

PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Katalin Novák and PM's Office chief Gergely Gulyás at the ceremony closing out the Reformed Church's nationwide kindergarten programme in C Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

European Parliament holds plenary session

TOP STORY

HUNGARY CHARITY TO PROVIDE AID TO MOROCCO

The Hungarian Reformed Church Aid is providing humanitarian assistance in earthquake-stricken Morocco, distributing durable foodstuffs and hygiene products.

The first delegation of the organisation is flying to Marrakesh on Sunday, members of the organisation told a press event. "This time we are not primarily focusing on searches with dogs or searching for missing people, but we plan to provide humanitarian aid to the victims of the earthquake," executive director Márton Juhász said, adding that they will purchase supplies locally for donations and these will be transported to their destination with locally rented vehicles. In addition to delivering donations, the delegation will assess local needs. The search and rescue team of the organisation is already prepared to provide reinforcement if necessary and could depart as soon as Monday. The Hungarian Reformed Church Aid is organising a national fundraiser for contributions to the aid effort. More than 2,000 people have been confirmed dead in the 6.8 magnitude earthquake that hit the north African country late on Friday, with the homes of thousands having become uninhabitable.

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HUNGARY PRESIDENT, HOUSE SPEAKER EXPRESS CONDOLENCES OVER MOROCCO EARTHQUAKE

President Katalin Novák has sent her condolences to King Mohammed VI of Morocco, his family and the people of Morocco, over the earthquake that hit the country late Friday. "Deeply shocked by the devastating news coming from Morocco where an earthquake killed hundreds of people and left many more homeless," Novák said on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter. "My heartfelt condolences to the royal family and to the people of Morocco; my thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of the victims during this tragic moment. I wish you strength for the rescue operations, we Hungarians lend a helping hand whenever needed," she added.

László Kövér, the Speaker of Parliament, also expressed his condolences to Rachid Talbi Alami, head of the Moroccan House of Representatives. "Let me express my condolences to you and to every Moroccan citizen, especially those who lost family members and homes during this tragic event," he wrote. Kövér sent a similar message of condolence to Naam Miyara, head of the Council of Advisors of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Foreign ministry spokesman Máté Paczolay told MTI on Saturday that based on currently available information, there were no Hungarian victims or injured in connection

with the overnight earthquake. The Hungarian embassy in Morocco is contacting Hungarian citizens living or staying in the country for the purpose of travel, providing them with all possible help and information, he said.

TWO DEAD, FOUR INJURED IN C HUNGARY AIR SHOW PLANE CRASH

Two people were killed and four injured when a plane crashed during a flight demonstration at an air show in Székesfehérvár, in central Hungary, on Sunday. The circumstances of the accident are as yet unknown, the communications centre of the Székesfehérvár local council told MTI, adding that firefighters and ambulance crews were at the scene. Organisers suspended the show's remaining events. The Fejér County Police Headquarters said the plane crashed next to a parked car, with the debris causing the vehicle to burn out. The pilot and the other person on board the aircraft both died at the scene, and three of the car's passengers suffered severe burns, they confirmed on the police.hu website. According to press reports, the aircraft was a T-28 Trojan. Pál Gyórfi, the spokesman of the National Ambulance Service, told MTI that ambulance personnel on-site at the time of the accident started treating the injured and later on three rescue helicopters and several other ambulances arrived. Three who were seriously injured -- a girl, a woman and a man -- were transported by

helicopter to hospitals in Budapest and a boy with less serious injuries was taken to a hospital in Székesfehérvár by ambulance, Gyórfi said.

GOVT OFFICIAL: BRUSSELS MUST CHANGE

Changes are needed in the European Union, Balázs Orbán, the prime minister's policy chief, told an event on Saturday, adding that a confident right-wing force in Brussels following the European parliamentary elections next year would be essential in ushering in those changes. Orbán said "Brussels" has been taken hostage by a "pro-war and corrupt elite", and bad decision-making was seriously damaging Europe and its competitiveness. A strong European right wing with Fidesz and its Christian Democrat ally acting with the broad trust of Hungarians would be instrumental in achieving changes in the European Union, he said ahead of a speech to be given by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. He said opinion polls indicated that the right wing was gaining strength in all big EU countries, and he warned against the "so-called centre right" cooperating with the left, as evidence of the past five years suggested that Europe would continue to go downhill as a result. Instead, he said, the right wing and the centre right should cooperate. Only at a later stage will Fidesz and the Christian Democrats decide which grouping to join, he added.

