

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Sándor Palace

Hungarian President Katalin Novák meeting Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa at the COP28 summit in Dubai

UPCOMING EVENTS

President Katalin Novák at COP28 in UAE

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

1st Advent day

TOP STORY

'MISTAKE TO PUSH FOR UKRAINE EU ENTRY TALKS'

Ukraine's EU membership and the start of accession talks "currently do not coincide with Hungary's national interests", and the bloc should first sign a strategic partnership agreement with the country, the prime minister said.

Viktor Orbán told public radio on Friday he had proposed that talks on Ukraine's EU membership are not started at the upcoming EU summit. He said it was a mistake to force the prime ministers to include the issue on the meeting's agenda. He said the European Commission had proposed starting accession talks with Ukraine but this did not coincide with the interests of several member states, and "certainly not with Hungary's". Orbán said the EU should talk to everyone and align their interests. He said the EU's basic treaty did not use the word "veto" but stated that in certain issues a decision could only be made if all member states agree. "Hungary will not veto anything, Hungary will prevent some decisions." Orbán said he would represent the position that the bloc should first sign a five to ten-year strategic partnership agreement with Ukraine, which will allow bringing Ukraine closer to the EU. "Once we see that we can cooperate, then we can bring up the question of membership," he said, adding that this would only be possible "many, many years from now".

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ORBÁN: IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL IF UKRAINE MEETS CONDITIONS FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio on Friday that there were several issues in the case of Ukraine that were uncertain, with the legal and political systems of a country at war functioning differently from a peaceful country's, and it was therefore impossible to tell whether Ukraine met the rule-of-law conditions of European Union membership. He said it also could not be determined how big Ukraine's territory was, arguing that parts of it were under Russian occupation despite being part of Ukraine in terms of the law, or how big the population was given that people were constantly fleeing the country. It was also unclear, he said, what effect the integration of Ukraine's agriculture would have on the common market. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarian farmers would go out of business if Ukraine's agriculture was part of the European system, he added. It is also not known where the money would come from if Ukraine was to join, he said. If the money must be drawn from the existing funds, then countries in central and eastern Europe will lose certain financial resources, he added.

Orbán said the EU had committed a similar mistake in the past when it started talks with Turkey, promising them membership. "And it has been going on for 20-30 years, which makes everyone frustrated, and the whole issue is a failure," he added.

ORBÁN: SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE SHOULD BE PROVIDED OUTSIDE EU BUDGET

Hungary's position is that support for Ukraine should be provided outside the European Union budget, in a transparent way, the prime minister said on Friday. Viktor Orbán told public radio that a separate fund should be set up with intergovernmental agreement for supporting Ukraine, with every country making payments to it. "We have granted quite a lot of money, over 100 billion euros, to Ukraine, partly in the form of weapons and partly in cash," he said. "If this money had been spent on Europe's development, the European economy would be in much better shape." "Europe suffers from economic problems and at the same time, it is throwing money away, sending train-loads of weapons and money to Ukraine," he said. He added that instead of the war, a ceasefire was needed. "A ceasefire, not the war, should be financed, and then peace," he said.

ORBÁN: ONLY HUNGARIANS CAN DECIDE THEIR OWN FATE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in a radio interview on Friday, said that at its core, every political debate was about sovereignty, and that only Hungarians could decide their own fate. He added,

at the same time, that attempts were always being made to interfere in Hungary's affairs, making reference to the issue of the "dollar left and the dollar media". He said the government needed the support of everyone who valued Hungary's independence and sovereignty, asking the public to fill out the National Consultation survey. He said one of the lessons of Hungarian history was that the country had always been surrounded by larger empires, "and though they wanted to take a bite out of us, we don't have to be frightened by them because even those that are bigger than us have fallen and we're still here". "We move in a way so that we can be there at the funeral of every empire," he said. Orbán said another lesson was that over the last 1,100 years Hungarians had shown how to arrange their own territory. "This is our world that we know how to best furnish it," he said, adding that Hungarians did not want to let others interfere in their affairs.

