

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Operetta performance at Budapest's Erkel Theatre

UPCOMING EVENTS

Parliament meets

Stats office report on July wages

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: UNGA 'FAILED AS OPPORTUNITY TO BRING UKRAINE PEACE CLOSER'

The United Nations General Assembly session held in New York this week has failed as an opportunity to bring the peace in Ukraine closer, as large and strong countries decided it was not the time to start talks, the Hungarian foreign minister said in New York on Friday.

Regarding an afternoon meeting of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Péter Szijjártó warned that in the war in Ukraine a nuclear power confronted a country supported by other nuclear powers. The warring parties had lately referred to their nuclear capabilities "openly, shamelessly", and deployed arms containing depleted uranium, he said. The minister said that in times like these, it was even more important that countries yet to join the treaty should do so, to ensure that no country would conduct nuclear tests, and lamented that the US and China were not among the signatories. On another subject, Szijjártó said tuberculosis was a renewed challenge for the world. Developing countries still see some 1.5 million TB-related deaths, he said. The efforts and resources consumed by the coronavirus pandemic also harmed systemic prevention, he added. As a result, the number of infections started to grow in Europe for the first time in 20 years, with the largest number of cases and steepest growth reported from Ukraine, he said. In Hungary, the number of TB cases grew by 35% in annual comparison by 2022, he said.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: RUSSIAN FM PLEDGED TO GUARANTEE HUNGARY ENERGY SUPPLY

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pledged to guarantee Hungary's energy supplies, so the delivery of gas, crude oil and nuclear fuel from Russia will be uninterrupted, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said after talks with his Russian counterpart in New York on Friday. Szijjártó met Lavrov on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. "If other Western politicians did the same, the hope for peace in Ukraine would be greater," he said, according to the foreign ministry's statement. The talks focused mainly on the war in Ukraine, and Szijjártó said he reiterated to Lavrov that Hungary had a vested interest in a swift end to the war. "I told him that we Hungarians were also losing lives in this war, and so we urge an immediate ceasefire and peace talks," he said.

"My colleague, Sergei Lavrov, also said Russia was ready for peace negotiations. There are obviously a lot of details to clarify. I do hope that at some point, circumstances will make it clear for Russia as well as for Ukraine that they have to seek the solution at the negotiating table," Szijjártó said. Another topic of the talks was bilateral energy cooperation, he said. Lavrov said Russia would fulfil its contractual obligations, Szijjártó said.

Russia will deliver the promised amount of natural gas, crude oil and nuclear fuel by the contractual

deadlines, "we can rest easy regarding Hungary's energy supplies", Szijjártó said. Regarding the upgrade of Hungary's Paks nuclear plant led by Russia's Rosatom, Szijjártó said the construction was on time for the two new blocks to be "hopefully" operational by 2030. This year, Russia has already delivered 3.3 million tonnes of crude oil and 4.2 billion cubic metres of natural gas to Hungary, he said. The ministers said that Russia and Hungary both had an interest in maintaining the operation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as the only remaining forum for East-West dialogue. Szijjártó said they also touched on the issue of new Russian textbooks. "I told Sergei Lavrov that the 1956 revolution is one of the most uplifting events of Hungarian history when Hungarians turned into heroes as they stood up for the freedom and sovereignty of their homeland ... which is why branding those people fascists is unacceptable for us..." Lavrov assured Szijjártó that the issue would be handled according to President Vladimir Putin's latest statement, the Hungarian minister said. Szijjártó and Lavrov also discussed maintaining economic cooperation in sectors not hit by sanctions.

GULYÁS: HUNGARY SUPPORTS ENSURING RIGHTS OF UKRAINE HUNGARIANS

The Hungarian government supports ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia,

including "promotion of their fundamental rights and restoring their rights to use the (Hungarian) language," Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, said at a ceremony opening the new academic year at the Mathias Corvinus Collegium's new building at Berehove (Beregszász) on Sunday. In his address, Gulyás thanked Viktor Mykyta, the governor of Transcarpathia, for honouring the event and "demonstrating through his presence the importance of cooperation between Hungarians and Ukrainians in such hard times". The Hungarian government condemns "Russia's aggression, launching the war and violating (Ukraine's) territorial integrity", Gulyás said.

