

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVI/Tibor Illyés

Hungarian fencer Luca Szűcs competing for the women's sabre individual top 16 at the Paris Olympics

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to Hungary's EU presidency

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Stats office releases Q2 GDP, June tourism data

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: INTL DIPLOMACY GAINING IMPETUS

International diplomacy has gained new impetus since the Hungarian "peace mission", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Monday.

"Finally more and more people are speaking to each other, and this is good news, because the way to peace is through negotiations," Szijjártó said on Facebook. He said China's foreign minister and the US secretary of state had held talks at a recent ASEAN forum, and the Russian foreign minister had also spoken with his South Korean counterpart. "It would be good if the Europeans also noticed this, but it appears that understanding is slower..." the minister said.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski was "also sticking to provocation", adding that he was "used to this", as they sit next to each other in EU Foreign Affairs Council meetings. He added, however, that Sikorski had "crossed another line by lying" when he had said that the Hungarian foreign minister had backed his "nonsensical proposal" for the next informal meeting of EU foreign ministers to be held in Ukraine. Szijjártó said that in reality he had immediately objected to the proposal at the meeting, adding that there would not be a Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Ukraine.

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**EU AFFAIRS MINISTER:
HUNGARIAN EU
PRESIDENCY ‘TO LISTEN
TO EUROPEANS’**

A task of Hungary’s European Union presidency is to ensure that “the voice of European citizens is heard” and considered in decision-making, János Bóka, the European affairs minister, told a conference of EU affairs committees of the bloc’s parliaments in Budapest. Bóka said in his keynote address at the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) that the message of the recent European parliamentary elections was that “Europeans expect the EU to yield more and better,” adding that “if we pretend that European policy making could go on in the usual way, we would let down our fellow citizens and betray their hopes and expectations.” The minister called for a “new agreement on European competitiveness” and said improving the productivity and competitiveness of the bloc as a whole and its members was crucial. Strengthening Europe’s defence policy is another important objective, Bóka said, adding that the EU “should take a greater role in ensuring its own security through increasing its resilience and capacity to act.” Speaking about the enlargement of the EU, Bóka said the process should continue to be “based on [candidates’] merits, balanced, and authentic”. He said Ukraine’s case was “unique” in that “the integration process is coupled with the EU’s broad

and complex support to that country in its fight against Russian aggression”. The Hungarian presidency will also support Moldova and Georgia in their endeavours to join the EU, Bóka added.

Referring to the Western Balkans, he said “besides managing the integration process we will further study the possibility for gradual integration”, that is options to provide access for candidates to EU programmes and projects before they gained full membership. The Hungarian presidency will focus on the importance of protecting the external borders and ensuring the necessary financing, he said. The presidency will promote a dialogue on the future of cohesion policy as well as initiate preparations for a “producer-based” agricultural policy, Bóka said. The Hungarian presidency will also facilitate continuing a dialogue on efforts to prevent foreign interference in election procedures, increase the fight against anti-Semitism and promote minority rights, the minister added.

Deputy House Speaker István Jakab, who opened the conference, said the Hungarian parliament aimed to “promote a greater role of national parliaments in EU policy making and the application of and respect for the principle of subsidiarity”. Jakab noted that the Hungarian presidency was hosting five inter-parliamentary conferences in Parliament while the sixth would be hosted by Brussels. Concerning agriculture, Jakab said that “unprecedented challenges” of

current times such as climate change, increasing “input costs”, and “too ambitious tightening of regulations” as well as increased imports from third countries had considerably weakened the sector’s competitiveness and “jeopardise the livelihood of European farmers”. Jakab noted the increased importance of adapting to changing conditions, but added “it is impossible without modern equipment”. Farmers should be given incentives to use sustainable technologies and the EU’s common agricultural policy “must be made producer-focused.”

Responding to European dignitaries’ comments on EU enlargement and other issues, Bóka said the Hungarian presidency was ready to cooperate constructively with the EP. “Whenever the EP is ready, so are we.” Regarding the war in Ukraine, Bóka welcomed the “honest and open dialogue” on the subject. All member states agree that Ukraine had been attacked and that Russia is the aggressor in this war, he said. Ukraine has a right to defend itself, it must be supported and a solution must be found that is acceptable for the country, he said. At the same time, EU member states’ views differ on ways for Europe to have an “autonomous role” in the conflict, and not every state agrees that to achieve that, Europe must function as a channel of communication, he said. Member states differ on whether the conflict can be solved on the battlefield, he added. “We must agree, however, that we must be able to discuss contested issues,” he said.



