

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Statue of Hungarian-born Bologna FC coach Árpád Weisz unveiled in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

EP plenary in Brussels

NATO foreign ministers' meeting ends in Oslo

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Stats offices publishes Q1 GDP figures in 2nd reading, April foreign trade and hotel occupancy figures

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY-ISRAEL COOPERATION AT ALL-TIME HIGH

Political and economic relations between Hungary and Israel are stronger than ever, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Budapest on Wednesday, adding that the two countries were also discussing opportunities for energy cooperation.

Cooperation between Hungary and Israel has always been based on mutual respect, and Hungary has always supported the Jewish state's right to defend itself and guarantee its security, Szijjártó told a joint press conference with his Israeli counterpart Eli Cohen, according to a ministry statement. "We condemn all the terrorist threats and attacks that Israel has had to face in the recent period, and we equally condemn the practice in international political organisations that involves the adoption of one-sided, biased statements of condemnation against Israel based on an unfair approach," the minister said. He said the "anti-Israel political stance" was in many cases also present in western Europe. "That is why we have had to veto several joint European statements in the recent period which were clearly biased, dishonest, unbalanced and unfair towards Israel," Szijjártó said. He vowed that the Hungarian government would continue to push for a balanced and fair approach to Israel within the United Nations as well.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: SECURITY IN MIDDLE EAST LINKED TO SECURITY IN EUROPE

The security of the Middle East is closely linked with the security of Europe, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said at press conference held jointly with his Israeli counterpart in Budapest. After decades of unsuccessful attempts, the Abraham Accords are the only agreements that offer hope for long-term peace, Szijjártó said, adding that the Hungarian government considered it a global security interest for even more Arab countries to normalise their relations with Israel. “We ask the European Union and the international financial institutions to ensure financing for developments and investments that can be agreed within the framework of the Abraham Accords, as a form of encouragement for their expansion,” the minister said. Szijjártó strongly condemned terrorism, calling it “unacceptable” that Palestinian organisations linked to terrorist groups were eligible for EU support.

He said he and Cohen had agreed at their talks that Hungary will support Israel in the international lawsuit the Palestinian Authority has filed against the country. Szijjártó said he had also told his Israeli counterpart that Hungary rejects all forms of anti-Semitism. “We are proud that Hungary is home to central Europe’s largest Jewish community,” he said. “We are concerned about the modern form of anti-Semitism having reared its head

in western Europe,” Szijjártó said. “One source of this phenomenon is mass illegal migration, which poses a particular security challenge for the continent,” he added, underlining the importance of combatting unregulated immigration.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said bilateral economic cooperation was at an all-time high, with trade turnover having reached a record 750 million US dollars last year, and grown by 38% so far this year. There are 250 Israeli-owned businesses employing more than 4,000 people in Hungary, he said, adding that economic cooperation also extended to areas like the security and the space industries. The minister said they had also discussed ways for Israel to contribute to Hungary’s energy security. Hungary’s government is putting in significant efforts in the interest of diversification, he said, adding that this was aimed to involve new resources. Israel can play a role in this, but more infrastructure developments are needed for it to deliver natural gas to central Europe, he said. The sides also signed a declaration of intent on higher education cooperation.

EP RAPPORTEURS: UKRAINE CONFLICT NOT LIKELY TO BE RESOLVED DURING HUNGARY EU PRESIDENCY

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is not likely to be resolved during Hungary’s EU presidency in the second half of

next year, authors of a European Parliamentary report on the state of the rule of law in Hungary told a press conference in Brussels on Wednesday. The rapporteurs raised concern about Hungary’s taking over the presidency of the Council of the EU in July 2024. French Green MEP Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield said Hungary had not made progress in resolving issues concerning the rule of law since last autumn, adding that the Hungarian parliament had passed a whistleblower act in April, which would facilitate “denouncement of citizens who do not agree with the narrative of the government or with the constitution”. The legislation, similarly to the “anti-LGBT” child protection law, was “inspired by a Putin-law of ten years ago”, she insisted. Although the Hungarian parliament has repealed a part of the law, the legislation has inspired the idea of passing another EP resolution concerning Hungary, she said. Delbos-Corfield also raised concern about a bill in front of the Hungarian parliament which she said would strip teachers of their right to strike and increase the government’s control over teachers and students alike. She said the situation of the Hungarian judiciary had not improved, either, and suggested that community funding for Hungary should remain frozen. She said it was worrying that Hungary’s presidency would coincide with the start of the mandate of the new European Parliament and Commission, when commissioners are selected and “the path of the EU in the

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next five years is determined". This will be the presidency during which "the Ukraine conflict will probably not be finished". "Whom will this presidency invite, and ... where will this presidency send missions" on behalf of the EU, she asked.