At the same time, Orbán said, "there are always those, even within Hungary, who think we should integrate into an empire instead". "There are always those willing to sell out parts of the country or all of it for money." He said the government of former socialist prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány had "brought the IMF on us, introduced foreign currency-denominated lending which turned out to be good for the banks but not the people, and took people's pensions and wages away". In times when these kinds of governments are in power, their

decisions don't serve the interests of the Hungarian people and violate the country's sovereignty, he added. The prime minister said foreigners were trying to influence the decisions of countries of Hungary's size, insisting that "the Americans, for example, are trying to press us into the Ukrainian war right now". He said economic lobby interests also tended to come up, and during election campaigns, attempts were made to influence people not to choose a nationally minded government. "This is what happened in the last parliamentary elections, when the left was backed with money from the West, Brussels and Washington," the prime minister said. This, he noted, was against the law, but because loopholes had been found, drafting clear regulation was in the country's interest. "Let's not allow a repeat of a situation in which ... the Hungarian people find out after the election that attempts had been made to influence their decision through the left-wing parties," Orbán said. He said parliament needed to make some decisions in the interest of protecting Hungary's sovereignty, and efforts to block attempts to interfere in the country's affairs had to be taken more seriously in the coming years.

ORBÁN: 2024 TO BE 'HOPEFUL YEAR'

Next year is set to be a "hopeful" one, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said on Friday, adding that Hungarians in 2024 would be working "so that things

get better, not so that they don't get worse". Concerning the economy, Orbán said inflation, sanctions and the energy crisis had made 2023 "the most dangerous year in a long time". Hungarians this year "have been working so that things don't get worse, so that they could protect their prior achievements", he said. But he said 2024 would be a "hopeful year", emphasising that "this time we'll be working so that things get better". He said there were already signs showing that this was "not just wishful thinking", but something that could be achieved. He vowed that the government would "definitely raise pensions by 6% even if it turns out that inflation is only at 5%". The increased 13th-month pension will be paid out in February, and economic players have decided to raise the minimum wage for skilled labourers and unskilled workers by 10% and 15%, respectively, he noted. The prime minister said it was also an encouraging sign that the government had been able to roll out the expansion of its home creation scheme by increasing subsidies for the village CSOK programme, launching the revamped CSOK Plusz home purchase subsidy programme, and increasing the prenatal baby support loan. He welcomed that the share of home owners among people under 40 had reached 75%.

Orbán said Hungary had a vested interest in establishing economic relations with the entire world. He said that though it was clear that "we are part of the West", it was also

"obvious that the fastest-growing part of the world right now is to our east". Orbán said economic cooperation with Easterners was therefore in Hungary's fundamental interest, and the government's foreign policy needed to support this. The prime minister said the reason why he had recently travelled to Switzerland and Azerbaijan and was scheduled to visit Argentina next week before going to Brussels was to try to make more room for Hungarian economic players so that they could be as successful as possible abroad, and so that Hungary could benefit from that success.

HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA OPEN NEW BRIDGE OVER RIVER IPOLY

Hungary and Slovakia on Friday opened a new bridge over the River Ipoly linking the border villages of Órhalom and Vrbovka (Ipolyvarbó). Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said the bridge was co-financed by the European Union and cost 2.5 billion forints (EUR 6.6m) to build. Whereas in 2010 Hungary and Slovakia had just 22 border crossing points, they now have 39, the minister said. The 40th border crossing will be opened early next year at Drégelypalánk, he said. Hungary and Slovakia both attach strategic importance to having ways to cross the border legally, Szijjártó said, adding that this was especially true given that Hungary's longest border section was

the one it shared with Slovakia, its third most important trading partner. As regards the formation of the new Slovak government, Szijjártó noted that in 2014 it had been the governments of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Slovakia's Robert Fico that had signed the agreement on the construction of the bridges on the Ipoly being completed now. He said the latest bridge would shorten the travel time by car between Vrbovka and Őrhalom from at least half an hour to a few minutes. Szijjártó said the bridge's opening demonstrated the two countries' "excellent utilisation" of European Union funds.

