

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Noémi Bruzák

President Katalin Novák at the sports day for disabled children in Budapest's 14th district

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases July trade figures

Finance ministry reports on Aug budget figures

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

HUNGARY BACKS OSCE PEACEBUILDING ROLE

Hungary supports strengthening the role of OSCE, "which acts as the last channel for East-West dialogue", in peacebuilding, the foreign minister has said.

Maintaining dialogue between the parties was the only way that could lead to peace in Ukraine, Péter Szijjártó said at a joint press conference in Budapest with North Macedonia counterpart Bujar Osmani. "We Hungarians who live here in the neighbourhood of war want peace as soon as possible," he said. "Every single day that is spent in war brings more deaths and more destruction. The propaganda that better conditions for a peace agreement can be won on the battlefield is false. The conditions for peace negotiations are much better today than they will be tomorrow, and today they are much worse than they were yesterday," he said. "Therefore, the Hungarian government strongly supports the North Macedonian presidency [of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] so that the OSCE can continue to serve as a communication channel between East and West, Russia and the western half of Europe," he said.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI's real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



SZIJJÁRTÓ: REAL TALKS NEEDED ON EU ACCESSION OF ALBANIA, NORTH MACEDONIA

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó urged the initiation of genuine negotiations on the EU accession of Albania and North Macedonia. He argued that Europe faced extraordinary economic and security challenges, so stability and peace in the Western Balkans had never been more important. He said the EU now had a greater need for enlargement than the Western Balkans had a need for the EU “because the bloc is unfortunately weak and is getting weaker”. “We can only reverse this if the European Union begins to grow, because if it becomes larger, it will also be stronger, and this can only happen through enlargement,” he said. The reason for the failure of further enlargement so far, he added, was that neither Brussels nor some member states were honest on this matter, because in public they supported the process but behind closed doors they made more sceptical statements. “That is why we consider it unacceptable that the president of the European Council wants to postpone the date of admitting new members until 2030,” he said.

The minister asked what the community wanted to do during these seven years. “If NATO, which is a defence alliance, was able to include

three Western Balkan countries, I think the European Union should be able to follow suit,” he said. “At every meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, I listen to the lamentations of others that the Russians, the Turks, and I don’t know who else are gaining ground for themselves in the Western Balkans. It would be easy to counter this by, for example, admitting them to the European Union.”

Answering questions, Szijjártó confirmed that the government did indeed intend to buy Budapest Airport and that negotiations were under way, but it would be too early to disclose details. He said the ownership of the country’s largest airport was a strategic question.

On the ratification of Finland and Sweden’s NATO membership, he said it was a legitimate question for debate that the admission of the two countries would make the border between Russia and NATO several hundred kilometres longer, but nevertheless the government had submitted a proposal to parliament for approval of the ratification.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: GOOD HUNGARY-ROMANIA RELATIONS BENEFIT ETHNIC HUNGARIANS IN TRANSYLVANIA

Hungary must maintain the best possible relations with neighbouring countries because it also benefits

ethnic Hungarians living there, as demonstrated in the case of Hungary and Romania, the foreign minister said. The ministry cited Péter Szijjártó as telling a joint press conference with Hunor Kelemen, president of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), that the government considered national communities as a link and resource, which also applied to the ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania and Szeklerland. The performance of RMDSZ was proof of the reliability of this approach, as the party’s activities “have contributed to the development of bilateral cooperation considerably”, he added.

Szijjártó said that in the current period burdened by crises, “Hungary cannot afford not to maintain effective bilateral cooperation based on mutual respect and serving mutual interests”. The government, he added, would continue to support RMDSZ’s activities to ensure that the ethnic Hungarian communities further strengthen in Transylvania and Szeklerland.

Kelemen said it was important to improve living conditions for ethnic Hungarians in Romania to stop the shrinking of the community. This requires good relations between the two countries and pragmatic cooperation, he added. “We don’t need to agree on everything ... what’s most important is that the two states identify common points of view and there are a whole lot of them,” he said.

KÖVÉR: MEMBER STATES NO LONGER ABLE TO CONTROL EU BUREAUCRACY

Member states of the European Union can no longer control the EU bureaucracy, “which is spreading like a cancerous tumour”, Speaker of Parliament László Kövér said in an interview published in weekly *Mandiner*.