Isabel Wiseler-Lima of EPP said Hungary would be the face of the EU during its presidency, which "raises concern in view of the statements (PM) Viktor Orbán has made". She insisted that that country had made no progress in such areas as the transparency of political campaign financing, independence of the media, equal opportunities and data protection. She added, however, that "slightly positive" changes had been made concerning issues around judges' independence, corruption, and the fight against the conflict of interests.

"We don't say what the Council should do, but we ask the Council to find a proper solution to protect the European Union and its fundamental values," she said.

Thijs Reuten, MEP of the Dutch Workers' Party, said "The Council should understand ... that Hungary is no longer a democracy". He insisted that though Hungary may implement reforms to access community funding, those changes took "minimum effort that can also be turned back" any time. He said Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had a "detrimental impact" on the EU's foreign policy "vetoing important decisions ... on support to Ukraine", adding that it harmed the

EU's credibility and suggested that the situation could even be worse under Hungary's presidency. He warned that Orbán could "push his agenda" during the EU presidency, and said "it obviously is not the task of a country holding the presidency".

Dutch Liberal MEP Sophie in 't Veld raised concern about the European Commission's negotiations with the Hungarian government concerning the frozen EU funding. She suggested that "Commissioner Johannes Hahn ... forgets that this is not about budget conditionality but rule of law conditionality". She said a decision was up to the Council but added that the body should "have stiff talks with Orbán and convince him to skip his term". If the Hungarian presidency still goes ahead, she said, "we should give a podium to those who have been silenced in Hungary".

FIDESZ MEP SLAMS PLANNED EP RESOLUTION AS 'CONCENTRATED ATTACK AGAINST HUNGARY'

The leftist majority of the European parliament is preparing another "concentrated attack to put pressure on Hungary" because of its pro-peace approach, an MEP of ruling Fidesz said on Wednesday, ahead of an EP debate on the state of the rule of law in Hungary. Leftist MEPs have earlier attacked the country for its stance on migration, its steps to protect children and families, and for promoting peace

in connection with the war in Ukraine, Balázs Hidvéghi told Hungarian journalists in Brussels. The resolution set to be presented at the debate will attempt to prevent Hungary from taking on the rotating presidency of the EU in the second half of 2024, which is a serious breach of EU laws and treaties, he insisted.

The debate is expected to bring "harsh anti-Hungarian attacks", Hidvéghi said. He insisted that the actual aim was to keep up pressure on the country, "because its pro-peace stance is not to the taste of the pro-war elite supporting weapon deliveries." Hungary rejects the "mendacious attacks", and finds it "shameful" that Hungarian leftist MEPs also take part in them, he said. "Their attempts to isolate Hungary and to cut Hungarians off from EU funding are just as shameful," he added. Hungary is ready to take on the presidency of the Council of the EU and to perform those duties to the highest standards, he said. "We stand up for Hungary's independence and freedom, and will protect Hungarians," he said.

EU JUSTICE COMMISSIONER: EC COMMITTED TO ENSURING RESPECT OF RULE OF LAW IN HUNGARY

The European Commission remains fully committed to ensuring that the rule of law is respected in Hungary as the unprecedented budgetary measures taken clearly show, the EU

Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders said in a debate concerning Hungary in the European Parliament on Wednesday.

Speaking in the debate held in Brussels under the title “Breaches of the Rule of Law and fundamental rights in Hungary and frozen EU funds”, Reynders said the Commission will continue consultations with Hungary on the implementation of all reforms and the fulfilment of all criteria necessary for unlocking the funds.

