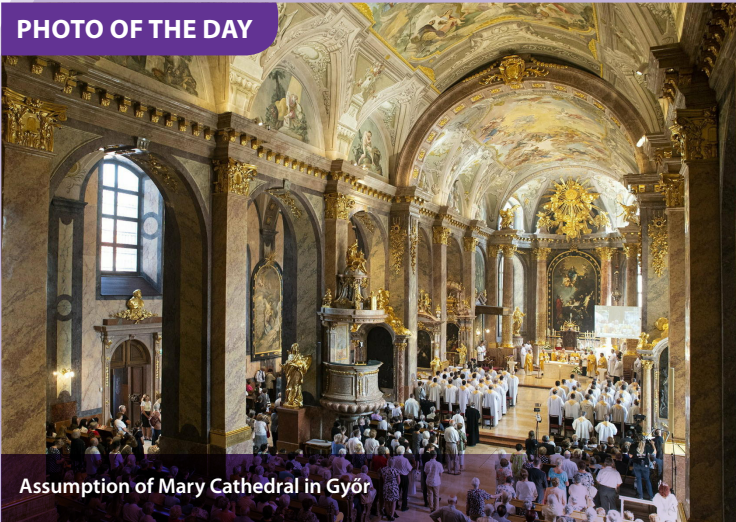


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Csaba Krizsán

Assumption of Mary Cathedral in Győr

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Stats office presser on preliminary report on agriculture in 2023

TOP STORY

GULYÁS: 'GOVT COMMITMENT TO PUSH DOWN INFLATION STILL REALISTIC'

The government has made a commitment to push inflation into the single digits before the end of this year which is still a realistic undertaking despite the difficulties, the head of the Prime Minister's Office told a press briefing on Wednesday.

"It might be achieved in November, but, as also suggested by forecasts, we can certainly deliver on this commitment by December," said Gergely Gulyás, adding that "there are some worrying signs which are related primarily to the fact that fuel prices are now higher than they were before". He attributed soaring fuel prices to the five-fold increase in the transit fee of fuel imported via Ukrainian pipelines. "Fuel price increases in the past one month have alone increased inflation by half a percent," he said. Gulyás said that a European Commission ban imposed on Ukrainian grain imports in five neighbouring countries would expire on September 15 and if the EC does not extend the ban "we will be forced to introduce measures in national authority". "We are again asking the EC from here to understand the rationale behind the decision and extend the current import ban", he said. It would be best to find a solution that meets the original goal which was to help African countries suffering from starvation instead of damaging European agricultural markets, he added.

GULYÁS: GOVERNMENT REASSESSED EARLIER DECISION ON SOLAR PANELS

Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, said on Wednesday that in response to calls by the ruling Fidesz group, the government has reassessed its earlier decision on solar panels. The government has decided that the new rules by Brussels must apply only to those who had submitted their applications to install solar panels after September 7. Referring to the 5th Budapest Demographic Summit to be held on Thursday and Friday, Gulyás said Hungary had made significant progress in the area over the past decade but "we are not yet where we would like to be". In 2010, when the civic government of Hungary received its mandate to introduce new demographics policies, the total fertility rate (TFR) was 1.23 and it went up to 1.59 by the end of 2021. This represented a 25.6% increase, the largest in the EU over the past decade, he added. Had the previous trend not changed, some 160,000 children would not have been born between 2011 and 2021, he added. At the same time, there are some difficulties, with the number of women of child-bearing age on the decrease, which makes it all the more important that family policy measures remain effective, he said. Gulyás said the cabinet had assessed a proposal on replacing "city CSOK" subsidies

in a first reading on Wednesday. The government is introducing new family policy measures next year that serve the country's demographics targets and also help people acquire a home, he said. Gulyás said the president and the prime minister will also address the summit and it will be attended by numerous international guests, including the Italian prime minister and the Bulgarian president.

Government spokesperson Alexandra Szentkirályi congratulated to Hungary's cave rescue team for a "world-famous achievement" helped also be government bodies. She added that the cave rescue team had been contacted on September 2 concerning an emergency situation in southern Türkiye involving a US national stuck in a depth of 1,000 metres. "It tells a lot about the preparedness and attitude of the Hungarian Cave Rescue Service that the European organisation of cave rescue services which coordinated the operations found them "the fastest to mobilise medical team which would be able to not only reach an extreme depth but also work there," she added. Szentkirályi said that the government bodies and background institutions made every effort to help the work of the Hungarian rescue team, with the defence ministry providing transport services and the foreign ministry offering 2.5 million forints for the operation. The government projects 6% inflation next year and the central bank between 3.5% and 5.5%, so it will reach a manageable level by 2024, said Gulyás.