Asked whether Fidesz saw Robert Fico, the former Slovak prime minister,

as an ally, he said the party would work together with people who thought in terms of a "Europe of nations". Asked why the government had not summoned the Russian ambassador in light of a Russian textbook describing participants of the 1956 revolution as "fascists", he said Hungary expected all countries to subscribe to the generally accepted view that the heroes of 1956 were "the most important and distinguished actors of the Hungarian nation who deserve every respect". The picnic meeting in Kötcse, in southern Hungary, has taken place every year since 2004, and "Where there's home there's freedom" is the motto of year's event.

NOVÁK: PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH GIVES COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The free practice of Christian faith provides a competitive advantage in today's world, President Katalin Novák told a thanksgiving worship service and ceremony closing out the Hungarian Reformed Church's nationwide kindergarten programme in Kunszentmiklós, in central Hungary, on Sunday. In her speech, the president expressed thanks for the 66 Reformed kindergartens that have been built or renovated across the country over the last four years. Novák also gave thanks for the 1,300 Reformed churches that have been renovated and the 55 that have been built across the Carpathian Basin in the last 13 years. The leadership of the Hungarian Reformed Church does not just settle for survival, but intends to

grow, she said, adding that the church had what was needed to make this happen. The president said she was also thankful that more and more parents wanted to equip their children with knowledge of Christianity and faith, and that Christian communities were being kept alive. Novák noted that the nationwide kindergarten programme has helped create 450 jobs linked to the Reformed Church and Christianity and that the number of kindergarten teacher applications had doubled compared with previous years.

Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, told the same event that good kindergartens and schools were needed in order for the country to make progress. Communities that are strong in their faith and unity and work to achieve goals that go beyond themselves are also necessary, Gulyás said. The government has allocated 35 billion forints (EUR 90.8m) towards the Reformed Church's nationwide kindergarten programme, he said. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church is building, upgrading and expanding 128 kindergartens from 67 billion forints, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church is spending 10 billion on building or upgrading 13 kindergartens, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, ALGERIA IN AGREEMENT ON MIGRATION, UKRAINE WAR

Cooperation between Hungary and Algeria is key, as the two countries hold similar positions on illegal migration

and the war in Ukraine, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said after meeting his Algerian counterpart on Friday. Hungary and Algeria are both freedom-loving countries that reject attempts at outside interference, the foreign ministry cited Szijjártó as saying at a joint press conference with Ahmed Attaf in Budapest. The two countries also see eye to eye when it comes to their serious security challenges, Szijjártó said.

The European Union is facing some of its most severe economic and security challenges of all time, with the latter being related to the rising threat of terrorism in Africa, he said. Former French colonies in Africa have seen eight coups in three years, which destabilise the region and result in a rise in migration pressure on the European continent, the minister said.

Hungary faces security threats from two different directions, namely the war in Ukraine from the east and illegal migration from the south, Szijjártó said. "That's why cooperation between Hungary and Algeria is important to us, because we are on the same side and hold similar positions when it comes to both issues," he said. Migration flows towards Europe need to be stopped as quickly as possible, new armed conflicts in Africa must be prevented and the countries in the region must be given the help they need to preserve their stability and develop their economies, the minister said. In other words, it is the root causes of migration that need to be addressed, Szijjártó said, adding that instead of encouraging people to come

to Europe and “supporting the business model of people smuggling rings”, Africa should be helped in achieving stability and peace and eliminating the causes of migration. “This is especially true for the Sahel region ... if stability can’t be restored here, then Europe will face more migration waves, and in the current situation the continent won’t be able to manage two simultaneous security challenges,” Szijjártó warned.

Turning to the situation in Ukraine, the minister said both Algeria and Hungary were part of the “global pro-peace majority”, stressing that only a diplomatic settlement could save lives. “And the conditions for achieving peace are better today than they will be tomorrow,” Szijjártó said. He also expressed concern over reports of potential deliveries of weapons to Ukraine that pose danger and health hazards, calling on the international community to refrain from steps that would lead to an increase in the number of such weapons in the region.