On the matter of Sweden’s NATO accession, Kövér confirmed it was supported by both the government and President Katalin Novák. “If it were not so, its ratification would not be on parliament’s agenda,” he said, adding that the ruling Fidesz-led coalition were “a living political community, and its members can have different opinions”. “Many of us in the parliamentary group think it would be worthwhile to wait with the decision,” he said. He said Turkey had not even hinted that they had any expectations from Hungary on the matter. He said the accession of two traditionally neutral countries, Finland and Sweden, was an issue that should have warranted a more comprehensive, in-depth discussion. “This does not actually strengthen the security of Europe, but weakens it, as the contact surface between Russia and NATO is broadened.” Kövér noted that in Hungary a referendum had been held on NATO accession, whereas in the two northern countries people had not been consulted on the matter.

He emphasised that NATO membership was a priority national interest for Hungary after the post-communist change in political system, and for now he did not “consider it a historical mistake”. He reiterated that Hungary was not waiting for Türkiye’s decision concerning Sweden. “The sovereign parliament of a sovereign country will decide when it sees fit,” he added.

Commenting on the fact that leaders of Eastern states came to Budapest as guests for the celebration of the founding of the state on Aug 20, Kövér said the national holiday coincided with the first full competition day of the World Athletics Championships, and “we also hosted many of our central European friends”. State leaders were here whose participation in the energy supply of Hungary, central Europe and Europe will be essential in the future, he said.

Kövé said that Hungary was part of Western Christian culture. “We entered Europe and its political institutional system with the founding of the Christian state. This is also part of our national culture, and now those who reject this ideological and moral foundations of Europe want to force us to make an exclusive choice in the political and economic sense,” he said. Kövér also noted that Hungary, a country which has always been at the crossroads of imperial aspirations, could also act as a mediating link culturally. “Why

shouldn’t there be value in this, why shouldn’t Hungary be one of the bridges that connect the West in the traditional sense with the diverse East,” he said.

On the issue of the war in Ukraine, Kövér said he saw no real difference between the positions of the government and that of the president. He pointed out that, similarly to government statements, President Novak spoke primarily about peace, which in itself distinguished her and Hungary from politicians from all other allied European and NATO member states. “No one can win; this war has already been lost by everyone,” Kövér said, adding that the United States and the military, energy and financial lobby there were the exception. “We always consider Hungarian interests and choose who we negotiate with, what we discuss and with what purpose accordingly”, he said. “We do not look for enemies, and we are happier with a fair partner than a false friend whose embrace is suffocating,” he added. Concerning Polish suggestions questioning Hungary’s actual dependence on Russian energy, Kövér said: “We should not give in to the hysteria-mongers who want to undermine Hungarian-Polish friendship.”

On the topic of US-Hungarian ties, he said it was not relations between Hungary and the US, but political relations between the two governments that were “at rock bottom”. In terms of the defence



and military cooperation, “we are doing our job as a NATO member”. He said that in economic terms, the US government had taken one or two steps that worsened bilateral relations but US companies operating in Hungary felt comfortable here. When Donald Trump was president, he added, political relations were better than ever. He expressed hope that sooner or later there would be another change in the administration in Washington and things would “get back to normal”.

Speaking about the European Union, the speaker said it was currently still the best forum for Hungary to enforce its national interests, a forum of “voluntary cooperation” of equal member states with equal rights. “And as long as this alliance continues to exist and Hungary receives what it is entitled to while meeting all its obligations defined in EU treaties, this statement will remain true,” he said. In connection with EU funds, the speaker said the government had done all it could to meet EU expectations without harming “the honour of Hungarian constitutionality”. The government, however, had a duty towards Hungarians to make reasonable compromises and ensure that “the Brussels bureaucracy runs out of arguments as to why it wants to reduce Hungary’s room for manoeuvre through financial means”. “They want to intervene in [Hungary’s] political affairs by withholding funding...”

