

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Hungarian, South Korean authorities working together on the salvage of the "Hableány" tourist boat

MTI/NoémiBruzák

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Whitsun celebrations

Danube collision salvage operation

Áder attends Pope Francis' mass in Sumuleu Ciuc, Romania

## TOP STORY

# ROMANIA AMBASSADOR SUMMONED OVER WW1 CEMETERY

Marius Gabriel Lazurca, Romania's ambassador to Hungary, has been summoned to the foreign ministry to account for Thursday's events at a Hungarian WW1 memorial cemetery in Valea Uzului (Úzvölgye) but refused to comply, citing conflicting orders.

At the cemetery, the local council has erected a memorial site for Romanian soldiers fallen in the second world war. Ahead of the site's inauguration late on Thursday, the visitors of that event clashed with Szekler demonstrators and eventually forced their way into the cemetery. State Secretary Levente Magyar called the events an "anti-Hungarian provocation". The ministry has issued a diplomatic note of protest and summoned the ambassador. Refusing to answer the summons was "below all courtesy and friendship", Magyar said. "Romania has refused an opportunity for dialogue."

Hungary still has a vested interest in a correct and good relationship with Romania to ensure the peaceful coexistence of Hungarians and Romanians, Magyar said. The latest events raise questions about Romania's good faith in upholding those ties, he said. Romanian authorities stood idly by as "the graves were defiled", and watched as Romanian attackers beat peaceful Hungarian protesters, he said. Hungary expects Romania to thoroughly review this "shameful incident", he said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: CEE LOBBYING POWER STRONGER AFTER EP ELECTIONS**

Central and eastern Europe's lobbying power has visibly grown after the European parliamentary elections in May, although "tough debates" are to be expected in the ensuing round of post-election bargaining, the foreign minister said.

Talking to journalists on the sidelines of the Globsec conference on security policy in Bratislava, Péter Szijjártó noted that the Hungarian and Polish ruling parties had been "awarded the largest domestic support" within the bloc, suggesting that central Europeans "are committed to a strong EU but want a union based on strong member states" and not the "united states of Europe promoted by the mainstream".

A robust economic performance is also at the root of growing regional influence, Szijjártó said. "We make reasonable decisions, lower taxes and put the security of our own citizens first", he said. The success of the region's economic policies can be measured by the increasing interest in central and eastern Europe on the part of the world's fastest growing economies in the Far East, he said. The Hungarian government contributes to that trend thanks to low corporate taxes, lower wage costs and research funding, he added.

Regarding the ship collision on May 29, when a tourist boat carrying 33 South Koreans and two Hungarian

crew collided with a cruise ship and sank in Budapest, Szijjártó said that last Friday, he reassured his South Korean counterpart that the Hungarian authorities would "do everything in their power and even more" to remove the wreck from the water. They are also mobilising large resources to recover the bodies of victims, he said. Szijjártó promised an "impartial, unbiased but strict" investigation into the circumstances of the collision. "The necessary consequences will be drawn and punishments meted out," he said. The prime minister of South Korea has expressed his thanks to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for Hungarians' related efforts, he noted.

On Friday, the second day of the Globsec conference, Szijjártó took part in a panel discussion on the political balance of forces after the EP elections, along with Czech Foreign Minister Tomáš Petříček and George Ciamba, the Romanian minister for European affairs. Szijjártó noted that of all the parties running in the elections, Fidesz has garnered the highest ratio of votes, 52%. "This has to be respected. No one has the right to question the will of the Hungarian people," he said. The most successful parties in the EP elections, after Fidesz, were the Polish Law and Justice party, the Austrian People's Party and Italy's Liga, he said.

These parties are not Eurosceptic but they differ from others in their vision of creating a strong Europe as they promote a Europe of strong nation states, Szijjártó said. The European People's Party has to be ready to

cooperate with successful parties from the right of the political spectrum, he said. "The standpoint of these parties was in minority before the elections. But the EPP cannot separate the election results from the debate over Europe's future," he said. That debate is now subject to "historic challenges", Szijjártó said, such as migration, climate change and security issues. They have to be addressed in cooperation and in a rational manner, he said.

At the discussion, Szijjártó also expressed support for the EU's enlargement on the Balkans. He called for the EU to open all the remaining chapters of accession with Serbia, start the last phase with Montenegro and begin the process with Albania and North Macedonia. The Serbian-Hungarian ties have improved enormously and Serbia guarantees the widest possible rights to its Hungarian minorities, he said.

## **BODY OF 19TH VICTIM FOUND IN SOUTH BUDAPEST**

The 19th body linked to last week's Danube collision in central Budapest was discovered in the river near the Bálna cultural complex, public broadcaster M1's news programme reported on Thursday evening.

It was identified as one of the two Hungarian crew members, a man, of the Hableány sightseeing boat, the police said on its website late on Thursday. Earlier in the day two bodies linked to the collision were recovered.

One was found in the river near Rákóczi Bridge and was identified as a South Korean tourist who died in the May 29 collision, the police reported on its website. Another body, found earlier in the day downstream from the city near Érd, was identified as a South Korean woman travelling as a tourist on Hableány, the police said.