According to Gulyás, Hungary has provided aid worth a total 35 billion forints (EUR 90m) to Ukraine since the outbreak of the war, while Hungarian charity organisations have sent thousands of tonnes of food and other supplies worth some 10 billion forints. Tens of thousands of refugees have been accommodated in Hungary, and over one million were allowed transit to other countries, he added. Hungary strives for good neighbourly relations and "wants to be a friend to Ukraine", Gulyás said, but added that those efforts were impeded by "the one-sidedness of gestures, deliberate misunderstanding and measures curbing the rights of the Hungarian minority". Ukraine "rightfully complains about the violation of its sovereignty" but it "overlooks fundamental rights

due to its ethnic minorities as well as international norms," he said.

"Hungarians fighting and sacrificing their lives for Ukraine deserve to be considered as Ukraine's own citizens and be returned what (Ukraine) stripped them of, the free use of their mother tongue ... especially in education," he insisted. The new MCC building has been erected "in preparation for a better future after the war", Gulyás said. "Let us pray and work for the war to end as soon as possible and peace to come," he added.

Governor Mykyta thanked Hungary for the humanitarian aid provided. The peoples of Transcarpathia "have lived peacefully together for a thousand years and I will do everything that it does not change in future," he added.

ORBÁN: CIVIC CIRCLES KEY TO HUNGARY'S CURRENT SUCCESS, STRENGTH

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Friday praised grassroots civic circles and local communities, and said they were key to the strength and success of Hungary and to ruling Fidesz's entering into power, the PM's press chief said.

Speaking at an event celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Belvárosi Polgári Szalon in downtown Budapest, Orbán said the salon was an example for other such communities in the country: "We must build communities like that everywhere; this way, our opponents will never be able to push Hungary from the path of growth," Bertalan Havasi cited Orbán as saying.

District 5 mayor Péter Szentgyörgyvölgyi and cabinet chief Antal Rogán also attended the event.

ROSATOM HEAD: ALL OBSTACLES TO PAKS II CONSTRUCTION REMOVED

With all preparatory work completed and permits obtained over the past years, there are no obstacles standing in the way of the expansion of the Paks nuclear power plant, Rosatom CEO Alexey Likhachev said at the site which he visited together with Hungarian Foreign Ministry State Secretary Levente Magyar on Friday. At a press conference, Magyar said that the two new blocks had to be built in order to ensure Hungary's continued energy security and sovereignty.

Likhachev told the press conference that now all conditions were in place for the construction to go according to schedule. Rosatom will fulfil all its contractual obligations in the project, he said. Paks II will be the first nuclear facility Rosatom is building in the European Union, he said, underlining that the company would use an absolutely safe technology and best practices. He said they would speed up construction which currently works with 140 Hungarian suppliers. The number of employees will continue to increase and reach around 2,000 next year, said Likhachev. Magyar said the construction was progressing well. He called the Paks II project irreversible, insisting that it would be implemented

despite and attempts seeking to thwart it.

COE CALLS ON HUNGARY TO STOP REMOVAL OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers has expressed concern over Hungary's removal of illegal migrants seeking asylum from Hungarian territory to the Serbian side of the border between the two countries and called on Hungary to submit an action plan by June next year aimed at eliminating the practice, the CoE said on Friday. According to the CoE's statement, the committee reviewed the execution of rulings by the European Court of Human Rights related to violations of rules on asylum seeking. Although the Hungarian authorities indicated that they had launched a reform of Hungary's asylum procedures, the committee has not yet received information about actual measures, the statement said. The committee has urged the Hungarian authorities "to intensify their efforts to reform the asylum system in order to afford effective access to means of legal entry, in particular border procedures in line with Hungary's international obligations". The body also called on the authorities "to terminate, without further delay, the practice of removing asylum-seekers to Serbia ... without their identification or examination of their individual situation." According to the statement, the committee

“reiterated its call on the authorities to introduce an effective remedy providing a person alleging that their expulsion procedure is ‘collective’ in nature with an effective possibility of challenging the expulsion decision by having a sufficiently thorough examination of their complaints conducted by an independent and impartial domestic forum”. “Finally, should Hungary achieve no tangible progress by September 2024, the Committee of Ministers envisages taking new action to ensure it abides by its obligations deriving from the Court’s judgments in this group of cases,” the statement said.