PRESIDENT VISITS HUNGARIAN SERVICEMEN INJURED IN KOSOVO

President Katalin Novák on Wednesday visited 12 Hungarian soldiers convalescing in a Budapest hospital after sustaining injuries in clashes in Kosovo. Hungarian troops within KFOR were deployed in northern Kosovo where riots began on Friday. Altogether 27 Hungarians were injured, 12 of whom are now convalescing in Budapest. As the commander-in-chief of the Hungarian Armed Forces, Novák thanked the soldiers for their service and wished them a swift recovery.

ORBÁN MEETS UEFA HEADS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met the leaders of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), including UEFA president Aleksander Čeferin, for a working lunch at his office on Wednesday, the PM’s press chief said.

UEFA’s leaders arrived in Hungary to attend the Europa League final between AS Roma and Sevilla on Wednesday evening. Sándor Csányi, the head of Hungarian football federation MLSZ, also attended the meeting, Bertalan Havasi said.

STUDENTS BEGIN SIT- IN DEMONSTRATION AT PRESIDENT’S OFFICE

A group of students began a sit-in demonstration in front of Sandor Palace, the office compound of the Hungarian president, on Tuesday evening in protest against the law changing the legal status of teachers. Organised by the United Student Front, the demonstration is planned to be continued until June 1 when the Tanítanék Movement has scheduled a nationwide protest, the students said. The students have put up a tent next to a mirror placed earlier at the scene by the Szikra (Spark) Movement near the Prime Minister’s Office to demand from decision-makers “to confront their own selves”.

DEMONSTRATION HELD FOR ‘DEBT COLLECTION VICTIMS’

A demonstration organised by the Szikra (Spark) Movement was held in front of the Budapest Municipal Court on Tuesday afternoon to demand the abolishment of the “bailiff mafia” and support for the “victims of debt collection procedures”.

Párbeszéd lawmaker András Jámbor, a representative of Szikra, said the movement wanted a transparent debt collection regime, urging the introduction of a public electronic database. He called for investigations aimed at uncovering potential abuses “since debt collection became a for-profit process”, saying that any abuses warranted compensation.

Jámbor called for an equality of rights that applied “not just to the powerful”, but also those who have found themselves in trouble because of the crisis. He said a new debt collection law was needed because the existing debt collection regime “can’t be called fair or democratic”, arguing that bailiffs could be appointed for money.

Bernadett Bakos, a lawmaker of opposition LMP, said ruling Fidesz represented the “capitalist class” against the interests of the Hungarian people. She said former chief bailiff György Schadl had “preyed on those stuck at the edge of a cliff, and made billions”. The speakers and protesters walked from the court building to Parliament, where Jámbor said he will again submit his proposals aimed at reforming the debt collection regime.

MI HAZÁNK CALLS ON GOVT TO BRING TROOPS HOME FROM KOSOVO

Radical opposition Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) called on the government to bring Hungary’s

soldiers home from Kosovo and make public the number of troops serving abroad as well as the costs of the missions. Party lawmaker Előd Novák told a press conference on Wednesday that “while the United States incites tensions against pro-Russia Serbs and is arming Kosovo Albanians”, the injured Hungarian troops had been “being used as shields by the US” in Monday’s clashes between NATO peacekeepers and protesters in Kosovo.

Since Montenegro, a country with a majority Serb population, could potentially veto joint NATO defence in the event of a potential attack by the Serbian army, it is clear that there is no military solution to the situation, the lawmaker said after a closed-door meeting of parliament’s defence and law enforcement committee. Political pressure is needed to resolve the situation in Kosovo, he added.

Hungary’s obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty only require it to help defend a member state that is attacked, but because of the “overzealousness” of the governments that have been in power so far, Hungary has been involved in several foreign invasions, including the “abject failure that was Afghanistan”, the lawmaker said. This, rather than the defence of the homeland, has also been the main consideration when it comes to military developments, he added.

SOCIALISTS TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL ON BATTERY PLANTS TO LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The opposition Socialist Party said it was submitting a draft resolution on the construction of battery plants to parliament’s legislative committee after the sustainable development committee voted against putting it on the agenda. Addressing an online news conference after a meeting of the sustainable development committee, Socialist Party group leader Bertalan Tóth noted that under his party’s proposal, the construction of a battery plant within a 12km area around a settlement would require the consent of residents in a local referendum.

