

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Csaba Krizsán

Science and Innovation Park building inaugurated in Győr (NW)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Finance ministry releases budget report for Jan-Oct

Events connected to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

European Parliament holds plenary session

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY REJECTS PRESSURE ON ENERGY

Hungary rejects all attempts at political pressure regarding energy supplies, and calls on the European Union to return to common sense to handle the crisis, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Bucharest on Wednesday.

Szijjártó told a panel discussion at the 6th Romanian International Gas Conference that Hungary saw energy supply as a “physical reality” and rejected all approaches introducing a political or ideological context. The purchase of natural gas is determined “100%” on infrastructure rather than political declarations, he said. “The issue of energy supplies is over-politicised and over-ideologised in Europe,” which often harms member states’ sovereign right to set their own energy mix, he said. Banning any energy resources from Europe is “dangerous and irrational”, he added. Returning to a rational approach would be the bloc’s only chance to handle the crisis successfully, he said. The EU should “not try to override physics, should restore the right of sovereign member states’ to compose their own national energy mix and we should not ban any sources from the continent.” Meanwhile, he said the Hungarian government saw diversification as a process of involving new suppliers rather than replacing one reliable supplier with another.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: BULGARIA SHOULD TAKE PRINCIPLE OF SOLIDARITY SERIOUSLY

Bulgaria should take seriously the principle of solidarity “cited so often in European debate”, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told a conference in Bucharest on Wednesday, saying Bulgaria’s decision to raise transit fees on Russian gas posed a risk to energy security in Hungary and Serbia, which receive a large portion of their supplies via the TurkStream pipeline. “No European member state should risk the energy security of another,” he told the 6th Romanian International Gas Conference. As a landlocked country without significant hydrocarbons, Hungary relies heavily on resource and transit countries, he said. In recent years, it has linked its energy network with six of its seven neighbours, but a stable gas supply remains “unimaginable” without Russian sources, he said. “If we sever ourselves from Russian deliveries, we won’t be able to ensure full supplies.” Hungary’s domestic gas production comes to 1.5 billion cubic metres a year, and the country needs to supplement that with importing another 8.5 billion cubic metres, he said. Infrastructure developments in Hungary only will not help if the neighbouring countries’ outgoing capacity remains limited, he added. Romania is “exemplary” in that regard, as its outgoing capacity matches the incoming one, the minister said.

Concerning diversification, Szijjártó said “the biggest obstacle” was “Brussels and some member states”. Hungary’s primary new sources for large quantities of natural gas would be Azerbaijan, Qatar and Türkiye, but the south-eastern European infrastructure is inadequate for such deliveries, he said. The European Commission has rejected to fund a capacity upgrade in the relevant countries, saying natural gas would be phased out in the coming 15 years. “First of all, who knows what’s going to happen in 15 years? Second, even if gas is not going to be part of the national energy mix in 15 years, what’s going to happen in the coming 14?” Hungary is committed to continuing cooperation with other countries in the region in boosting the capacity of interconnectors and pipelines, he said. Politicising gas purchases poses a risk to energy security, Szijjártó warned.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, ROMANIA SIGN KEY ENERGY DEALS

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó on Wednesday said he has signed important agreements with Romanian Energy Minister Sebastian Burduja that will allow Hungary to continue to rely on Romania’s cooperation in guaranteeing the country’s energy security. Szijjártó said on Facebook that he and Burduja had agreed to increase the capacity of the interconnectors between their countries’ gas networks so that Hungary could access as much

of the gas extracted from the Black Sea gas fields as possible. Hungary and Romania will also begin preparations to link their electricity grids, Szijjártó said. Meanwhile, the minister said Burduja had assured him that Hungary could continue to transport Russian nuclear fuel for its Paks plant through Romania.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: MOVING AHEAD ROMANIA SCHENGEN ACCESSION PRIORITY FOR HUNGARY EU PRESIDENCY

A major objective of Hungary’s EU presidency in the second half of 2024 will be to move ahead Romania’s integration with the bloc’s passport-free Schengen zone, unless progress is made on the matter before, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Bucharest on Wednesday, after talks with the leader of the ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ party. The ministry said in a statement that after meeting Hunor Kelemen, Szijjártó highlighted the strategic importance of the two countries’ bilateral cooperation, which he said rested on ethnic Hungarians living in Transylvania and Szekler Land. The Hungarian government sees that community as a resource as well as a link in bilateral ties, Szijjártó said, pointing out the importance of listening to RMDSZ on issues concerning cooperation with Romania. Romania’s earliest possible Schengen integration is in Hungary’s national interest, partly because the neighbouring country is Hungary’s

second largest export market, and bilateral economic and trade ties could be strengthened with its membership, the minister said. "Romania's Schengen membership would allow that the border should connect rather than separate us," Szijjártó said, noting that a potential "automatic" opening of ten new border crossings would also help the Transylvanian Hungarian community in maintaining relations with Hungary.

