

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Czeglédy

Removal of waste from Tisza river at Kisköre Dam

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Comments on Ursula von der Leyen's election**

**EP plenary session in Strasbourg**

**Campus Festival in Debrecen**

## TOP STORY

### **FIDESZ: EC CHIEF SHOULD WORK TO STOP MIGRATION**

The "only correct path" for the next president of the European Commission is "to do everything to protect the external borders of the European Union", Hungarian MEP Tamás Deutsch said in the European parliamentary hearing of Ursula von der Leyen, the candidate for the post.

The European Union must stop migration through control of the external borders, respect national identities under the EU treaties, and continue subsidies to central and eastern union members at the current level, Deutsch, a deputy of Hungary's ruling Fidesz, said.

"We expect the new head of the European Commission to appreciate and support efforts by members aimed at protecting the community's external borders," he said. The next budget of the EU "should not punish but support central Europe" whose countries are "developing and closing the gap at a higher than average rate", Deutsch insisted.

Katalin Cseh, MEP of the Momentum party, called on the EU to step up against "those working to destroy the EU".

Jobbik MEP Márton Gyöngyösi said "European voters are disappointed; they want a more credible, democratic and more transparent EU. Many find Von der Leyen unacceptable as EC president candidate."

Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi voiced support for Von der Leyen's programme on a community site, but added that he disagreed with the way she had been nominated.

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## **OPPOSITION DK TO SUPPORT VON DER LEYEN FOR EC HEAD**

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) said their MEPs will support Ursula von der Leyen to be elected president of the European Commission, spokesman Zsolt Gréczy said. DK's board took the decision in response to the party's online vote with the majority of over 50,000 respondents asking for Von der Leyen's support, he said.

Gréczy said the decision also had political grounds as the outline Von der Leyen gave about her programme in the EP earlier in the day reflected much of DK's policies including the concept of a united states of Europe, as well as introducing a uniform European minimum wage and child support scheme, fair taxing of multinational companies and supporting climate protection goals. Von der Leyen pledged to urge strict sanctions against national governments that take measures violating the rule of law, he said.

Gréczy welcomed the candidate's further pledge "to be tough fighting against anyone who wants to weaken or disintegrate Europe. "This is nothing less but a declaration of war on Hungary's prime minister and his ruling Fidesz party," he said.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY LOOKING TO IMPROVE TIES WITH UKRAINE**

Hungary's interest lies in bringing about a significant improvement in

its ties with Ukraine and establishing mutually beneficial cooperation for both countries and the Transcarpathian Hungarian community, Hungary's foreign minister said in Berehove (Beregszász). Hungary is interested in a strong, stable and democratic Ukraine, Péter Szijjártó said after meeting the leaders of Transcarpathian Hungarian organisations, arguing that this would have a positive impact on bilateral ties and the lives of the country's ethnic Hungarians.

"We sincerely hope -- and hoping does not equal meddling in internal affairs -- that the makeup of the new parliament in Kiev will allow for the two countries to significantly improve their relations," Szijjártó said. Hungary wants the Ukrainian government to view the Transcarpathian Hungarian community as an asset that strengthens Ukraine and advances the normalisation of Hungarian-Ukrainian relation. The current state of bilateral ties was bad for Ukraine because it did not have Hungary's backing in its European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations and bad for Hungary because "we don't like to be on bad terms with our neighbours," he said. The situation was also hurting Transcarpathian Hungarians by having to endure intimidation and the violation of their rights. "We weren't the ones to blame for the deterioration of our relations since there were no decisions made in Budapest that had curtailed the rights of Hungary's Ukrainian community," the minister said. Concerning the situation of Transcarpathian Hungarians, he said the

better their lives were, the more they could contribute to Ukraine's success.

