

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Hungarian swimmer Zsófia Konkoly wins gold in the women's S9 400m freestyle event at the Paris Paralympics

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Globsec forum in Prague**

**EU defence ministers' informal meeting in Brussels**

**Stats office releases demography figures, industry prices for July**

**Events related to Hungary's EU presidency**

**Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East**

## TOP STORY

### SZIJJÁRTÓ: 'WAR PSYCHOSIS' STILL RIFE IN EU

The European Union remains incapable of undertaking a realistic assessment regarding the war in Ukraine, and "war psychosis is still rampant" in the bloc, Hungary's foreign minister said in Brussels on Thursday.

At a press conference after an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers, Péter Szijjártó lamented that most member states thought that the war's territorial expansion did not carry a risk of escalation, and that some of his counterparts had even said that allowing Ukraine to use Western weapons to strike targets in Russia was "a way of achieving peace". Szijjártó said that because of the extent to which "this goes against reality ... we must conclude that this blind pro-war stance and pro-war psychosis will continue to hold sway here in Brussels in the coming months". He said several member states urged the EU to allocate a further more than 6 billion euros from the European Peace Facility towards weapons deliveries, adding that Hungary "will not contribute to freeing up a single euro cent as long as Hungarian companies are discriminated against in Ukraine" and measures endangering Hungary's energy security were in effect. He said there was also mounting pressure to expand and extend the EU's training mission for Ukrainian soldiers, but Hungary was not participating in this, either.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU 'IDLY WATCHES' UKRAINE 'PLAYING WITH' ENERGY SECURITY**

Ukraine has threatened the energy security of Hungary and Slovakia by making Russian Lukoil's crude oil transit impossible and the European Commission has not taken any action, the foreign minister said on Thursday. Péter Szijjártó told a press conference after a meeting with his EU counterparts in Brussels that his Ukrainian counterpart had also attended the consultations and talked much about the Russian attacks against his country's energy grid. "Hungary's position is clear," he said. "A country's energy supply is a matter of national security. As a result, when a country threatens the security of another country's energy supplies, then it also threatens that country's national security interests." "And this is exactly what has happened in respect of Ukraine and Hungary. By making around a third of Hungarian oil imports from Russia practically impossible by legal means, Ukraine is undermining the security of Hungary's energy supplies or at least subjects it to serious challenges," he said. He added that the same applied also in connection with Slovakia where Ukraine had blocked around 40-45% of Russian oil imports.

"And I must say that the European Commission has shown its true

colours, because either the European Union is so weak that it cannot protect two member states' energy security against a non-member country, or it has created the whole situation itself and Kyiv had actually been instructed by Brussels to introduce measures that limit energy security for Hungary and Slovakia," he said. Whichever happens to be the case, "it is disappointing that the European Union is either so weak or it is trying to hide so boldly behind Kyiv to force Hungary and Slovakia to change their pro-peace position," he said. Szijjártó said that together with his Slovak counterpart they had expressed their disappointment in connection with the EC's handling of the issue and noted that both countries were making considerable contributions to the security of Ukraine's supplies. "Some 42% of Ukraine's electricity imports currently arrive in Ukraine through Hungary and Hungarian state companies have made significant investments in order to enable synchronised cooperation between European and Ukrainian systems," he added. "Without these measures, Ukraine's electricity supplies would not be secured... And despite this we had to face Ukraine playing with the security of energy supplies for Hungary and for Slovakia," he said.

Szijjártó said there were continual talks with Russian suppliers and the Ukrainian system operator about finding a legal solution to guarantee long-term supplies. "But

let me tell you again, it should not be us having to deal with this task but either the Ukrainians should restore the original situation or the European Union should take action in this matter," he added. With the help of different types of temporary measures, supplies could be successfully secured in the short term and medium term, but in the case of energy only a long-term solution was acceptable, he said. "As a result, we will certainly continue the talks and hope that agreements can be signed soon that will enable the long-term security of energy supplies," he added.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ SLAMS EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF'S 'DANGEROUS' MIDDLE EAST PROPOSALS**

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó on Thursday criticised what he called "dangerous and unreasonable proposals" put forward by European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell concerning the situation in the Middle East. Speaking at a press conference after an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels, Szijjártó said Borrell "has seemingly lost control" and was putting forward proposals "that are extremely dangerous for Europe". Szijjártó criticised a proposal for the EU to impose sanctions on two Israeli ministers. "It's an extremely dangerous and absolutely unreasonable proposal, because

such a decision would raise major question marks in the Middle East, and would completely undermine the cooperation between the European Union and Israel," Szijjártó said, according to a ministry statement. He praised Israel for its agreement with the World Health Organization (WHO) on the launch of a polio vaccination campaign in Gaza. "This step must be appreciated," he said. "They wanted to adopt a joint position here today that would have criticised Israel in spite of this agreement, so we asked that it be amended."

