The parties were in agreement on the need to continue to boost bilateral economic ties and that the expansion of research and development and industry cooperation should be a priority, the ministry said.

MINISTER: HUNGARY, GEORGIA AGRICULTURE COOPERATION HAS VAST OPPORTUNITIES

Hungarian Agriculture Minister István Nagy has held talks with Otar Shamugia, his Georgian counterpart, in Tbilisi and they signed a cooperation agreement in seed grain farming, winery and honey production, the ministry said on Monday. The two ministers were in agreement that bilateral cooperation was offering vast opportunities for both countries. Hungary can serve as a gateway for Georgia to Europe while a partnership with Georgia can pave the way for Hungary to the East, the ministry said in a statement. The agreement is for the cultivation of Hungarian seeds in Georgia and joint projects in viticulture,

winemaking, vegetable and fruit production and honey making, it said.

BUDAPEST METRO LINE 3 RENOVATION WRAPS UP

The two remaining stations of Budapest’s metro line 3 were opened to the public on Monday, ending a comprehensive renovation that lasted five and a half years. At the inauguration of the Lehel Square and Nagyvárad Square stations, wrapping up the project, Regional Development Minister Tibor Navracsics said the investment was an important one for Budapest, Hungary and the European Union, and an “embodiment” of cooperation between the three. Mayor Gergely Karácsony thanked the government, the EU and all contributors of the project. The reconstruction was a challenge for the city, and hopefully citizens using the renewed, accessible facilities will think it was worth it, he said.

JOBBIK CALLS FOR PARLT DEBATE DAY ON ‘NORMAL WAGES’

The opposition Jobbik-Conservatives party has initiated a parliamentary debate day to be held on “normal wages” next Tuesday. Jobbik plans to “make the Orbán government face the way they are pushing our country into poverty”, the party said in a statement on Monday. “The Orbán government’s economic policy is marked by record-high inflation in the

EU, price caps making the life of retail owners impossible, and catastrophic wages are turning Hungary into the poorest country in Europe," it said. "It is not the EU hindering us from living better, but our own government, which is unacceptable," the party said. The government should take steps, as its policy based on cheap work force has not panned out, Jobbik said. Emigration has become so heavy that the work force shortage can only be offset with guest workers from the east, it added.

FORMER SOCIALIST MINISTER TAMÁS SUCHMAN DIES

Tamás Suchman, Socialist lawmaker and minister of the Horn government, has died aged 68, the party said on Sunday evening. A founding member of the Socialist Party in 1989, Suchman worked as a Socialist MP between 1990

and 2010. He was appointed minister without portfolio for privatisation in 1995, and minister for industry, trade and tourism in 1996. He was awarded the For Hungarian Jews Award in 2007, as a recognition of his life's work.

SOME 20 GUNS, PISTOLS SEIZED FROM ALBANIAN DRIVER AT SERBIAN BORDER

Excise officers have seized 17 assault rifles, two machine guns, two pistols, cartridges and rounds of ammunition from an Albanian driver at the Rösztke border crossing with Serbia, a spokesman for the prosecutor's office of Csongrád-Csanád County told MTI on Monday. The weapons were stashed in a secret compartment in the door of the man's car, which was stopped on Thursday morning for inspection, Ferenc Szarka said. Legal proceedings have been

launched against the man on charges of alleged weapons smuggling, he said. The prosecutor's office has initiated the suspect's pre-trial detention, citing flight risk and a danger he would undermine the legal proceedings. A Szeged court ordered the man's detention for one month, Szarka said.

OVER 13,000 REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON SUNDAY

Fully 5,543 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Sunday, while 7,324 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 49 people, ORFK said on Monday. Fully 93 people, 41 children among them, arrived in Budapest by train.