KÖVÉR ASKS METSOLA TO HELP ‘PREVENT UNDEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES’ IN EP

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér on Monday sent a letter to Roberta Metsola, the newly re-elected President of the European Parliament, congratulating her and asking for her cooperation in “preventing undemocratic procedures in the European Parliament”. Kövér said he agreed with Metsola that parliamentarism needed to be strengthened in Europe, adding that this aim “coincides with the long-standing aspiration of national parliaments to play a greater role in EU decision-making.”

Referring to the Patriots for Europe party group, he said the Hungarian public was “shocked” upon learning that “in violation of the rules of parliamentary democracy and written European law, [the EP] ignored the will of some 18 million European voters and failed to allocate to the third largest political group in the European Parliament any of the vice-presidential or committee office-holder seats that this political group is entitled to according to established practice.” Kövér said the Hungarian public and MEPs of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat parties “had hoped that, moving beyond the European Parliament’s practices experienced so many times over the past five years, the newly formed

European Parliament would value the unity of Europe and break away from the practice of stigmatizing and attempting to exclude those countries, parties, and their MEPs whose opinions and positions, based on democratic mandate, differ on certain issues from the majority view of the European Parliament.”

“Madam President! Since 1990, [...] it has been an uninterrupted practice in the Hungarian National Assembly that the parties that have won seats in Parliament by democratic mandate fill parliamentary offices in proportion to their seats. Any politician who has confidence in the democratic values of European popular representation and in the much-vaunted rule of law must ask whether the leadership of the European Parliament considers this exclusionary and divisive situation to be good practice,” Kövér said. Kövér said “no honest politician with a sincere commitment to democracy” could agree with that “arbitrary procedure”.

Moreover, Kövér said one of the motives behind the “increasingly aggressive attacks” are differing opinions “on the Slavic fratricidal war taking place at the EU’s borders.” He said the EP resolution condemning Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s peace efforts did not align with “the much-vaunted view of EU politicians that the European Union was created to establish peace.” Should the “discriminatory tendencies” of the past five years continue or strengthen in the EP, rather than an attempt at “reconciling the positions of the Member States based on divergent national

interests”, the EU’s capacity to address growing challenges would be further weakened, Kövér said. “I kindly request Madam President’s future cooperation in preventing any undemocratic procedures within the European Parliament,” Kövér said in conclusion.

VÁRHELYI: EU ENLARGEMENT ‘INVESTMENT IN PEACE, STABILITY, PROSPERITY’

The European Union’s enlargement policy is “a clear and necessary geostrategic investment in our long-term peace, stability, prosperity and security,” Olivér Várhelyi, EU commissioner for neighbourhood policy and enlargement, told a conference of representatives of EU affairs committees of European parliaments in Budapest on Monday. The EU cannot be successful without new entrants and their national parliaments, the commissioner said, adding that the EU currently had 10 aspirants that “believe in the EU offering them long-term peace, security, stability, welfare and prosperity.” Concerning the candidates, Várhelyi said Ukraine, despite “the current times of challenge” had made progress in its required reforms. He noted that Ukraine was expected to show commitment to the process and should go on with its reforms. He also added that in 2024 the EU was committed to help Ukraine with a total 16 billion euros if that country met the bloc’s requirements.

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Concerning Moldova, Várhelyi noted that the EU had entered into accession talks with that country last month, and was helping Moldova with an investment of 1.6 million euros to refurbish key road infrastructure and the green and digital transition. Georgia was given candidate status last December, and made a commitment to promote the rule of law and fundamental rights, however, that country then passed “controversial” legislation with special regard to a law concerning the “transparency of foreign influence”, Várhelyi said, adding that the contested law indicated “a step back from candidate status”. EU enlargement in the Western Balkans was a top priority for the Hungarian EU presidency, the commissioner said, adding that the EU “cannot be complete without that region”. He urged that the EU should open the competitiveness and inclusive growth chapters in its talks with Serbia, and noted the Serbian government’s commitment to introducing EU reforms. He also said it was of “vital importance” that Serbia should indicate its strategic directions to the EU “in the current geopolitical context”.