Last Wednesday, the Hableány sightseeing boat, carrying 33 South Korean tourists and a crew of two Hungarians, collided with a large cruising ship, capsized and sank in the river. Seven tourists are reported to have survived the disaster.

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### **POLICE SEARCH FOR MISSING HABLEÁNY PASSENGERS WITH 15 BOATS**

The Danube Water Police are searching for missing persons from last week boat collision with 15 boats on an over 200km stretch of the river between Budapest and the country's southern border, the water police chief said.

Police are also using dogs to search for the bodies and three of the missing bodies have been discovered with their help so far, Richárd Prohászka told a press conference. Sonar equipment, search lights and night-vision are also being used, he added.

The search for missing persons started right after the collision and will continue until all the bodies are found, he said. Other water authorities are also involved in the search, he added. In response to a

question, he said the body of one of the Hungarian crew from the Hableány pleasure boat had been found thanks to a citizen's report on Thursday. In response to another question, he said there was no plan to involve civilians in the search operation.

The national water management authority said on Friday that the water level of the River Danube was still on the rise. Snow melting in the catchment areas of the river is expected to push the water level a few centimetres up in the next few days. A flood alert is in place along 350km of the river in Hungary, the authority said in a statement. At a time to be determined on the basis of forecasts, Slovak authorities are expected to inhibit the river flow over the period of four hours in the near future, the authority added. The water level was 466cm at 10am on Friday and it is expected to drop to below 400cm next Wednesday evening only, it said.

Slovakia is helping to speed up lowering the water levels of the River Danube with a view to aiding the operation to raise of the wreck a National Water Directorate (OVF) spokeswoman said on Thursday. Gabriella Siklós told public television channel M1 that the OVF had turned to its Slovak counterpart with a request to inhibit flows upriver so as to speed up the ebbing downriver. The large crane will then be able to approach the wreck and begin to raise it.

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### **VIKING CRUISES: VIKING SIGYN CRUISE SHIP CAPTAIN WAS NOT CAPTAIN IN DUTCH ACCIDENT**

The Ukrainian captain of the Viking Sigyn cruise ship that was involved in a crash in Budapest last week was not serving as captain on a boat that was in an accident in the Netherlands in April, Viking Cruises told Reuters late on Thursday. "We can confirm that even though the Captain of the Viking Sigyn was onboard the Viking Idun on April 1, he was not serving as the ship's Captain at the time of the incident. Viking Idun was under the command of another Captain," a Viking spokesperson said. He declined to comment further, stating that the investigations of both incidents were still ongoing. The Budapest prosecutor's office said earlier on Thursday that official information acquired through the Hungarian member of Eurojust had confirmed press reports that the captain was a suspect in the Netherlands for causing a crash on April 1.

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### **COE: HUNGARY NOT DOING ENOUGH TO PREVENT MINORS' SEXUAL ABUSE IN TRANSIT ZONES**

The Council of Europe has censured Hungary for its failure to implement effective measures to prevent the

sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of unaccompanied asylum applicant minors in transit zones at the Hungarian-Serbian border, in a report released on Thursday. In its report, the CoE's Lanzarote Committee, tasked with monitoring sexual abuse against children, established that the risk that asylum-seeking minors may fall prey to sexual abuse in the transit zones remained high, despite previous recommendations submitted to Hungary by the committee. The reason for the high risk is that, despite some positive developments, the Hungarian authorities have failed to implement appropriate measures to protect minors while hindering the work of civil organisations in these zones, the committee said.

### **BUDGET DEFICIT 17.7% / FY TARGET AT END-MAY**

Hungary's cash flow-based budget, excluding local councils, ran a 176.4 billion (EUR 544m) forint deficit at the end of May, reaching 17.7% of the 998.4 billion forint full-year

target, the finance ministry said in a preliminary release. The central budget deficit reached 253.4 billion forints, while the separate state funds and the social insurance funds had surpluses of 51.5 billion and 25.5 billion, respectively. In May alone, the general government deficit came to 137.4 billion forints.

The ministry said revenue from VAT was up 367.3 billion forints in January-May from the same period a year earlier, while revenue from personal income tax rose by 91.3 billion. Payroll tax revenue increased by 209.2 billion and excise tax revenue by 46.5 billion.

It attributed the growing revenue to higher wages and employment, which, along with tax preferences, have lifted consumption, as well as to government measures to improve tax compliance together with tax cuts. The ministry said pre-financing for European Union-funded projects continued to affect the balance: the government paid out 608.1 billion forints for EU projects in January-May, while transfers from Brussels came to just 305.9 billion.

### **HUNGARY POSTS EUR 228 M TRADE SURPLUS IN APRIL**

Hungary posted a trade surplus of 288 million euros in April, down by 255 million euros from the same month a year earlier, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. Exports grew by an annual 3.6% to 8.865 billion euros while imports were up 7% at 8.637 billion. Fully 83% of exports and 73% of imports were traded with other European Union member states. In January-April, exports were up an annual 5.3% at 36.601 billion euros and imports increased by 7.4% to 34.520 billion.

### **HUNGARY HEADLINE INFLATION STEADY AT 3.9% IN MAY**

Hungary's twelve-month consumer price index stood at 3.9% in May, level with the rate in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. In a month-on-month comparison, CPI stood at 0.7% in May.