"Unless Romania's Schengen integration materialises sooner, one of the major objectives of the Hungarian EU presidency will be to help the process and Hungary will continue to run the closest possible consultation with RMDSZ on the matter," Szijjártó added. He expressed hope for RMDSZ's success at the four elections coming up in Romania next year. "RMDSZ's strong representation in Bucharest is always helpful in developing Hungarian-Romanian relations," Szijjártó said.

FIDESZ MEP HAILS EP RIGHT-WING COOPERATION ON EURO 7

The new Euro 7 emission standards would have "wrecked" Europe's automotive industry, but right-wing cooperation in the European Parliament successfully pushed for a version to avoid that risk, an MEP of ruling Fidesz said in Brussels on Wednesday. In the Euro 7 proposal, the European Commission and left-wing MEPs proposed regulations

curbing greenhouse gas emissions to a degree that would have seriously harmed the industry, Edina Tóth told MTI on the sidelines of a plenary session of the EP that tabled the proposal. Had the proposal been adopted in its original form, it would have led to factory closures, rising vehicle prices and a "wrecked car industry", she said. Thanks to the pushback from right-wing parties, an EP committee adopted an amended proposal. Under the new version, Euro 7 will be implemented from 2030 only. Cars and light-weight cargo vehicles will use the Euro 6 standards until then, she said. The threshold and deadlines set in Euro 7 would have hobbled industrial development, she said. The EP will vote on the proposal on Thursday.

CSÁK: HUNGARY'S OPPONENTS 'PAYING ATTENTION TO FAMILY POLICY'

Even those opposing Hungary's family policy are paying attention to it, as shown by attacks from "Brussels where they think we should spend on supporting migration rather than on supporting families", Culture and Innovation Minister János Csák said in an interview published in the weekly Magyar Demokrata on Wednesday. The government aims to support families in raising as many children as they like by ensuring that families are not worse off financially than single people, by supporting home

purchases and offering options for parents to stay home with the children or return to the workplace, he said. Families are now eligible for 15, 30 or 50 million forints in government-supported loans for home purchases, he said.

As a result, the fertility rate in Hungary rose from 1.2 in 2010 to 1.52, and reached 1.59 before the coronavirus pandemic, he said. Japan, South Korea and other countries have shown great interest in the Hungarian model, he said. Commenting on the recent sacking of the director of the National Museum, Csák said "leaders of state institutions are especially expected to fully adhere to the law." The government has also restructured higher education, innovation and research, and the universities participating in the reforms have seen their funding increase 2.5-fold, Csák said. At the same time, the government also set strict requirements to those institutions, he said.

FIDESZ MEP: LINK BETWEEN ILLEGAL MIGRATION, TERRORISM 'CRYSTAL CLEAR'

The link between illegal migration and terrorism is "crystal clear", yet many in Brussels "continue to repeat the absurd claim that immigration is a good thing and we need it," Balázs Hidvéghi, an MEP of Hungary's ruling Fidesz, said in a European Parliament plenary debate on Wednesday.

“Europe is in a crisis, but Brussels is not capable of providing tangible solutions,” Hidvéghi said. “Just look at what’s happening on the streets of western Europe,” he said. “Islamist terrorists are murdering innocent people, mass demonstrations are being organised in support of a terrorist organisation and there’s a level of anti-Semitic incitement not seen since the second world war.” Concerning the war in Ukraine, Hidvéghi said that though many in the EU “support the continuation of the war without any criticism, Brussels’s Ukraine strategy has failed”. He said that more than a year and a half into the war, the conflict was no closer to ending, while hundreds of thousands were dying on the battlefield. The MEP cited “the chaos around the EU budget, the unwarranted withholding of EU funds and the deceitful ideological attacks against conservative governments” as more examples of Brussels’s inability to find solutions. “Instead of policies that weaken Europe, we need a leadership that puts the interests of Europeans first,” Hidvéghi said. “It’s time for change in Brussels.”

