

PHOTO OF THE DAY



FM Péter Szijjártó (r) in talks with his UAE counterpart, Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi

UPCOMING EVENTS

EP holds plenary

Stats office releases January construction figures

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

Events marking 1848/49 freedom fight anniversary

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: REALITY, IDEOLOGY 'FAR APART'

Reality and an "ideological approach" to politics are "extremely far apart" in international politics today, the foreign minister said.

Concerning the war in Ukraine, Péter Szijjártó told a podium discussion in Martonvásár, near Budapest, that Europe was "suffering from war psychosis". He said that despite the "inflated liberal expectations", it was certain that Russia could not be dealt a military defeat in this conflict, given that it is a nuclear power. But Ukraine cannot lose, either, he said, arguing that there would always be a big enough supply of weapons from the West to maintain the status quo. "If neither side can win, then it's clear that the whole thing will end with negotiation," the minister said, adding that this made the call for an urgent ceasefire and peace talks the only morally acceptable position. He said Europe today was "incapable of creating these conditions", so an agreement between the United States and Russia was needed. But this, he said, could only come about after a change in the US' leadership. Meanwhile, Szijjártó warned that sending Western troops to Ukraine would violate the NATO's "red line" which said it was not party to the conflict.

SZIJJÁRTÓ CALLS FOR PREVENTING REGIONAL ESCALATION OF MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told a podium discussion in connection with the conflict in the Middle East that the number one objective was to prevent an escalation of the conflict, as this would lead to a regional war. He said a political change in Washington could resolve this crisis as well, noting that the Abraham Accords brokered under Donald Trump's presidency had resurrected the hope for peace. He said there were many similarities between the political positions of Trump and the Hungarian government, such as their views on the family and handling of migration.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó praised the government's policy of opening to the East, underlining that despite the political efforts to decouple the European and Chinese economies, it was clear that many Western companies have become fully dependent on Chinese suppliers in sectors like the auto industry, among others. Szijjártó said that "the United States puts constant pressure onto Hungary to stop its nuclear cooperation with Russia while Russia became the largest Uranium supplier of the US last year. Speaking about the upcoming European Parliament elections and its significance, Szijjártó said that parties with a rationality-based, conservative and patriotic agenda endorsing national interests

and sovereignty would need to have a strong showing in order for "turning negative developments around".

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, UAE SIGN ECONOMIC COOPERATION PACT PAVING WAY FOR EUR 5 BN REHABILITATION PROJECT

Hungary and the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday signed an economic cooperation agreement establishing the conditions for a 5 billion euro rehabilitation project in Budapest on Wednesday. The agreement was signed by Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó and the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, the foreign ministry said in a statement. At a joint press conference after the meeting, Szijjártó said the "flagship" project by UAE developer Eagle Hills would give new impetus to the two countries' economic cooperation, as well as Budapest's development. Under the project "the abandoned industrial area around the Rákospuszta train station and rail yard in the city's north will be transformed into a new city quarter with tourism, economic, business and sport functions", the foreign minister said.

He said enhanced cooperation between Hungary and the UAE could pave the way for investments in other branches of the economy too. Szijjártó noted that bilateral trade between Hungary and the UAE had climbed over an annual 1 billion dollars and pointed to the presence of Hungarian companies in the Emirates' food industry

and ICT sector. Al Zeyoudi called the agreement a "milestone" for economic relations with Hungary and said there was potential for further cooperation in the food industry and energy sector, including nuclear and renewables.

FIDESZ MEP SLAMS EU'S MEDIA FREEDOM ACT AS 'CENSORSHIP LAW'

An MEP of ruling Fidesz slammed the Media Freedom Act adopted by the European Parliament on Wednesday as "a censorship law attempting to regulate member states' media systems by infringing on the states' competencies and in consultation with organisations of the Soros network, although it purportedly protects the independence and pluralism of media."

"The law is another attempt from Brussels to curb member states' sovereignty. It aims to make sure that only Brussels' voice can be heard, and gives the EU an opportunity to oppress patriotic and Christian conservative views and values. This is unacceptable. Brussels is building total control over media and a centralised system of censorship before our eyes," Andrea Bocskor said. She also slammed the regulation for disregarding country-specific characteristics and pushing a generic regulation for all member states. It also allows the EU to curb certain contents in public media by imposing sanctions, she said. "Hungary is committed to a multi-faceted media and the freedom of opinion... This

regulation is clearly another attempt to weaken and silence right-wing forces ahead of the EP elections," she said. Under the EU treaties, regulation of the law's subject matter is in the hands of the member states. The law "is a stealthy attempt to widen Brussels' competencies," said the MEP.

The Media Freedom Act obligates member states to protect the independence of media and bans influencing editorial decisions, the European Parliament said in a press release. "Authorities will be prohibited from pressing journalists and editors to disclose their sources, including by detaining them, sanctions, office searches, or by installing intrusive surveillance software on their electronic devices," the EP said. The EP also tightened the use of spyware on journalists' devices, "which will be possible only on a case-by-case basis and subject to authorisation by a judicial authority... Even in these cases, subjects will have the right to be informed after the surveillance has occurred and will be able to challenge it in court." To avoid the use of public media for political ends, the law said the heads and board members of public media institutions must be "selected through transparent and non-discriminatory procedures for sufficiently long terms of office. It will not be possible to dismiss them before their contract ends, unless they no longer meet the professional criteria," the press release said.