Speaking about the European Parliament, the speaker said

he would be “satisfied” if the ruling Fidesz party could return to the European People’s Party (EPP), though this scenario was “impossible”. Fidesz, he said, was still in the same place politically where it had been 10-20 years ago and it was “the so-called centre right” that had shifted to the left. Kövér said he saw a right-wing turnaround possible in the EP only if the EPP and its major members such as the CDU-CSU made “a 90 degree turn”. He, however, anticipated a right-wing shift within the EP with the strengthening of the European Conservatives and Reformists and the Identity and Democracy party groups. Kövér called the scenario that right-wing parties could form a majority in the EP “unrealistic at the moment”.

NAVRACSICS: HUNGARY COULD ACHIEVE ‘BREAKTHROUGH’ IN EC ERASMUS TALKS BY END OF AUTUMN

Talks with the European Union’s budget commissioner were held in “a good atmosphere”, which gives hope to Hungary that it could achieve “a breakthrough” and settle yet unresolved issues in connection with the Erasmus student programme by the end of the autumn, Regional Development Minister Tibor Navracsics and EU Affairs Minister János Bóka told MTI in Brussels. At their talks with Johannes Hahn, they agreed on

speeding up talks and resolving technical problems in a bid to reach a consensus by the end of November and ensure the participation of Hungarian students in the Erasmus schemes, Navracsics said. “Our talks held on Wednesday indicated the European Commission being more flexible, also on matters concerning which the EC and the Hungarian government had very different positions,” he said, adding that those matters had not included the composition of the boards of Hungarian universities.

János Bóka said that at the talks they had reaffirmed that the Hungarian government was ready to continue the talks with the European Commission on a political and technical level in the spirit “of constructive and loyal cooperation”. He said that together with Navracsics they had proposed to the commissioner that the political and technical aspects should be addressed separately at future talks with a view to speeding up the process. Commenting on the so-called super milestones, a set of requirements defined by Brussels for unlocking funding, Bóka said that the Hungarian government had fulfilled all of them appropriately.

FIDESZ MEP: EU ENERGY POLICY ‘IN ALTERNATIVE REALITY’

Rather than taking responsibility for its “rushed decisions and failed sanctions policy”, the European Commission is developing its energy policy “in an

alternative reality”, a Fidesz MEP said. Commenting on a meeting of the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy on the results of European energy policy, András Gyürk said the committee approved the handling of the energy crisis, even as “the recession and nosediving industrial production in Europe paint a very different picture.”

Ensuring access to affordable energy is one of the most important tasks of the EU and the member states, Gyürk said in a statement. “Brussels failed at that”, and its “rushed decisions and failed sanction policy” brought about volatile energy prices, raising utility prices and undermining investors’ trust, he said. European consumers pay seven times more for natural gas than in the US and three times more for electricity than in China, he said, adding that the EC, however, was sticking to its policy, requiring member states to scrap measures aimed at protecting families, such as Hungary’s utility price caps. “At the same time, citizens will give their opinion of the EU’s performance in energy policy, among other things, in next year’s European parliamentary elections,” the statement added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ CONDEMNS EFFORTS AIMED AT BLOCKING TRUMP FROM PRESIDENTIAL RACE

In light of recent attempts to block former President Donald Trump from running in next year’s presidential

elections in the United States, the government will not accept any criticism from the US on the state of democracy in Hungary, the foreign minister has said. Answering a question at a press conference held after meeting his North Macedonian counterpart, Péter Szijjártó said that “we do not want to hear remarks anymore from the Americans about the state of democracy in Hungary, how institutions work and what the situation with the state of the rule of law is.” He said Hungary would not accept any criticism over its political system from a country where a candidate who has the most chance might be disqualified from the presidential race. Szijjártó said the exclusion of Trump “would be very bad news also because he is the one to trust when it comes to creating peace”. Also, he insisted that the former US president had been the only politician to have achieved success in stabilising the situation in the Middle East in the past decades.