FIDESZ MEP: EU ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE REFORM MUST ADHERE TO FACTUALITY, EQUAL TREATMENT

The process of reforming the European Union’s economic governance must adhere to factuality and the principle

of equal treatment, Enikő Győri, and MEP of Hungary’s ruling Fidesz, said on Tuesday. Addressing the debate on the reform in the European Parliament’s Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), Győri said the changes were necessary, adding that the aim was to strike a balance between creating the conditions for growth and promoting fiscal responsibility. The new rules must guarantee equal treatment for member states and that the European Commission cannot abuse its discretionary power, Győri said. An objective target figure is needed when it comes to debt reduction with a view to guaranteeing the EC’s impartiality when dealing with member states, the MEP said. She criticised the EU’s debt sustainability analysis (DSA), saying it was based on assumptions and could not be used to make decisions, and called for an objective methodology approved by member states. Győri also said the coordination of member states’ economic policies should remain focused on ensuring the sustainability of their public finances. She warned that the incorporation of social policy would lead to ideological debates and leave member states with less room for manoeuvre.

FIDESZ MEP CALLS FOR SECURE ENERGY SUPPLY, HEATING FOR ALL HOUSEHOLDS

All households must be guaranteed secure energy supplies and heating, and housing prices should

be brought down, Fidesz MEP Lívía Járóka said after a meeting of the European Parliament’s women’s rights and gender equality committee (FEMM) on Tuesday. Energy poverty requires a complex solution that includes managing labour-market challenges simultaneously with local housing-related challenges, Járóka told MTI. Also, every household needs to be ensured an adequate energy supply and heating parallel to the reduction of home prices, she added. The cost-of-living crisis has hit disadvantaged groups the hardest, she said, mentioning women, the poor, including the Roma community, and forex debtors as examples. Járóka called for making use of affordable green technologies and providing a stable livelihood to all.

BUDAPEST POLICE BAN DEMONSTRATION

The Budapest police (BRFK) have banned a demonstration regarding the armed conflict between the Hamas terrorist organisation and Israel, BRFK said on the website police.hu on Wednesday. A private individual had submitted a request to hold a demonstration in Budapest’s 2nd district on November 22, it said. Similar events have recently turned into violence in many cities in Europe and elsewhere in the world, and it can be assumed that such a demonstration in Hungary could

pose a danger to public order and safety, BRFK said, citing the law on the right of assembly. BRFK added that attending a banned event would result in sanctions. Budapest police have banned several demonstrations since the outbreak of the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas.

RETAIL SALES DOWN 7.8% Y/Y IN SEPTEMBER

Retail sales in Hungary dropped by an annual 7.8% in September, dropping for the tenth month in a row, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Wednesday. Retail sales declined by 7.3% when adjusted for calendar year effects. Adjusted food sales fell by 2.3%, non-food sales dropped by 7.5% and vehicle fuel sales were down 19.9%.

HUNGARY TRADE SURPLUS WIDENS TO EUR 1.263 BN IN SEPTEMBER

Hungary's trade surplus reached 1.263 billion euros in September, widening from 665 million in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data on Wednesday.

Exports fell by an annual 5.1% to 12.756 billion euros, slipping for the second month in a row. Imports dropped by 19.4% to 11.493 billion euros, declining for the sixth month in a row. Trade with other European Union member states accounted for 76% of Hungary's exports and 69% of its imports during the month. In January-September, Hungary's exports increased by an annual 7.1% to 112.756 billion euros, while imports fell by 5.2% to 105.906 billion. The trade surplus reached 6.849 billion euros.

GUEST NIGHTS UP BY 5.8% Y/Y IN SEPT

Guest nights at commercial and private accommodations in Hungary rose by an annual 5.8% to 3,418,000 in September, lifted by a higher number of bookings by foreign travellers, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Wednesday. The number of guest nights spent by domestic travellers fell by 1.2% to 1,657,000, but guest nights spent by foreign visitors rose by 13.3% to 1,761,000. In January-September, guest nights spent by domestic travellers fell by an annual 7%, while foreigners' guest nights rose by 13%, KSH said.

MORE THAN 8,500 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON TUESDAY

Fully 4,844 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Tuesday, while 3,792 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 48 people, ORFK said on Wednesday.

25 KURDISH NATIONALS FOUND IN POLISH VAN

Customs officers found 25 Kurdish nationals hiding in a van with Polish licence plates on its way to Austria on motorway M1 near Ács in north-western Hungary, tax and customs authority NAV said on Wednesday. The group of 12 men, 3 women and 10 children were jammed in the vehicle's cargo department, the authority's spokeswoman said. The passengers could not present valid personal documents to stay in Hungary, Etelka Prantner Juhász said, adding that legal proceedings had been launched against them for illegal entry and against the driver on people smuggling charges.