Szentkirályi said that an online price monitoring website launched by the government had gained popularity with members of the public, with 1.2 million visitors so far spending on average 4 minutes and 20 seconds on the website.

The website has resulted in considerable competition, with prices decreasing an average 7% in 55 of the 62 categories it listed, she added. Fines totalling 72 million forints have been imposed on retailers so far for refusing to offer mandatory price cuts, she said. It is not acceptable for multinationals to profiteer and damage Hungarian people, she added. Gulyás said that an educational film made in Sweden stating that Hungarian democracy had been deteriorating since 2010 was "a baseless accusation and unjustified insult". If such a film is being shown in state schools, it means that Sweden is making every effort for Hungary not to ratify its NATO accession. He said he would recommend to the Fidesz group leader that MPs should decide if they want such a country as a member of NATO.

Commenting on soaring fuel prices, Gulyás said the government was looking to find alternative sources, adding that it viewed the five-fold increase of transit fees as "incorrect business conduct".

Answering a question, Gulyás said the government would not change the price of household gas until December 31. He added that if prices would be adjusted to fluctuating world market prices, the price of electricity would

have to be radically increased both below and above the utility price cap limits and the price of gas below that limit.

Answering another question, he said the government would assess at the end of September whether a pension adjustment should be carried out. Asked about the payment of EU funding Hungary is entitled to, Gulyás said that the government hoped that the European Commission would “return” to acting in line with the law and that there would be no obstacles that hinder the unlocking of funds. He argued that Hungary had met all criteria set by Brussels and the EC had until November to take a decision. As regards access to funds available under the current seven-year budgetary framework, Gulyás said Hungary aimed to get the full amount and the government was conducting talks in Brussels accordingly. Commenting on recent talks by Klára Dobrev, an MEP of opposition DK, with an American “pro-war” politician supporting weapon deliveries to Ukraine, Gulyás said the Hungarian left wing would deliver weapons to Ukraine, if they were in power. He called the left wing’s pro-war stance “an irresponsible” policy towards the around 100,000 ethnic Hungarians living in Ukraine’s Transcarpathia region.

Commenting on Wednesday’s address of the EC president, Gulyás said that the government was not surprised that Brussels had not changed its position on the war in Ukraine, on migration and the LGBTQ

issues. “We would welcome if Brussels addressed Europe’s real problems,” he said. Europe has a vested interest in achieving peace, Gulyás said, adding that the government would not support migration quotas and migrant redistribution schemes. He said it was difficult to figure out from Ursula von der Leyen’s Wednesday speech whether Hungary would receive any contribution to the costs of the fence it had erected on its border, but he expressed hope that a part of it would be reimbursed. Commenting on reports that Ukraine was ready to amend its minority laws, he said the foreign ministry was also ready for this. When President Katalin Novák held talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, one of the five points they agreed on was that the issues concerning ethnic minorities’ language use must be addressed. An acceptable solution would be for Ukraine to reach an agreement with Hungary and amend the situation. Once an agreement is reached, the Ukrainian parliament approves it and the law enters force, then the reason for Hungary blocking Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations will cease to exist, he said. “We would like this to happen”, he said.

Commenting on negotiations about Budapest airport, Gulyás said that they would not reveal details before an agreement is reached. The “good news” would be announced in every detail once the agreement is signed, Gulyás said. He said it was unreasonable to compare the amount

allocated for purchasing the airport with the amount needed to raise teachers’ wages. The raise of teachers’ salaries is being postponed not by the government but by left-wing MEPs lobbying in Brussels against teachers getting 800,000 forints a month while they pocket 6 million forints, he added. The purchase of the airport could increase state debt but not the budget deficit, he said. Gulyás said it was in Europe’s interest that economic ties are maintained with all large economic powers and accordingly, Hungary wants to maintain cooperation with China. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is expected to visit China in October, he added. In response to a question about Hungary not handing over to Ukraine refugees who had been drafted in the army, he said no such request had been received from Ukraine and in line with the Geneva Convention, refugees must not be handed over anyway. In response to a comment regarding an increasing number of refugees crossing the border to Slovakia illegally, he said all Hungary could do was to protect the southern borders. By doing so, Hungary also protects Slovakia from tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of refugees, he added.

**SZIJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY
‘PRO-PEACE APPROACH’
GREATLY APPRECIATED
OUTSIDE EUROPE**

The world is “waiting for peace in Ukraine”, and many countries greatly appreciate Hungary’s approach, which



favours diplomatic solutions, hoping it would become the European one, the foreign minister said in Hong Kong on Wednesday. Péter Szijjártó attended the annual meeting of China's Belt and Road initiative in Hong Kong, and held bilateral meetings with the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, the economy minister of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt's minister for international cooperation. After the talks, Szijjártó said "our African and Asian partners continue to ask when ... the European Union is going to step up for peace." Rather than calling for peace as it usually does in the case of conflicts further from home, the EU is now "further firing up the conflict by delivering weapons, shutting down channels of communication and through its sanctions policy," he said. This created a "vicious circle" of rising inflation and food and energy prices, he added. Hungary is "perhaps the only country" to fully stand up for an immediate ceasefire and peace talks, he said. Non-EU countries greatly appreciate that stance and expect it to "prevail as the generally accepted approach in Europe," he said.

Regarding the energy crisis, Szijjártó said Hungary and its partners in Egypt and the UAE had reinforced their commitment to nuclear cooperation, including projects in training and knowledge exchange. Hungary is seen as a friendly country in Hong Kong, "with a sovereign foreign policy that doesn't involve lecturing others," he said. "We have always respected China's sovereignty and the principle

of one country, two systems," he said. The good relations were well reflected in last year's cooperation when trade volume reached 2.5 billion dollars. Exports to Hong Kong jumped 1.5-fold this year, the Hungarian foreign minister added. The ministry cited Szijjártó saying at a lecture held in CityU that the Hungarian government's most important task was to guarantee the physical and economic security of the country. "This is not easy under strong international pressure and various attacks, but we have so far been successful in our efforts," he added.

Hungary's right-wing conservative and patriotic, Christian-Democrat government goes against the international liberal mainstream, he said. At the same time, the Hungarian government has the strongest mandate in the continent, which it gained in several two-thirds majority victories in general elections, and this stability has greatly contributed to enabling Hungary to resist the attacks, Szijjártó added. He also said that it was a great achievement that despite a "war psychosis", Hungary had managed to stay out of the conflict and weapon deliveries linked to the Ukraine war. He said Hungary rejected the position that "Ukraine is also fighting for us and therefore it is our moral obligation" to get involved in the conflict. "That would take us closer to a third world war," he said. "The longer this war lasts, the chances are smaller for a sustainable and long-term agreement," he added.

Szijjártó welcomed the success of the eastern opening policy announced in 2010 and the fact that Hungary had become the number one destination for Chinese investments in central Europe.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY SUPPORTS STRONGER EUROPE-CHINA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Hungary would strongly support even closer economic cooperation between Europe and China, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Hong Kong on Wednesday, adding that the separation of the two economies would amount to a "total knockout" and would make it impossible to improve competitiveness. Addressing a panel discussion at the annual Belt and Road Summit, Szijjártó said the EU was currently facing its most severe economic and security challenges of recent years. The war in Ukraine has been going on for a year and a half, and "unfortunately the answer Europe has given to this war proved to be a big mistake, a huge failure," he said, according to a foreign ministry statement. "Because Europe should have isolated this war, but instead of that, Europe has globalised this war. And nowadays, unfortunately the impacts of this war are global," he added. The war must be prevented from turning into a global conflict, he said, warning that every additional day of fighting increased the risk of escalation.

Szijjártó said it was illogical of Europe to have “accepted the ... provocation” of the United States into a race to see who delivered more weapons to Ukraine. He said this had also been a mistake because since the war was happening in Europe, it was the continent that primarily had to pay the price of the conflict in the form of deteriorating competitiveness, casualties and decaying infrastructure. The minister said Europe’s sanctions had proven to be “a total failure”, arguing that they had failed to bring Russia to its knees or an end to the fighting, and were hurting the continent more. The EU’s competitiveness is deteriorating by the day, he said, arguing that China had overtaken the bloc last year in terms of GDP. He warned of the risks posed by the re-emergence of geopolitical blocs, saying this was “the worst possible scenario for central Europe”. Up until now, the model of European economic growth has been based on the combination of advanced Western technologies and easily accessible, relatively cheap Eastern energy sources, but these ties are being severed one by one, and certain players also urge a “decoupling” of the European and Chinese economies, Szijjártó said. “That would be a total knockout for the European economy,” he said, noting that bilateral trade turnover amounts to an annual 875 billion euros.