FORMER JOBBIK LEADER VONA TO LAUNCH NEW PARTY

Gábor Vona, the former leader of opposition Jobbik, has said that a foundation he registered following the 2018 parliamentary election will be transformed into a political party dubbed 2RK (Second Reform Age). Vona said in a video on Facebook that “there could be

a second reform age in Hungary in the 21st century, meaning a country that organises itself and a society that has self-respect”. Instead of following ideologies, the party will pursue politics along the political vision of the reform age, he said, adding that it would not deal with the “tribal conflicts” that characterised Hungarian politics today but “focus on their own issues while building bridges and seeking creative energies”. He added that 2RK would not enter into an alliance either with the ruling parties or any opposition party.

FINMIN: GOVT, CBANK CONTINUE ‘CLOSE COOPERATION’

Finance Minister Mihály Varga and National Bank of Hungary (NBH) governor György Matolcsy discussed recent positive economic developments such as the affirmation of Hungary’s credit rating by Moody’s and the successful euro bond issue. Both agreed that efforts to bring down inflation and to reduce the budget deficit and the state debt should be continued. They also welcomed the decision of the European Central Bank that cleared the government’s proposed amendment to the central bank act as the new rules will broaden the central bank’s room to manoeuvre and increase the stability of the budget.

Varga and Matolcsy have met regularly since April with the shared goal of improving balance indicators amid the uncertain international environment, reducing inflation and putting the Hungarian economic on a sustainable growth path.

SZALAY-BOBROVNICZKY OPENS HUNGARIAN MEMORIAL IN ITALY MILITARY CEMETERY

The courage of Hungarian soldiers of the past and their tough persistence must be seen as an example and guiding force today, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said at the opening of Hungarian memorial in the Italian military cemetery of Monte Grappa on Thursday. The defence ministry noted that the event was also attended by Parliamentary Speaker László Kövér and defence ministry state secretary Tamás Vargha.

A memorial paying tribute to soldiers who fought under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the first world war in the Alps would also include a Hungarian flag from now on, it added. In a note added to the memorial's book of remembrance, Kövér thanked Italy for preserving the burial place of the fallen, adding that "war cannot solve anything" and citing the slogan "if you want peace, remember war". Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto said that both Italians and Hungarians had died in the area, which has by now become a site of remembrance and friendship.

AGRICULTURE MINISTER MEETS ISRAELI COUNTERPART

Minister of Agriculture István Nagy met Israeli counterpart Avi Dichter. The sides discussed irrigation development, partnerships in education and science, and long-term cooperation in agriculture. Nagy said Hungary was able to produce double the food necessary to feed its population and the country could become a "key partner" for Israel in terms of its food imports. The ministers agreed on the need for a strategic partnership in agriculture between the two countries.

OFFICIAL: WAR PUTTING PRESSURE ON HUNGARY FROM TWO SIDES

The price increase of energy and fertilisers coupled with the duty-free status granted to Ukrainian produce have radically worsened conditions for farming, so "the war is putting pressure on us from two sides", an official of the ministry of agriculture said on Thursday. State secretary for agriculture and rural development Zsolt Feldman told the opening of the 36th Bábolna farmer expo in northern Hungary that the country shared the same fate with Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia that face the same problems. Despite many months of constant reports

from the affected countries, Brussels has refused to accept that the many tens of millions of tonnes of Ukrainian produce arriving in European Union markets have caused disruption, he said.

Thanks to the five countries joining forces, Ukrainian products are now banned in their markets, Feldman said. They would like to get the ban extended and the introduction of a railway transit fee for Ukrainian grain deliveries, he added. If the countries' joint action is not successful, they will be ready to introduce unilateral national bans, he said.

OFFICIAL: USE OF MOTHER TONGUE MUST BE PROTECTED

The use of the mother tongue in all areas of life, including the public and private fields, must be viewed as a fundamental value that must be protected under all circumstances, the state secretary for Hungarian communities abroad said on Thursday. Árpád János Potápi told a congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) in Pécs, southern Hungary, that people living in minority must be protected.

"Because if their rights are not guaranteed, and their language use, their culture and traditions are restricted or prevented, or they are prohibited or persecuted, then the community may lose their most talented leaders", he added. When the government raises its voice concerning

the protection of national minorities, it is protecting the values that preserve the wisdom of elders, he said.