Meanwhile, the minister said that after a time of "political hatred" between the two countries, cooperation between Hungary and Slovakia was now "a success story based on mutual respect". The two countries, he said, supported each other in key matters and contributed to each other's economic growth and physical security.

ÁDER: ADAPTING TO CHANGED CLIMATE AND HYDROLOGICAL CONDITIONS ESSENTIAL

Adapting to the changed climate and hydrological conditions is essential, János Áder, chairman of the board of the Blue Planet Foundation and Hungary's former president, told a meeting of Water and Climate Leaders on the sidelines of the United Nations' COP28 climate summit on Friday. In his online address delivered

from Budapest, Áder said the targets earlier set by the body had been correct. Eighty percent of the effects of climate change are felt through water, he said, adding that it was right to agree on the need for a global water management information system that links climate, meteorology and water databases. Highlighting the timeliness of the work of the body, Áder cited the Copernicus Climate Change Service's latest report which said global temperature increase from the pre-industrial average exceeded 2°C for the first time on Nov 17. The former president invited the participants of the COP28 summit to the Budapest sustainability expo set to be held in two years' time.

According to a press release, water and climate leaders are asking countries at the summit to work together in coordinating their water and climate policies, to support each other in sharing their data, experiences and ideas and to incorporate the issue of water into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

LMP: GOVT ABUSES 'PRIORITY INVESTMENT' LEGAL CATEGORY

The introduction of a legal category for priority investment in the national economy has been harmful because the government has been abusing it, an opposition LMP national board member said on Friday. Mária Szendefy told a press conference that the legal regulation enabling projects to be

classified as priority investment should be void. In its current form it did not serve the public interest, she said, adding a new law could be introduced to achieve the intended goal. Szendefy said that the Kúria, the supreme court, had recently approved LMP's initiative for an referendum to be held on withdrawing the law introducing the category of priority investment in the national economy. If the constitutional court does not prevent it, the collection of signatures necessary for holding a referendum could be started within weeks, she added. In her criticism of the law, she cited a tourism development project near Lake Fertő as an example. The government declared it a priority investment in 2018 and even though the "mad plan" could not be fully implemented as a result of financial constraints, the locals could not use the lakeshore for years, "the natural habitat was practically destroyed on an area of nearly sixty hectares", and many of the iconic hay-roofed huts were destroyed, she said. It was only recently revealed that the local government office had issued its environmental permit for the original plan, and so it is currently not known what exactly will come out of the project, she added.

CLOSE TO 14,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON THURSDAY

Fully 4,827 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Thursday, while 8,998 came

to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 70 people, ORFK said on Friday.

HUNGARY Q3 GDP UP 0.9% Q/Q, KSH CONFIRMS

Hungary's GDP grew by 0.9% quarter-on-quarter in the third quarter, adjusted for seasonal and calendar year effects, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) confirmed in a second reading of data released on Friday. Adjusted for seasonal and calendar year effects, GDP dropped by 0.3%. On the production side, services contributed 1.7 percentage points, industry 0.9,

construction 0.1 and the balance of taxes and subsidies on products 1.1 percentage points to the headline decline. The farm sector mitigated the drop by 3.4 percentage point. On the expenditure side, gross capital formation contributed 5.3 percentage points to the headline decline. The trade balance reduced the drop by 5.0 percentage points. For the period Q1-Q3, GDP fell by an annual 1.2%.

HUNGARY TRADE SURPLUS WIDENS TO EUR 1.3 BN IN SEPTEMBER

Hungary's trade surplus reached 1.3 billion euros in September, widening from 665 million euros

in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data on Friday. Exports fell by an annual 4.3% to 12.9 billion euros. Imports dropped by 19% to 11.5 billion euros. Trade with other European Union member states accounted for 76% of Hungary's exports and 69% of its imports during the month. Hungary's terms of trade improved 12% during the period as the forint firmed 4.3% to the euro and 11% against the dollar. In January-September, Hungary's exports increased by 7.2% year-on-year to 112.9 billion euros, while imports fell by 5.2% to 105.9 billion euros. The trade surplus reached 6.9 billion euros.