Hungary therefore urges even closer, stronger, more successful and more effective economic

cooperation between Europe and China, the minister said. Hungary’s sovereign foreign policy is based on mutual respect instead of criticising and lecturing others, and strives for connectivity and keeping communication channels open over the re-forming of blocs, Szijjártó said, arguing that the international community would otherwise be giving up even the hope for peace. Making Hungary a meeting point for Eastern and Western businesses is a key strategic goal of the Hungarian government, as it is a guarantee of long-term economic growth, he said.

This has been aided by a foreign policy which builds on connectivity and has proven successful, Szijjártó said, pointing out that Hungary has become the number one central European destination for Chinese investments and that it was the first EU country to join the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition to Hungary, European businesses are also strongly against cutting ties between the European and Chinese economies, as the continent would not be able to regain its competitiveness without strong East-West cooperation, Szijjártó said.

The minister also touched on the car industry’s transition to electric vehicles, which he said required a division of labour between East and West, as almost all of the batteries needed for European vehicles are made in China, South Korea and Japan, which creates a strong dependence. Hungary has become a “success story”

in this area, and is the only country besides Germany and China to have plants from all three big German premium carmakers, Szijjártó said. Also, five of the world’s top ten battery manufacturers are present in Hungary, making the country the world’s fourth-biggest, and soon the second-biggest battery maker, he added. Because Hungary believes in connectivity and strong cooperation between East and West, strengthening the Belt and Road Initiative will always be a focus of its foreign policy strategy, Szijjártó said.

FIDESZ MEP SLAMS EU DECISIONS AS ‘HARMFUL FOR BLOC’

The European Union’s latest decisions are harming the bloc and European citizens, an MEP of ruling Fidesz said on Wednesday.

Contrary to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s “lofty statements” in her State of the European Union speech on Wednesday, “bad decisions” like the sanctions on Russia do not bring help or peace in Ukraine, but seriously contribute to the deterioration of the European economy and competitiveness, to rising prices, inflation and uncertainty, Balázs Hidvéghi told Hungarian journalists. Meanwhile, Hidvéghi insisted the EC and the European Parliament were “complicit” in an “ideological jihad” against conservative, nationalist, Christian Democratic governments and states.

“Hungary is being attacked because we have said no to sanctions, illegal migration ... and reject LGBTQ propaganda,” he said. Recently, the EU has also “blackmailed Hungary by withholding monies the country is entitled to, using ever-changing lies and manufactured conditions”, Hidvéghi said.

Meanwhile, Hidvéghi said the last months had seen “one of the gravest corruption scandals in Brussels”. Von der Leyen’s handling of the coronavirus vaccine purchases was also “outrageous”, he insisted. “It is unacceptable that decisions on business deals worth multi-billions should be made without transparency and accountability,” he said. Hungary is working to strengthen national political forces that respect European treaties and values, “that see the EU as a cooperation of strong member states, understand realities and are capable of deciding on and representing Europe’s strategic interests,” he said. Regarding the EU’s long-delayed migration and asylum pact, Hidvéghi said that contrary to what von der Leyen said in her keynote address earlier in the day, “an agreement was not in sight”. “Migration is growing, people smuggling is thriving, the issue has not yet been resolved and Brussels is yet to make the right decisions,” he said. Meanwhile, “Hungary is still waiting to receive EU contributions to the construction costs of its border fence”, Hidvéghi said, arguing that Hungary was protecting a border that is also an EU border.

RULING PARTIES TO HOLD PART GROUP MEETING IN HUNGARY NEXT WEEK

The ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance will hold a parliamentary group meeting in Esztergom, in northern Hungary, next Wednesday and Thursday, at the start of the autumn session of parliament, Fidesz’s group leader has said. “The Brussels elite has made infuriating and bad decisions in the recent period,” Máté Kocsis said in a post on Facebook. “It endangers Europe’s security with its pro-war stance, its flawed sanctions have triggered an energy crisis and an economic slowdown, which is why a change is needed in next year’s European Parliament elections.”

“Instead of pro-war Brussels leadership we want a pro-peace leadership, and they must be prevented from weakening the European economy with their flawed sanctions,” Kocsis said. “Peace must be created at Europe’s borders and we must build a successful European economy which cooperates with all of the world’s economic regions,” he added. The Brussels leadership’s job is not to “force gender propaganda and migration” but to represent the European people, Kocsis said. He called for protecting the common borders and families, and eliminating “Brussels’s double standards”. This change in Brussels cannot be achieved without a strong and successful right wing, he said, stressing the need for Hungary’s

ruling parties to cooperate with forces that want change in Europe. Meanwhile, the politicians of the domestic left “financed from abroad” must be defeated and the country’s sovereignty protected, Kocsis said.

