

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Nézőpont Institute presents Press Freedom Hungary 2023 report

UPCOMING EVENTS

PM Orban meets Macron in Paris

CoE PACE summer session in Strasbourg

LMP presser on party's natl referendum initiative

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ CALLS FOR SOVEREIGNTIST COOPERATION

Hungary's foreign minister has called for cooperation between sovereigntist and patriotic forces in the EU, saying the liberal mainstream was "trying to rule over Europe, and are clearly divvying up positions without considering the will of the voters."

Péter Szijjártó met Christian Hafenecker, a Secretary General of Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), in Vienna, and said that FPÖ and Hungary's ruling Fidesz had both won their respective EP elections, "because people voted for patriotic, sovereigntist, pro-peace parties that oppose a European super-state". FPÖ and Fidesz are cooperating closely and have similar stances on the solutions to the challenges facing Europe, he said. "We both think that further curbing member states' competencies is unacceptable... [and] Europe should swiftly change its pro-migration stance." FPÖ and Fidesz also agree that "Ukraine needs peace, not weapon deliveries," he added.

Later on Tuesday, Szijjártó met top officials of gas pipeline operator Trans Austria Gasleitung, and said the Trans Austrian Gas pipeline could contribute to strengthening the security of Hungary's energy supply. According to a statement from the ministry, Péter Szijjártó told public media that the pipeline could be a "good security reserve", giving Hungary access to LNG arriving at ports in Italy.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ SPEAKS WITH WANG YI OVER PHONE

Developing cooperation with China will be an important goal of Hungary's EU presidency, as it could greatly help achieving environmental and competitiveness goals, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said, after talks with Wang Yi, his Chinese counterpart, by phone. Szijjártó said that China was a valuable partner also because "it is one of the most decisive, vocal and committed champions of peace", according to a statement from the foreign ministry. He welcomed the Chinese-Brazilian joint proposal for peace in Ukraine, and said Hungary was fully backing it as it could serve as a good basis for a ceasefire and peace talks. Szijjártó said that he and Wang were in agreement that "we must boost our efforts to broker peace, "because that is the only way to avoid even more loss to the warring parties, Europe and the world". Another focus of Hungary's rotating EU presidency between July 1 and December 31, 2024, is improving competitiveness, and the talks with Wang also touched on developing European-Chinese economic ties, he said. Economic cooperation with China could be a booster for European competitiveness, which has deteriorated a lot recently, he said.

"Hungary is the best example of the benefits of an economic cooperation between East and West based on mutual respect and common sense,

as the largest eastern and western companies are cooperating here," he said. Europe would prosper if it could tighten cooperation with China rather than using an ideological approach and striving for isolation, introducing tariffs," he said. EU tariffs on Chinese car industry players were raising serious concerns, he said, as cooperation with those companies was key to the electric transition of western European car makers, the foreign minister said. Isolating those players from one another would bring environmental as well as competitiveness issues, he said. "We will work to make sure that the EU and China enter into economic cooperation based on mutual advantages, rather than engaging in a tariff or trade war," he said. Such an approach is in the EU's and Hungary's interest, as a tariff and trade war would put hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk, Szijjártó added.

BÓKA: EU USING ARTICLE 7 AS TOOL OF POLITICAL PRESSURE

The European Union has been using the Article 7 procedure as a way to bend Hungary to the bloc's mainstream position on key issues, János Bóka, the European affairs minister, said in Luxembourg. But hopefully, now that the EU elections are over, debates on the rule of law will be more objective and constructive, Bóka told journalists before a meeting of EU affairs ministers at which the Article 7 procedure against Hungary is on the agenda. He said it was expected that "voices that linked

the Article 7 procedure to a certain negotiation position will fall silent", adding that whereas the procedure itself as a political process was unlikely to change -- and would be used to put Hungary under pressure regarding certain political issues -- "strong rhetoric and the conflict-seeking" would ease. Bóka said Hungary's EU presidency starting next week would lead strategic discussions on policy areas that were key for the next institutional cycle. The democracy protection package is on the agenda at today's Luxembourg council meeting, he noted, adding that ministers will hold a policy debate on the proposal for establishing harmonised requirements on transparency of interest representation carried out on behalf of third countries. "Hungary agrees ... that malign interference in the electoral process of the European Union is undesirable. The Hungarian presidency will take this dossier further," he said.