Concerning Albania, he said the country was making progress with its judicial reform, but added that such areas as private ownership and the rule of law required further efforts. North Macedonia should accelerate implementation of its accession-related reforms, Várhelyi said, and noted that next steps in the process required constitutional

amendments. Bosnia and Herzegovina has completed all eight requirements the European Commission defined in October, the commissioner said, adding that the framework for the talks was being prepared. Integration of all new entrants could be promoted by a new “growth plan”, he said, adding that the mechanism could offer candidates such facilities as access to the common regional market even before they are granted full membership in the EU.

DEFMIN: HUNGARY TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT IN PRODUCTION OF 30MM SHELLS

Hungary will be self-sufficient from now on in the production of 30mm medium-calibre shells, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said at the official inauguration of Rheinmetall’s ammunition plant in Várpalota, in western Hungary, on Monday. Szalay-Bobrovniczky said few ammunition plants in Europe matched the one in Várpalota in quality, adding that the plant will also make ammunition for the armoured infantry fighting vehicles manufactured in Zalaegerszeg. The plant in Várpalota will guarantee the quality of Hungary’s defence industry, as well as the safety of those living in the area, while also creating a lot of new jobs, the minister said. Some 50 people will be working at the factory, but headcount will increase to several hundred as production ramps up, he added. The plant will be

expanded with further elements over the coming months and years, and will also manufacture 155mm calibre artillery shells in addition to 120mm tank ammunition, he said.

Szalay-Bobrovniczky said the Russia-Ukraine war had demonstrated that “nothing is as important as having everything needed for battle at our disposal”. “Cutting-edge technology is indispensable, but not enough to fight successfully, but if there’s ammunition, there’s also success,” the minister said. He said Europe had recognised that it could not remain idle, but had to completely rebuild its defence industry capacities, and specifically ammunition production. The supply of ammunition to Ukraine by European countries, he added, had significantly reduced their strategic munitions reserves, and the European defence industry could barely keep up with the increased demand. Szalay-Bobrovniczky said Hungary was also ahead of “its European Union friends and allies”, arguing that the plans for the Várpalota plant had been completed well before the start of the war and construction had gotten under way quickly. This, he added, had resulted in the emergence of a defence industry in Hungary in the form of factories employing “a Hungarian workforce with high-tech knowledge” which greatly reduced the country’s military dependence.

Armin Papperger, Rheinmetall’s chairman and chief executive, said the company was planning to export not just medium calibre ammunition, but also calibres up to 155mm globally. He



said the Várpalota plant is capable of producing more than 240,000 rounds of tank ammunition a year. He said the 30mm calibre ammunition plant was a 300 million euro investment, but Rheinmetall is investing a total of half a billion euros in Várpalota through a German-Hungarian joint venture, as it will have to fulfil a 54 billion euro order stock.

GOVT OFFICIAL: BUDAPEST AIRPORT'S REPURCHASE 'STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT'

The repurchase of Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport by the Hungarian state has been of strategic significance, Csaba Dömötör, state secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, said. The airport is "a gateway to the

country, to 15 million passengers, which number could even double in future," he said on Facebook. It reflects well its strategic importance that its turnover has tripled over the past 20 years and nearing records of pre-pandemic levels, Dömötör said. "The airport generates profit for the country with a potential to pay a dividend of up to 35 billion forints (EUR 90m), so it doesn't take money, it brings money to the state." The government announced in June the acquisition of an 80% stake in Liszt Ferenc operator Budapest Airport, partnering with French airport company Vinci which acquired a 20% stake.

BUDAPEST MAYOR MEETS IOC HEAD IN PARIS

Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, has met Thomas Bach, the

president of the International Olympic Committee, in Paris, the mayor's office said. They were in agreement that the Hungarian capital had almost every sports facility that were required for hosting a summer Olympic Games, the office said in a statement. Karácsony said that "organising a sporting event of this scale poses a great challenge even for Paris, a city with a lot more developed infrastructure". "Should a plan seriously ever come up for Budapest to host an Olympic Games that would require a large-scale development of roads, bridges, public areas and the public transport system to make up for what has been undone over the past decade," the statement quoted the mayor as saying in a post on Facebook. He promoted a green development of the city and broad public consensus to be the base of a future Olympic concept.