PRESIDENT NOVÁK: ‘HUNGARY MECCA OF FAMILY-FOCUSED THINKING’

Hungary is today “the Mecca” of family-focused policies, the place to gather for discussing family-related matters together, President Katalin Novák told commercial broadcaster Inforádió late on Tuesday. Speaking about this week’s Budapest International Demographic Summit, Novák noted that it had been organised biannually since 2015. The summit to be held on September 14-15 will this time be attended by heads of state and government as well as leaders of the main churches. In connection with family affairs, the president highlighted the importance of family-centred thinking, discussions about families and a family-focused life in addition to financial incentives. Novák also spoke about the Russia-Ukraine war, the situation of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine’s Transcarpathia region and her diplomatic work. In connection with the war in Ukraine, the president said she would welcome “earnest, open talks” behind closed doors. Novák said it would be helpful to have the opportunity to talk at meetings with the leaders of states or governments “in a lot more informal terms” about possibilities regarding the



war, and about the ways and limits of providing support without getting involved in it. She noted “a setback” as regards the rights of ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia, adding that she had personally called the attention of the Ukrainian president to the issue during her visit.

Speaking about her diplomatic activities, Novák said she had intentionally paid her first official visit as new president to Warsaw. She said she nurtured a good personal relationship with President Andrzej Duda which she said she believed “could help Hungary a lot”. The president highlighted her goal “to make the negative image formed intentionally about Hungary more realistic”. Novák said she would seize every opportunity to meet local Hungarian communities, even if small in size, during every visit paid to a far-flung country.

MINISTRY: GOVT TO ENSURE FUNDING FOR UNIVERSITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

The government will provide every university the necessary funding to ensure their participation in European research cooperation programmes, the ministry of culture and innovation said on Wednesday. “The government will not allow that because of decisions by Brussels Hungarian researchers and students should suffer a competitive disadvantage. It will continue to provide funding for the programmes including

Erasmus, Horizon or the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST),” the ministry said in a statement. It said that the government set up this year a 5 billion forint (EUR 13m) fund dubbed Önerő Alap to directly support EU research programmes which it could later increase. According to the National Research, Development and Innovation Office’s website, the Önerő Alap has been set up to support Hungarian universities that operate under a new structure and have been excluded from European programmes under a European Council decree passed last December.

JOBBIK: SAMSUNG PLANT TO EMPLOY HALF A MILLION MIGRANTS INSTEAD OF HUNGARIANS

The opposition Jobbik-Conservatives on Wednesday held a press conference in front of a Samsung factory in Göd, near Budapest, under the title “the Orbán government has decided: half a million migrant workers instead of Hungarian employees”. Zoltán Péter Varga, the party’s representative in the Pest County general assembly and a Dunakeszi local council representative, told a press conference that the plant had caused great concerns to locals because potential pollution from the plant raised fears. “The battery plant is taking significant security measures but instead of focusing on operations, they focus on ensuring that no information is leaked from the plant,” he added. He also said that it was a

reasonable expectation by locals that taxes paid by the plant should be fully granted to them.

Dániel Z Kárpát, a party lawmaker and deputy leader, told the presser that the plant employing thousands of people had only 200 workers from Göd. The party would like to ensure that initially those jobs get subsidies from Hungarian taxpayers’ money that are filled by Hungarians.

AGRICULTURE MINISTER DISCUSSES EXTENSION OF UKRAINE GRAIN BAN WITH SLOVAK COUNTERPART

Agriculture Minister István Nagy met his Slovak counterpart, Jozef Bires, in Bratislava on Tuesday, and they agreed that the European Union ban on certain Ukrainian grain products should be maintained at least until the end of 2023, the ministry said. The European Union’s ban on the import of certain Ukrainian grain products, introduced earlier this year to protect the markets of neighbouring countries from a glut, will expire on Sept 15. “Ukrainian grain must be channelled back to its original markets, and so our primary goal continues to be to ease transit” to vulnerable countries, Nagy said. Hungary has earmarked resources to increase railway capacities near the Ukrainian border, he said. Slovakia is facing challenges similar to those of Hungary, Nagy said. On the cusp of the sunflower and sweetcorn harvest, warehouses are full and grain markets are “at a standstill”, he said.

