

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/János Váida

Sanofi's newly inaugurated for syringe manufacturing plant in NE Hungary

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

## TOP STORY

# BÓKA: PREPARATIONS FOR EU PRESIDENCY ONGOING

Government preparations for Hungary's European Union presidency are going "full steam ahead", with a focus on developing Europe's economy and strengthening competitiveness, the minister for European Union affairs said on Friday.

János Bóka told a press conference on the sidelines of an international meeting held in Parliament, dubbed "Next Generation is Female", that demographic challenges, the subject of the meeting, would also be on the agenda. Central Europe is seeking its own solutions to demographic challenges, and the relevant policies are the competency of member states, he said. Hungary is in the process of identifying common challenges and assessing how European policies can be put to use in handling them, he added.

Judit Varga, the head of parliament's European affairs committee, said that 2024 would be "a European year in Hungary", with the presidency starting on July 1. Europe is made up not only of EU institutions but also of member states, which makes dialogue essential, she added.

Attending the meeting are Karoline Edtstadler, Austria's federal minister for the EU and the constitution, Croatian state secretary for Europe Andreja Metelko-Zgombić, Romanian state secretary for EU affairs Daniela Anda Grigore Gitman, and Poland's deputy state secretary for EU affairs Karolina Rudzińska.

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## **BÓKA: GOVT READY FOR FURTHER EC TALKS**

János Bóka, the minister for European Union affairs, has said the government has made clear to the European Commission that it remains committed to negotiations both on a political and technical level. Hungary has made specific proposals on the structure and topic of the talks with a view to speeding up the outcome, and these were well received, he told HírTV in an interview on Thursday evening. The minister said that Hungary had already met all previous conditions for unblocking its EU funding but was pursuing further talks in view of the EU's "unprecedented geopolitical and economic challenges". It is vitally important, he said, to send a message to all member states and the world that "the European Union is united". He said Hungary was pursuing the talks constructively "and in the spirit of loyal cooperation" in the expectation that it would be similarly treated by the European institutions and other member states. Some, he added, sought to strengthen EU unity by abolishing the right of veto, but this would be a mistake. Noting that Hungary is holding the Council presidency in the second half of 2024, he said no one should be unclear about the intent with which the country is going about its preparations. Bóka said conflicts of interest and asset declarations were issues that must be resolved

as there were big differences in regulations between the various European institutions, and at the level of individual member states, none were as detailed or transparent as the standards that European institutions demanded of them.

Under the coming trio presidency, the study of demographic challenges is on the agenda at Hungary's initiative, he said, adding that the other priorities of Hungary's presidency were subject to consultations with all member states.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: GOVT DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN ZERO TOLERANCE OF ANTI-SEMITISM**

The Jewish community in Hungary can live in safety and peace because the government is determined to maintain zero tolerance of anti-Semitism, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó said on Friday. Szijjártó said on Facebook after a meeting with Andor Grósz, head of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ), he had assured him that "developing cooperation with Israel will continue to play an important role in Hungarian foreign policy, and our country will continue to support Israel in international organisations". He also noted that he has known Grósz, who was recently elected MAZSIHISZ president, since childhood. "I am sure that he will be an excellent leader for the largest organisation of Hungary's Jewry," he added.

## **DEFMIN: MINISTRY PLANE TO TRANSPORT RESCUE TEAM TO TÜRKIYE CAVING ACCIDENT**

A Hungarian team is flying to Türkiye on an aircraft of the defence ministry to help with the rescue of the American caver trapped there, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said on Thursday. The ministry said in a statement that the caver had been taken ill at 1,000 meters, and is now in a state that warrants a concentrated rescue effort. The team of doctors travelling from Hungary are "uniquely qualified to take on the task," the statement said.

The defence ministry will closely monitor the events and ensure all help necessary, the statement said.

## **SOCIALISTS CALL ON GOVT TO GET A GRIP ON INFLATION**

Today's Hungarian inflation data give no cause for celebration, an opposition Socialist official said on Friday, calling on the government to "finally get a grip on inflation". The Central Statistical Office data show consumer prices in August 16.4% higher than a year earlier, Zoltán Vajda, the chairman of parliament's budgetary committee, told an online press briefing. He said the inflation brackets affecting pensioners and low earners in particular were

higher than headline inflation, and he blamed this on government economic policymaking. Hungarian inflation, he added, was the highest in the EU and stood out in a regional comparison, too. Besides blaming the government for its “failed” financial and economic policies, he said “serious questions must be answered” in connection with the central bank. The Socialist politician called on the government to reach a quick agreement with the European Commission to unblock the country’s EU funds. Vajda said that whereas it was realistic to expect inflation to be in the single digits by year-end, the government should aim for a landing zone of 2-4% rather than its loose target.

### **MI HAZÁNK COLLECTING SIGNATURES AGAINST WHO PANDEMIC ACCORD**

Opposition party Mi Hazánk is collecting signatures in support of its campaign against the World Health Organization’s (WHO) planned pandemic accord.