DEFMIN: VÁRPALOTA AMMUNITION FACTORY TO BE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE FOR EUROPE

The ammunition factory currently under construction in Várpalota, in western Hungary, will be of great significance not only for Hungary, but for Europe as a whole, the Hungarian defence minister said in the town at the project’s topping out ceremony on Friday. Enhancing the defence industry is one of the pillars of Europe’s strategic autonomy Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said at the event.

He noted that the factory being built with a budget of 300 billion forints (EUR 775m) will create 1,000-2,000 jobs. The Hungarian government had recognised the challenges facing the Armed Forces and the defence industry years before the war in

Ukraine. Those challenges are now reality, he said. The government has created the conditions for responding those challenges and “we are now standing in the middle of a 400 hectare area where one of Europe’s most advanced ammunition factories is under construction”, he said.

Addressing the event, Thierry Breton, EU Commissioner for Internal Market, called the project important in enhancing the defence capabilities not only of Hungary, but Europe as a whole, adding that demand for ammunition produced in the plant was expected to be high because of an overall drop in the stocks of EU member states. He commended Hungary for increasing its defence spending to over 2% of GDP compared with 1% just five years ago. The commissioner said the other 26 member states would all keep up with Hungary which would ultimately mean that Europe should be spending a total of 140 billion euros annually on defence.

DEPUTY PM MEETS BARTHOLOMEW I AT INTL PANNONHALMA CONFERENCE

Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, addressed an international ecumenical conference in Pannonhalma, in western Hungary, on Friday, and spoke about reconciliation and various forms of peace. Whereas achieving

conciliation is possible in politics as well, finding reconciliation is possible only in one’s spirit in which churches play an essential role and “we pay great attention to that process with respect to the churches”, Semjén said in his address.

Addressing the conference, Bartholomew I said finding peace with nature is intertwined with finding peace with one another. Social justice presupposes finding peace with God, he said. Peace, Bartholomew I said, was another word for the existence of the Christian church, adding that the orthodox church was praying for peace administered “from above”, for peace in the whole world.

The patriarch is paying a six-day visit to Hungary at the invitation of the Pannonhalma Archabbey. The focus of his visit is ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as well as peace-building.

GYURCSÁNY: ‘THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO INCUMBENT GOVT’

Opposition parties need to show Hungarians that there is an alternative to the incumbent government and that it is possible to build a different state, the leader of the opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) told a rally on Friday. DK has set its tasks driven by the realisation that the country needs a new government, fair politics, competent and trustworthy women and men, Ferenc Gyurcsány said. “We need to create a country that does not want to fight a war with ghosts

and falsehoods, a country that wants to create peace in its own affairs, in human relationships, and in the world," he said. He said they wanted a country that "sought friends, partners and others countries to cooperate with". He asked people "to take back their own state".

Gyurcsány, who was prime minister between 2004 and 2009, criticised incumbent Prime Minister Viktor Orbán as a leader under whose tenure the country's economy had been shattered and the people had slipped into an existential crisis. Concerning economic problems, Gyurcsány said that the purchasing value of the forint was deteriorating at a faster rate than that of any other national or the common currency in Europe and the average rate of inflation would be higher this year than in 2022.

In reaction to the DK leader's speech, the group-leader of ruling Fidesz said Hungary does not want the Gyurcsány era, saying that that government had stripped Hungarians of one month's pension and wages. It also scrapped family allowances and pushed the country into near bankruptcy, Máté Kocsis said.

"That government was commanded from abroad, sold out the country's national assets and obeyed the orders of the multinational companies," Kocsis said on Facebook. Gyurcsány's speech launched a campaign dictated by the international left "which wants a different Hungary", one that is "obviously pro-migration and pro-war, and is swamped in a gender-

madness", one that "wants to be seen as an eminent country in the eyes of the liberals of Brussels and the United States". "The bad news for them is this: We will not let that happen!" Kocsis said.

MINISTER ADDRESSES ACADEMIC YEAR OPENER AT HUNGARIAN COLLEGE IN TRANSCARPATIA

Culture and Innovation Minister János Csák spoke at an event marking the start of the academic year at the Il Rákóczi Ferenc Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education in Berehove (Beregszász), Ukraine, on Saturday.