BÓKA: EU STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 'SHOULD TAKE VOTERS' WILL INTO ACCOUNT'

The strategic priorities of the EU's next cycle should be decided with the voters' will in mind, Hungary's EU affairs minister said in Luxembourg, adding that voters had clearly expressed their will at the last European parliamentary elections. János Bóka told a press conference after a meeting of EU affairs ministers that the past five years had been spent with the European

Commission “trying to force through the green transition agenda in spite of European industry, economic players and citizens, rather than in cooperation with them.” Regarding the common agricultural policy and green transition, the EU “is part of the problem, not the solution”, he said. Farmers’ protests and statements from the sector had made it clear that change was needed, Bóka added. The minister said the EU should also consider whether the migration pact adopted at the end of the now closing cycle was truly handling the challenges of the crisis. “Hungary doesn’t see it that way, and the Hungarian government is at the opinion that there’s a need of a more effective protection of the external borders and of strategic partnership agreements with partner states, as well as with states of origin and transit. Otherwise, the European institutions will carry on with their political lines of the past five years, without taking the will of the voters in consideration,” he said.

Hungary is prepared to taking over the rotating presidency of the EU, despite “the challenging times in which it is shouldering it”, and has managed to prepare a programme that will foster dialogue between member states and EU institutions, he said. Tuesday’s meeting also tabled a proposal for discussion that would make it possible to bring transparency over foreign influence in EU member states. “Hungary has first-hand experiences on the dangers of foreign players influencing the internal affairs of a member state, and the clandestine ways it can

happen”. “It is in all our interest that voters could make political decisions with all relevant information at hand,” he said. The meeting also heard Hungary in connection with the EU’s Article 7 procedure under way against the country, the minister noted. Bóka said the hearing had given him an opportunity to “rectify false information” on issues such as the Sovereignty Protection Office, the child protection law, and the general operation of the Hungarian legislative process. “I hope the new information will refine the incorrect and unbalanced image that western press reports ... have created about Hungary,” he said.

ORBÁN TO HOLD TALKS WITH MACRON

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has travelled to Paris following his talks in Rome, and he will meet President Emmanuel Macron at the Élysée Palace on Wednesday, the PM’s press chief said in a statement. The two leaders will assess the goals of Hungary’s rotating EU presidency starting next week.

The website of the French president’s office shows that the talks will start at 1pm.

ORBÁN: LISZT FERENC INTL TO BE DEVELOPED ‘INTO MOST SUCCESSFUL AIRPORT IN CENTRAL EUROPE’

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has met the CEO of Vinci Concessions, the company which co-acquired the

Budapest Liszt Ferenc International Airport with the government earlier this month. At the talks with Nicolas Notebaert in Paris, the sides reviewed development plans of the airport. Liszt International will see investment worth over one billion euros in the coming decade, including the construction of a new terminal, he said. Vinci has agreed to turning Liszt International into the most successful airport in central Europe, he added. On June 6, the government announced that it had bought an 80% stake in the airport along with Vinci, which had acquired 20%.

PRESIDENT SULYOK MEETS SYRIAC ORTHODOX PATRIARCH

President Tamás Sulyok met Ignatius Aphrem II, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, in his office in Budapest, the presidential Sándor Palace said. At the meeting, Sulyok said that supporting Christian communities around the world was a primary task for Hungary. The country also provides help to the Christian Church and religious organisations through the Hungary Helps aid scheme, according to a statement released on the palace’s website. Sulyok and the patriarch were in agreement that they consider the protection and support of Christian communities in Syria and the Middle East a joint issue, the statement said. It noted the support and help Hungary had provided to churches in the region

at times of natural disasters as well as for educational, cultural and religious development programmes.

ECONMIN: INFLATION BROUGHT DOWN, MANDATORY FOOD PRICE DISCOUNTS TO END ON JULY 1

Mandatory supermarket discounts on certain food produce including bread, meat and milk have fulfilled the aim of pushing down inflation, and the measure will be dropped from July 1, the national economy ministry said. In order to encourage competitive prices in retail trading, an online price monitoring system will still be maintained. The measure requiring retailers to discount food produce in a number of categories by at least 15% on a regular basis was

rolled out a year ago to bring down inflation and was set to expire at the end of June. The government introduced the measure at the proposal of the ministry "to battle the inflation shock caused by the war and failed sanctions, and to protect families and pensioners", the ministry said in a statement. It noted that annual food price inflation has fallen to around 1% in recent months. In May, food prices fell in a month-on-month comparison, it said. In June 2023, food price inflation stood at 29.3%.

EUROPEAN EMPLOYER ORG TO HOLD SUMMIT IN BUDAPEST

BusinessEurope, the Confederation of European Business, is holding a summit in Budapest on June 27-28, organisers said on Monday. The

meeting hosted by BusinessEurope's Hungarian member, the Confederation of Hungarian Employers and Industrialists (MGYOSZ), is expected to draw the leaders of some 500 employer associations. BusinessEurope represents companies active in the European Union, and is a partner of the European Commission in talks on economic and corporate issues, organisers said. It gives its opinion and supports the European legislative process, they said. BusinessEurope's meeting of the Council of Presidents will be one of the first among the meetings of European organisations in Hungary during the country's EU presidency. It is expected to release a statement on the situation of the European economy and the recommendations of economic players, they said.