MEDIA AUTHORITY INAUGURATES CUTTING- EDGE EMC MEASUREMENT FACILITY

Hungary's National Media and Communications Authority (NMHH) inaugurated a new 15,000sqm facility on Thursday housing a laboratory measuring electromagnetic compatibility, measuring stations and servers, as well as conference rooms. The cutting-edge equipment and excellent working environment will boost expert training programmes, NMHH head András Koltay said at the event. EMC measurement is a fast-developing field aimed at filtering out interferences and disturbances in broadcasting caused by the swiftly changing technological environment, Koltay said. The new facility will have an important role in health-related testing too, he said. Prime quality EMC measurements will also boost the NMHH's decision-making processes on frequency assignments, he said. The facility will also offer practical training for university students, Koltay added.

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DOWN 2.6% IN JULY

Output of Hungary's industrial sector dropped by an annual 2.6% in July, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. July output

fell by 2.5% when adjusted for the number of working days. Month on month, output rose by a seasonally and workday-adjusted 2.8%. Most branches of manufacturing contributed to the headline decline, KSH said. Among the biggest branches, electrical equipment and automotive production increased, while production of computers, electronics and optical equipment as well as of food, drinks and tobacco declined, it added. In January-July, output dropped by an annual 4.5%.

OVER 12,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON WEDNESDAY

Fully 6,576 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Wednesday, while 5,986 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 143 people, ORFK said on Thursday.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: SAMSUNG SDI ANNOUNCES HUF 22.5 BN R+D INVESTMENT

Samsung SDI has announced the largest ever government-supported research and development investment in Hungary, worth 22.5 billion forints (EUR 57.9m), Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said, adding that the government is supporting the project with a 5.5 billion forint grant. The facility is expected to

contribute to longer-life, safer batteries while cutting production costs, he said. The facility will also create "dozens" of high value-added jobs, he added. The investment will further strengthen cooperation with universities that are already training experts in electric battery and car manufacture, he said. He said that while Europe stumbled from crisis to crisis, the car manufacturing sector was undergoing a "revolution".

"Hungary's success in the race for investments in the electric car sector is key to maintaining economic growth and preserving jobs," he said. "With traditional car manufacturing losing ground, Hungarians may lose their jobs en masse unless we can bring electric car investments to the country." An investment by Samsung SDI, the second largest domestic player in the field and the employer of 6,000 people in the country, shows Hungary's success in that competition, he said.

EXHIBITION OF YOUNG HUNGARIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS OPENS IN NEW YORK SOHO

A group exhibition of eight Hungarian contemporary photographers has opened in the art centre of New York. The exhibition entitled Photo Couture features a selection of the artists' works in fashion photography, one of the organisers told MTI. The week-long show has been organised to coincide with this year's New York

Fashion Week in the city, a capital of fashion, said Csenge Palotai, director of the Liszt Institute. Several of the artists are well-known fashion photographers with achievements in the international scene, she said.

Attila Ledényi, a co-organiser and founder of the Budapest Art Market and Art Photo shows, said that Hungary had a special bond with the art of photography built on the legacy of such renowned Hungarian artists as André Kertész, Robert Capa, László Moholy-Nagy and Brassai. The exhibition will be shown in Hungary at the Art Photo Budapest event between October 19 and 22, he said.

WORLD ATHLETICS DRAWS OVER 170,000 GUESTS TO BUDAPEST

More than 170,000 guests spent close to 460,000 guest nights in Budapest when the capital hosted the 2023 World Athletics Championships from August 19 to 27, the Hungarian Tourism Agency (MTÜ) said. Around 71% of guest nights were spent at four- and five-star hotels, MTÜ said, citing figures from the National Tourism Data Service Centre (NTAK). Revenue of tourism accommodations more than doubled from the same period a year earlier. Foreign visitors

accounted for 85% of guest nights in the capital during the event. Those visitors came from around 200 countries, but Britons and Germans each accounted for around 9% of the total number of guest nights spent by foreigners.

At a conference focusing on sports, Ádám Schmidt, state secretary for sports, said on Wednesday evening that the WAC 2023 Budapest event had by far exceeded expectations. He said that an estimated 1,170,000,000 people watched the championships, the largest sporting event Hungary had ever hosted. There were 14,000 articles written about the event reaching a total of 28.5 billion readers, he said.