“We welcome that Algeria is also committed to dialogue and trust that as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, it will be able to contribute significantly to a peaceful settlement to the war through diplomacy over the next two years,” Szijjártó said. Meanwhile, he said 100 Algerian university students are awarded scholarships to study in Hungary each year, adding that the roughly 900 applications submitted this year reflected the strong interest in the scheme.

In response to a question, Szijjártó said the precondition for Hungary

importing natural gas from Algeria would be the construction of an interconnector with Slovenia, on which an agreement has recently been finalised and could be signed next month. Once the interconnector is built, Hungary will be able to negotiate on the further conditions such as price, he said. The sides have therefore agreed that Hungarian and Algerian companies will begin exchanging information to determine whether there is a possibility for them to establish trade relations, he added.

On another subject, Szijjártó said it was “indisputable” that there had been “American meddling” in last year’s general election in Hungary. The aim, he said, had been to secure a victory for the opposition and bring Hungary “to the pro-war side” and get it to participate in weapons deliveries. The voters, however, made it clear that investment in the Hungarian elections “is one of the worst investments possible”, because the money was pumped into the Hungarian opposition, “which, thank God, failed miserably”, he said. Szijjártó said this interference was still ongoing, insisting that a significant number of media outlets were “pushing propaganda” against the government’s pro-peace politics using foreign, including American, resources.

GOVT OFFICIAL: CCUS SOLUTIONS NEEDED FOR DECARBONISATION

Carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) is essential for reaching

decarbonisation goals, Csaba Lantos, the energy minister, said on Saturday. Carbon dioxide emissions have fallen by 37% in Hungary since 1990, and the National Energy and Climate Strategy calls for a 50% reduction by 2030, he said at a presentation of a book on carbon dioxide storage and utilisation opportunities in Hungary. Last year, Hungary was the fourth most effective EU member state in reducing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of energy production, he said, having reduced this ratio by 8.6%. Only the three Benelux countries outperformed Hungary, he added.

Citing a recent Hungarian study, Lantos said CCUS may be the only way of ensuring the viability of existing power plants and industrial facilities, which can be retrofitted with carbon dioxide capture technology. Electricity generated by renewable energy can replace some processes, but not all industrial processes can be made electricity-based, he said, citing the examples of heavy industry, long-distance transport and cement production, which would rely on CCUS to achieve zero emissions.

Parts of the steel industry that use CCUS technologies now are the most advanced and cheapest low-carbon solutions for the production of new steel, he said. Only twenty large emitters account for 70% of Hungarian emissions where CCUS is relevant, so it would be fairly easy to make changes with relatively few players involved, he said. Around 47 million tonnes of carbon dioxide

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are spewed into the country's atmosphere annually, much of it by fossil fuelled power plants, metal producers, the chemical industry and cement makers. Since these produce emissions in large volumes they are big CCUS contenders, he added.

MINISTER: BALANCE-BASED SETTLEMENT TO REMAIN IN PLACE FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH SOLAR PANELS

Hungary's government will keep the current annual balance settlement system in place for families that have installed solar panels, Energy Minister Csaba Lantos said on Friday. Annual settlement will also apply to families that do not yet have solar panels installed but have registered for them, Lantos said in a video on Facebook. The government has recently asked the Hungarian Energy and Public Utility Regulatory Authority (MEKH) to explore the possibility of amending the regulation on the settlement of electricity bills in the case of households using solar power, Lantos said.

The minister confirmed after a meeting with MEKH head Edit Juhász on Friday that the annual settlement system could remain in place for families that have installed solar panels and, with certain stipulations, even those that are preparing to install them. Balance-based settlement will remain in place for a ten-year period after the solar panels are installed, he said, adding that this system was more

favourable because it meant lower electricity bills for families. Brussels, however, wants a gross settlement system to be adopted effective Jan. 1, 2024, Lantos said, referring to a new European Union directive. In the case of households that do not yet have solar panels installed, the annual settlement system will apply if they registered solar panel projects by midnight on Sept. 7, and the installation is completed by the end of 2025, he said.

FIDESZ: HUNGARIAN LEFT'S ELECTION CAMPAIGNS BEING FINANCED FROM BRUSSELS

The Hungarian left's European Parliament and local election campaigns are being financed from Brussels, the communications director of ruling Fidesz, István Hollik, said on Sunday. Despite the recent reports of the "Soros network" undergoing changes, "they want to continue being active in Eastern Europe", Hollik told public broadcaster Kossuth Radio. At the same time, given their good relations with the "Brussels bureaucrats", they have managed to get Brussels to finance "these attempts at interference", he said.