FIDESZ MEPS WELCOME NEW EU REGULATIONS ON AI

MEPs of ruling Fidesz welcomed that the European Parliament on Wednesday adopted the Artificial Intelligence Act, and said the law laid down the framework for the use of AI and protected the interests of EU citizens and companies. MEPs Edina Tóth and Balázs Hidvéghi said the new regulation focused on consumer protection, fostered innovation and helped companies exploit economic opportunities in the field. The EP said that the law, adopted with 523 votes in favour, 46 against and 49 abstentions, aims to safeguard fundamental rights, democracy, the rule of law and sustainability while boosting innovation.

The regulation bans "biometric categorisation systems based on sensitive characteristics" and collecting images from the internet or CCTV footage to create facial recognition databases, the EP said in a press release. "Emotion recognition in the workplace and schools, social scoring, predictive policing and AI that manipulates human behaviour or exploits people's vulnerabilities will also be forbidden." The law also imposes transparency requirements on the use of general-purpose AI and bans the use of biometric identification systems in law enforcement, with a few strictly regulated exceptions. "We have always seen it as a priority to have EU regulations on AI focusing on people's security and handling AI-related risks,

but also ensure fair competition for digital SMEs," the MEPs said. Tóth called it important "to keep the development and implementation of AI in human hands, and also that it is safe, transparent and non-discriminatory, serving society and the environment alike". "I hope the regulation will also boost innovation and investment in the sector in Hungary," Tóth added.

DEUTSCH: 'DOLLAR LEFT' MEPS 'PROUD TO BE WORKING AGAINST THEIR COUNTRY'

"Dollar left" MEPs have been boasting about "working against their country" and trying to prevent Hungary from accessing the EU funds lawfully owed to it, Tamás Deutsch, Fidesz EP group leader, said on Wednesday. In a video posted on Facebook, Deutsch said opposition Momentum MEP Katalin Cseh was a member of the "dollar-left choir" made up of DK and Momentum politicians "working tirelessly" to prevent Hungarians from receiving EU development funds, and "proudly bragging about it and slandering their country". He said Cseh was a hypocrite to stress the importance of the fight against corruption when she was part of "multi-billion corruption involving her family company fraudulently using Hungarian and European Union development funds". Deutsch said the left's "mantra" was the importance of direct funding from Brussels. Yet if EU development funds owed to Hungary were to become direct sources from

Brussels, Hungarians would lose 98% of EU funding due to them, he said, explaining that all EU member states can apply for direct funds, with each country receiving money in proportion to its population and GDP. These metrics account for around two percent of the EU total, he added.

NYITRAI: GOVT SEEKS PUBLIC OPINION ON GREEN ENERGY

The government is seeking public opinion on green energy in online survey, the prime minister's chief advisor on social affairs said on Wednesday. Zsolt Nyitrai said on Facebook that the survey included questions about 13 issues ranging from solar panels to reduced public utility fees and electromobility. Márton Nagy, the national economy minister, said that Hungary was building a green economy which involved modernising industry. The future of the Hungarian economy was at stake, he said, because Europe's green energy hubs were currently being formed.

CBANK: FINMIN'S BANK LEGISLATION WOULD IMPAIR INDEPENDENCE

Hungary's central bank (NBH) has said amendments to the Central Bank Act drafted by the Finance Ministry would impair its independence and affect its core activities. "It is the NBH's firm position that the draft amendment to the Central Bank Act, in its current form, would influence the independence of the

central bank," the NBH said in a statement late on Tuesday. "Some provisions of the draft transfer to the supervisory board not only further rights of oversight, but management rights that could affect the central bank's core activities," it said. "If the new law is approved, it could be used to construct narratives against the Hungarian economy and to damage our financial stability," it added.

HUNGARY JAN INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DOWN 3.6%

Headline industrial output fell by 3.6% in January 2024 compared with the same period last year, the Central Statistical Office said on Wednesday in a second reading of data. Adjusted for the number of working days, output dropped by 4.1%. Month on month, output fell by 1.1% based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. The detailed data show that output of the automotive industry, Hungary's biggest manufacturing sector, slipped by an annual 4.7% in January, falling for the third month in a row. Output of the electrical equipment segment edged down by 1.3%, while computer, electronics and optical equipment output fell by 18.7%. Food, drinks and tobacco output was up 7.6%.

AWARD-WINNING WRITER ISTVÁN SZILÁGYI DIES AGED 85

Kossuth and József Attila award-winning writer István Szilágyi died at age 85 on Wednesday, the ministry of culture and innovation said. Szilágyi was born in Cluj-

Napoca (Kolozsvár) in 1938 and spent most of his youth in Zalău (Zilah). After graduating with a law degree from the university of Cluj-Napoca in 1963, he contributed to literary magazine Utunk and later became its deputy editor-in-chief before becoming editor-in-chief of literary magazine Helikon. His most successful novels included Kő hull apadó kútba (A Stone Drops in a Dwindling Well), published in 1975, Agancsbozót (Antlershrub), published in 1990, and Hollóidő (Raventime), published in 2001. He was awarded, among others, the Attila József Prize in 1990, the Kossuth Prize in 2001, and the Hungarian Order of Merit, Middle Cross with the Star in 2014.

PUBLIC MEDIA TO LAUNCH ONLINE JAZZ RADIO STATION

Hungary's public media is set to mark International Jazz Day on April 30 with the launch of Szakcsi Radio, a new online jazz radio station. The non-stop radio station will launch a test broadcast on March 15. "Embracing and presenting Hungarian jazz on a wider scale is a true public-service function," Anita Altorjai, the head of public media service provider Duna Médiaszolgáltató, told a press conference at the Budapest Music Centre on Tuesday. Dániel Papp, the head of Hungary's Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA), said it "didn't take long to decide" that the radio station should be named after pianist and composer Béla Szakcsi Lakatos, "one of the finest figures in the history of Hungarian jazz", who died in 2022.