Also, the investor and operator would have to adhere to environmental protection and occupational health and safety regulations, he said. The proposal would also limit the construction of such plants to farmland with a maximum golden crown value of 25, he added. “We won’t stop; we’re going before the legislative committee because we want parliament to at least put the issue on the agenda so that it could be debated,” Tóth said. Balázs Pollreisz, a Socialist councillor in Győr, in north-western Hungary, said it was “outrageous” that the legislative committee had not heard him out. He added, at the same time, that he was certain that the residents

of Győr would collect the required number of signatures needed to initiate a referendum on the planned construction of a battery plant there.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: CHINA’S JIECANG HUF 25 BN INVESTMENT IN W HUNGARY CREATES 200 JOBS

China’s Jiechang, which makes linear actuators for health-care and home applications, will invest some 25 billion forints (EUR 67.38m) in a plant in Kaposvár, in south-western Hungary, the minister of foreign affairs and trade announced on Wednesday. The investment, to be Jiechang’s biggest European production base, will create 200 jobs, Péter Szijjártó said in Budapest. The Hungarian state has provided a grant worth around 3.5 billion forints to support the establishment of Jiechang’s European distribution centre, he added.

OVER 10,500 REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON TUESDAY

Fully 5,769 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Tuesday, while 4,914 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 53 people, ORFK said. Fully 62 refugees, 18 children among them, travelled to Budapest by train.

STATUETTE OF HUNGARIAN- BORN SOCCER PLAYER, BOLOGNA COACH WEISZ UNVEILED IN BUDAPEST

A statue of Árpád Weisz, a Hungarian-born soccer player who coached Inter Milan and later Bologna before perishing in the Holocaust, was unveiled in Budapest on Wednesday. The bronze statue was unveiled by Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, together with Sándor Csányi, the head of the Hungarian Football Association (MLSZ) and Giuseppe Saputo, the chairman of the Bologna football club. Addressing the ceremony, Cohen described Weisz as being "a legendary coach" whose legacy has been an inspiration to coaches and players to date. "We must learn from the past and do all in our powers to prevent such a destruction from ever happening again," the Israeli foreign minister said. He said the statue, the first such erected for Weisz, serves also as a memento for Weisz, his family and the six million Jews who were murdered in Nazi death camps.

Gulyás in his address said that Weisz has left behind a legacy of unparalleled achievements and his fate is an "eternal warning" over the horrors of the Holocaust.

CHENEY'S FAMILY IN CHILE DONATES PAINTING TO ARTIST'S HUNGARIAN HOME TOWN

A painting by Hungarian-born painter Ladislao Cheney who moved with his wife to Chile in 1930, was presented to a local museum in Salgótarján, Cheney's home town, at a ceremony on Wednesday. The painting entitled "A Lady from Budapest" depicts Rosa Cheh Kontha, the artist's wife. Addressing the ceremony in the Dornyay Béla Museum, Chilean Ambassador Camilo Sanhueza, who owns as an art collector a couple of Cheney's paintings, said the artist had won several awards in Chile including Santiago city's Gold Medal in 1942. The ambassador said that a book is in preparation about Hungarian artists including Cheney who settled in Chile in the 1940s. Salgótarján Mayor Zsolt Fekete said at the ceremony that the painting arrived in the museum in the

spring where it underwent restoration and was put in a new frame. He said Cheney had been instrumental in teaching artists, many of whom have become prominent painters in Chile. At the ceremony, Esteban Vuchetich de Cseney called his grandfather the most famous 20th-century Hungarian artist in Chile.

FOREIGN FANS ENTANGLED IN BRAWL IN BUDAPEST

Foreign fans arriving in Budapest to watch the UEFA European League final engaged in a brawl near the stadium, Budapest police said on its website on Wednesday afternoon. Police arriving at the scene took seven people into custody, police.hu said. In the brawl three people were injured, two of whom, a Spanish and a Swedish national, were taken to hospital. Legal proceedings have been launched against several Polish nationals. Meanwhile, police took into custody two other Polish nationals who assaulted a Spanish and an Italian fan in central Budapest. Legal proceedings have been also launched against them, the police website said.