The party is combining the signature drive with an information campaign, Dóra Dúró, the radical party’s deputy leader, told a press conference on Friday, adding that the accord “brutally curbs” personal freedoms and national sovereignty. She said it was intolerable that “a globalist organisation serving foreign interests” wanted to override the powers of the sovereign Hungarian

state, and Mi Hazánk demanded that the Hungarian government protest against the accord.

### **KÖVÉR OFFERS CONDOLENCES OVER BULGARIA FLOODS**

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér has sent a telegram of condolences to Bulgarian counterpart Rosen Zhelyazkov over the severe flooding in the country’s Tsarevo district, parliament’s press office said on Friday. Kövér said he was deeply shocked by the severe floods that have caused four fatalities so far and massive damage. “Allow me to offer my heartfelt condolences and sincere sympathies on behalf of Hungary’s parliament to relatives and friends of the victims on this sad occasion, on the day of national mourning,” he said. “I can assure you that Bulgaria can count on Hungary’s support in these difficult times,” he added.

### **ALMOST 16,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON THURSDAY**

Fully 6,507 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Thursday, while 9,273 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 150 people, ORFK said on Friday.

### **SANOFI INAUGURATES HUF 8 BN EXPANSION IN HUNGARY**

French pharmaceutical company Sanofi inaugurated an 8 billion forint (EUR 20.7m) expansion at its base in Miskolc, in north-eastern Hungary, on Friday.

The government supported the investment, which boosted syringe capacity by around 50%, with 1.5 billion forints. Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said the new capacity would make the base a leader in production of blood thinner injections in Europe. Exports of Sanofi’s local unit stand over 140 billion forints, making it the 22nd biggest exporter in the country, he added.

### **HUNGARY TRADE SURPLUS NARROWS TO EUR 697 M IN JULY**

Hungary’s trade surplus was 697 million euros in July, down from 1.568 billion euros in June, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data on Friday. Exports rose by 4.3% year on year, to 11.372 billion euros. Imports fell by 12.9%, to 10.675 billion euros. Trade with other European Union member states accounted for 76% of Hungary’s exports and 72% of its imports during the month. In January-July, Hungary’s exports increased by an annual 10.6%, to

88.820 billion euros, while imports edged down by 0.8%, to 83.761 billion euros. The trade surplus was 5.060 billion euros.

## **HUNGARY AUGUST INFLATION 16.4%**

Annual inflation in Hungary was 16.4% in August, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. Food prices were 19.5% higher in August, down from 23.1% in the previous month, while household energy prices increased by 34.7%. Prices in the category of goods that includes vehicle fuel rose by 19.8%.

Prices of spirits and tobacco products increased by 12.7%. Service prices were 13.2% up, slowing from a 14.6% rise in July. Harmonised CPI, adjusted for better comparison with other European Union member states, was 14.2%. Core inflation, which excludes volatile fuel and food prices, was 15.2%. Month on month, consumer prices edged up 0.7%.

Commenting on the data, Márton Nagy, the minister of economic development, said the drop in prices over the past seven months had been largely thanks to government measures such as mandatory price cuts and the online price monitor, and food inflation below 20% was a "milestone" considering its peak of 44.8% in December. Such measures

were still effective in suppressing prices, he said, adding that price competition was now "deadly". The slightly higher August inflation 0.4 percentage points above the government forecast was down to high fuel prices, he said. The price of vehicle fuels has risen significantly, and the reasons why were both international and country-specific, he said in a ministry statement, noting decisions by Russia and Saudi Arabia to cut production as well as higher transit fees. The minister underlined the government's target of cutting inflation to single digits by year-end, though, he added, this would "not happen in October".

## **BUDGET DEFICIT 3,298.7 BN IN AUGUST**

Hungary's cash-flow deficit was 3,298.7 billion forints (EUR 8.5bn) at the end of August, up from 2,940.3 billion at the end of the previous month, the finance ministry said in a first release of data on Friday. The central budget posted a shortfall of 3,330.8 billion forints at the end of August, with social security funds 93 billion in the red, while separate state funds had a 125.1 billion forint surplus. The ministry pointed to financing for household energy subsidies, security spending and family benefits and pensions

amid the strained circumstances of war and sanctions as contributors to the shortfall. It also mentioned pre-financing for European Union programmes. EU programmes were worth 1,813.8 billion forints in January-August, while transfers from Brussels were worth 1,040.9 billion. Spending on household utility subsidies came to 1,085.1 billion forints by the end of August. The ministry said the government was committed to reducing the deficit and public debt from one year to the next. The full-year deficit target is 3,400.2 billion forints.

## **AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLIER GKN INAUGURATES PLANT IN HUNGARY**

Automotive industry supplier GKN inaugurated a plant in Felsőzsolca, in north-eastern Hungary, on Friday. The plant, the first phase of a 52 billion forint (EUR 133.8m) investment, will create 200 jobs, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said at the ceremony. The next phase will wind up by the end of 2026, creating 1,500 jobs, he added. GKN Automotive Hungary's base will supply BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Suzuki and Volkswagen. The state is providing support for the investment, but the scale won't be announced until after it is cleared by the European Commission, Szijjártó said.