Csák pledged Hungary's continued support for culture and institutions that transfers culture "everywhere in the world where Hungarians live". Addressing the school's freshman class, Csák said the students would be the leaders of the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia in 10-20 years.

Rector István Csernicskó said the school remained popular among the youth of Transcarpathia in spite of the war and acknowledged the support of the Hungarian government allowing continued developments at the institution. Enrollment stands at 1,371, he added.

Viktor Mykyta, the head of the Transcarpathian Regional Military Administration, thanked Hungary for the country's humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine and support for the education sector.

HUNGARY GOVT CONTRIBUTES TO CHURCH RENOVATION IN TRANSYLVANIA

Five historic churches in the Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) region, in central Romania, refurbished with financing from the Hungarian government, were inaugurated on Sunday. The Roman Catholic churches of Dumitrei (Szentdemeter), Beu (Székelybő), Sancraiu de Mures (Maroszentkirály), Racu (Csíkrákos), and Sacaramb (Nagyág) were inaugurated in a mass attended by representatives of the Hungarian construction ministry and the Teleki László Foundation, the manager of the reconstruction projects. State Secretary Regő Lanszki said in his address at the ceremony that "the house and the homeland must be built on a rock ... building a nation requires the safe foundations of a community, that is why the Hungarian government provides assistance to the renewal of historic monuments in the Carpathian Basin". Lanszki said the Hungarian parliament could adopt a new historic monuments act, under which a comprehensive register of Hungarian-related historic monuments in the Carpathian Basin would be set up.

AGMIN OFFICIAL IN TALKS ON FAO GRANT PROGRAMME EXPANSION

Oszkár Ökrös, a deputy state secretary of the agriculture ministry, on Friday

met Beth Bechdol, the Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, to discuss the expansion of a joint grant programme.

At the meeting in Budapest, Ökrös said that Hungary's international agricultural grant programme supported the training of professionals in developing countries and the reform of those countries' food supply systems, also contributing to achieving sustainable development goals. In view of the stipend programme's growing popularity, expanding it merits consideration, he added.

Bechdol outlined FAO's future priority that included innovation and research as well as water as a strategic resource. She praised Hungary's commitment to cooperation with FAO.

Ökrös said that one of the agricultural priorities of Hungary's European Union presidency in the second half of 2024 was to address food waste. The government and FAO pledged to work closely together on the issue.

STATE SECY PARTICIPATES AT EU TRANSPORT MINISTERS MEETING

State secretary Nándor Csepreghy participated at an informal meeting of European Union transport ministers in Barcelona on Friday, the Construction

and Transport Ministry said on Saturday. The ministers exchanged views on the fundamental role of transport and mobility, their role in social and regional cohesion, and the advantages of decarbonisation and digitalisation at the meeting, the ministry said in a statement. In preparation for Hungary to assume the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2024, Csepreghy held talks with a number of ministers and state secretaries at the meeting.

LMP CALLS FOR ENERGY MINISTER TO RESIGN

Opposition party LMP is calling on Energy Minister Csaba Lantos to resign as according to them a government decree that came into effect on Friday favours polluting and environmentally destructive companies. László Lóránt Keresztes, a member of LMP and the chairman of parliament's sustainable development committee, said on Sunday that citing the wartime emergency, the government put into effect a decree that allows "polluting and environmentally destructive companies to avoid fines, and which makes it impossible to close plants in the event of serious environmental pollution". Keresztes said LMP has already announced that they will turn to the Constitutional Court of Hungary

because of the "destruction" of the environmental protection institutional system.

Keresztes said the situation would not be solved even if, keeping to its promises, the government revokes the decree as "the licensing procedure for dangerous industrial plants and battery factories is chaotic". He noted that "in several cases, the government allows waiving the strictest environmental protection licensing procedures" and the scandals surrounding the licensing procedures of polluting plants are still ongoing. Keresztes said it must be made clear that "it is a complete surrender of sovereignty when the government sacrifices and puts up for sale Hungary's natural treasures for the benefit of foreign manufacturers and investors".

UKRAINE CRISIS - NEARLY 13,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON SATURDAY

Fully 6,201 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Saturday, while 6,530 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 59 people, ORFK said on Sunday.