Szjijártó also welcomed Israel's commitment to guaranteeing religious freedom on the Temple Mount and in the country's holy places. "Certain steps in the recent period have raised concern among certain Israeli politicians and certain Christian communities," he said. "And in this respect I believe the Israeli foreign minister's and prime minister's public commitment to maintaining the freedom to practise religion is significant."

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said Thursday's meeting was also attended by Türkiye's foreign minister, noting that there had not been such a high-level meeting between the EU and Türkiye in the last five years. He underscored the importance of preserving the EU and Türkiye's cooperation on migration, saying he had asked his Turkish counterpart "not to let themselves be talked out of keeping migration at bay just because they see an EU member state being made to

pay tens and hundreds of thousands of forints for protecting its borders". Szijjártó said he and his Turkish counterpart did not hold bilateral talks this time because they could "do so at any time" and will talk on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting next month. The minister said Türkiye was "indispensable" when it came to responding to the challenges before the EU, whether it be energy security or migration.

On another subject, he said the deadly stabbing in Germany last weekend had demonstrated "just how dangerous and unreasonable the pressure Brussels is trying to put on Hungary is". "We don't want a Solingen in Hungary, we don't want stabbings in Hungary, we don't want illegal migrants in Hungary, so it's simply shocking and outrageous that while the number of crimes committed and the number of people killed by illegal migrants in Europe is rising, the European Union is punishing us because we protect ourselves and our border and don't allow illegal immigrants into the country," he said.

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### **MINISTER ORDERS PROBE OF AIRLINES THAT HAVE VIOLATED CONSUMER PROTECTION RULES**

The national economy ministry has ordered a probe of airlines that have violated consumer protection rules. In a statement issued on Thursday, the ministry said measures it had

taken earlier had put an end to the "airport chaos", reducing the number of late and cancelled flights, but problems and "legitimate consumer dissatisfaction" remained.

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### **NEEDY FAMILIES TO BENEFIT FROM HUF 7 BN BACK-TO-SCHOOL GOVT PROGRAMME**

A government project aimed at helping poor families with school-age children was formally launched in a school in Budapest's 13th district. The programme will use 7 billion forints (EUR 18m) from central coffers and European Union funding to supply needy families school packages over a six-year period, Zoltán Maruzsa, the state secretary for public education, said at the ceremony. The scheme this year covers 84,000 children, he said.

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### **GUEST NIGHTS UP 2.0% IN JULY**

Guest nights at commercial and private tourism accommodations in Hungary rose by 2.0% to 6,646,000 in July from the same period a year earlier, supported by an increase in bookings by foreign visitors, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The number of guest nights spent by domestic travellers edged down 0.3% to 3,861,000, while guest nights spent by foreign visitors climbed 5.4% to 2,786,000. The number of foreign tourists went up by 11% and

the number of guest nights they spent by 5.4% year-on-year. Visitors from Germany spent 255,000 guest nights at tourism accommodations in Hungary in July, more than any other nationality. Visitors from Poland spent 157,000 guest nights and tourists from Czechia 142,000. The number of guest nights spent by visitors from Asia reached 187,000, up 8.2% from the base period. Lake Balaton was the most popular destination in July, accounting for 2,272,000 guest nights. The capital was runner-up with 1,516,000 guest nights. Revenue of commercial accommodations, which include hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, camp sites, resorts and hostels, rose by 12% to 134 billion forints (EUR 341m).

Commenting on the figures, the national economy ministry said the tourism sector “performed better than

ever before in July,” noting the over 6.6 million guest nights recorded for the month, up 2% compared with the same month in 2023. The number of foreign tourists last month reached 1 million, up by an annual 11% and the number of guest nights they spent was 2.8 million, up by an annual 5.4%, the ministry said in a statement. It pointed out “a strong performance of the sector for the whole year so far,” noting an annual 10.6% increase in the number of guests, 9.9 million, at all commercial accommodations during the period of Jan-July. The revenue of accommodations during the period went up by 14.2% to 553.1 billion forints, the ministry said. It said that the tourism sector accounts for more than 10% of Hungary’s GDP and gives jobs directly and indirectly to 400,000 people.

### 33RD FARMER EXPO OPENS IN DEBRECEN

Sándor Farkas, state secretary at the ministry of agriculture, opened the 33rd Farmer Expo, an annual international exhibition and fair of agricultural producers, in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary. In his opening address, the state secretary said the government would “stand by farmers in all situations and seek dialogue with them.” Farkas said rural development projects until 2027 would benefit from nearly 2,900 billion forints (EUR 7.3bn) in European Union funding and “an outstandingly high proportion of co-payment” from domestic coffers. The programme facilitates “the highest form of assistance so far for rural development, farmers, and food producers,” he added.