Hollik said Brussels had 4 billion forints' worth of funds to spend on the campaigns, of which left-wing organisations had so far received 500 million forints. He said it was "particularly interesting" that recipients of direct funding from Brussels had

all been supported by the "Soros network" in the past. "Nobody can seriously think that this isn't closely connected with the fact that there are local and European Parliament elections next year," he said. "The reality is that Brussels is financing the Hungarian left's campaign in advance." This, he argued, was evidenced by the funding awarded to organisations operating small left-wing media outlets outside Budapest, such as a website that has been "attacking" the Debrecen local council.

Hollik called it "outrageous" that Brussels was financing the Hungarian left while withholding the funding Hungary was entitled to. "We dare hope that the EU funds Hungary is entitled to are still there and haven't been spent on something else," he said. "This isn't a handout, because when we entered the European Union, we opened the Hungarian market to the strong western European businesses with more capital, and in return the EU committed to assisting Hungary's progress with development funds," Hollik said. "This is the agreement that Brussels has now violated, because it is withholding these funds while financing the left."

MI HAZÁNK CALLS ON GOVT TO SUPPORT FARM SECTOR INSTEAD OF BATTERY PLANTS

Instead of subsidising foreign battery plants, the government should support Hungary's agriculture sector,

Dávid Dócs, the deputy leader of opposition party Mi Hazánk, said on Saturday. In the past two years, Hungarian agriculture has been hit by “the drought of the century”, while the price of materials has skyrocketed and purchase prices have halved, in some cases falling to one-third, Dócs told a press conference. Dócs noted that even in a year with a record harvest, many farmers were finishing the year with a loss. He called it “astounding” that the Fidesz-led government had chosen to subsidise foreign battery plants to the tune of billions of forints while leaving Hungarian farmers impoverished. Dócs said battery factories brought no benefit to Hungarians, since the investors and the technologies were foreign and the plants themselves staffed by foreign guest workers. Furthermore, products were exported abroad and the profits enriched foreign companies, he added.

PÉTER UNGÁR TO HEAD LMP EP LIST

Opposition party LMP co-leader Péter Ungár was chosen at the green party’s conference on Saturday to lead the party’s list in the 2024 European Parliament election. In his acceptance speech, Ungár promised voters to focus on substantive issues and try

to foster a calm and peaceful society. Ungár said other political parties merely offered “more hate”, while LMP sought to present an alternative to those who believed that “capital ranks above people” and “everything is for sale”. Ungár said he had headed the party’s EP list since he was currently recognised as LMP’s most suitable politician, but he did not intend to take his seat as an MEP. Erzsébet Schmuck is second on LMP’s EP election list, followed by Örs Tetlák, Máté Kanász-Nagy, Krisztina Hohn, János Kenderney and Gábor Hanák.

OVER 19,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON SATURDAY

Fully 7,718 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Saturday, while 11,349 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 129 people, ORFK said on Sunday.

HUNGARY NOMINATES FOUR SOULS OF COYOTE FOR OSCAR

Hungary is nominating Áron Gauder’s animated film, Four Souls of Coyote,

for the 2024 Academy Award for Best International Film, the National Film Institute (NFI) said on Friday. Four Souls of Coyote is based on Native American creation myths, with the mythical figure of the Coyote in the focus. The film probes the question whether humanity will be able to “find its place in the grand circle of life before it is too late”, the statement said. Gauder wrote the script in collaboration with renowned songwriter-director Géza Bereményi. The film was awarded the Jury’s Prize at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival, awarded best animated film at the Shanghai festival and has been invited to over 30 festivals, the statement said. The US Motion Picture Academy will announce the shortlist on January 23, 2024. The award ceremony will take place in Los Angeles on March 10.

REISZ’S ‘EXPLANATION FOR EVERYTHING’ WINS VENICE HORIZONS GONG

“Explanation for Everything” by Hungarian film director Gábor Reisz has won “Best Film” in the Horizons section at the 80th Venice International Film Festival, the film’s distributor, Cirko Film, said on Saturday. The film co-written by Éva Schulze is Reisz’s third feature. Explanation for Everything will be on general release in Hungary from Oct. 5.