Szijjártó noted that in recent years, the Hungarian government had disbursed 13.5 billion forints (EUR 41.4m) to 23,000 Transcarpathian SMEs within the framework of its economic development scheme geared towards the region, resulting in developments worth a total of 18 billion forints. He also noted that when the Ukrainian governor of Transcarpathia had notified Hungary of shortages in vaccines or the chemicals used in water purification, Hungary had sent immediate assistance. He said that hopefully Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky would have enough leeway to support the improvement of bilateral relations. Budapest has a plan for normalising the two countries' ties, Szijjártó said, adding, at the same time, that the Ukrainian government's cooperation was also needed in order for it to work. Once the Transcarpathian Hungarian community regains its rights and the Ukrainian authorities "end the intimidation" of ethnic Hungarians, the two countries can get back to pursuing close economic cooperation, he said, adding that the Hungarian government has approved a 50 million euro tied aid package for Ukraine for infrastructure developments. Szijjártó promised that Hungary would immediately lift its veto of Ukraine's NATO accession once "the provocations against Transcarpathian Hungarians end and the community has its rights restored".

László Brenzovics, head of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (KMKSZ), said that Ukraine's ethnic Hungarian community has a vested interest in the normalisation of Hungarian-Ukrainian ties. He slammed a recent police raid on the home of an ethnic Hungarian county representative over allegations that he had been working to buy votes in Sunday's parliamentary elections.

### **FIDESZ: EPP GROUP STANDS BY HIDVÉGHY'S NOMINATION FOR LIBE VICE-CHAIR**

The European People's Party group stands by Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi's nomination to serve as vice-chair of the European Parliament's civil liberties committee (LIBE) after calls from civil groups funded by US billionaire George Soros for the EPP to withdraw the nomination, Fidesz's EP group has said. "The pro-migration forces will stop at nothing to override the clear will of Hungarian voters," MEPs of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance said in a statement. But at its Monday session, the EPP's parliamentary group decided not to give in to the pressure of "Soros's more than 200 European lobby groups" and vowed to stand by its original nominees for committee positions, Fidesz-KDNP said. The MEPs said the lobby groups in question had penned a letter to the EPP group expressing their concerns over Hidvéghi's nomination. Further, they called on the group to "find a nominee for the position of LIBE

vice-chair who pursues an open and transparent dialogue with civil society organisations."

Fidesz insisted the letter's "independent" signatories were all backed by Soros's foundations. The group called it "outrageous" that the signatories "ignore the written rules and customary law of the European Parliament that have been in effect for 40 years". "This constitutes a grave violation of the EP's rules from those who preach about the adherence to constitutional norms at every forum," they added.

Last week, Hungarian MEPs Tamás Deutsch and Kinga Gál of ruling Fidesz, István Ujhelyi of the Socialists and Gyula Winkler of Romania's ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ party were elected to EP committee vice-chair positions. However, the votes were delayed in the cases of certain committees, including the constitutional affairs committee (AFCO), the culture and education committee (CULT) and the civil liberties committee.

### **MINISTER: JUDICIARY EMPLOYEES' WAGE HIKES MAY START NEXT YEAR**

Employees of the judiciary sector may see their wages raised as soon as next year, Judit Varga, who was sworn in as justice minister last week, told public news channel M1. Varga said Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had voiced support for the wage hikes as current wages in the sector are "humiliatingly low". On policy issues, Varga said she would follow in the footsteps of her

predecessor, László Trócsányi, who has gone on to work as an MEP. The ministry is also taking on the task of supporting Hungary's EU policy, she said.

The EU's objections to the Hungarian judiciary system are part of a "witch hunt", and are politically motivated, Varga said. She said she would continue to represent Hungary's interests in the Article 7 procedure started last year that could eventually strip the country of its voting rights in the bloc.

Regarding the Visegrad Group, Varga said the cooperation among the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia was "incredibly successful". "We managed to stop" EPP candidate Manfred Weber and Frans Timmermans, the Spitzenkandidat of the Party of European Socialists, from becoming head of the European Commission, she said. The final candidate German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen's "past and personality" suggest that she will be more open to the problems specific for central Europe, she said. On the issue of migration, Varga said the goal was to find a long-term solution respecting all states' interests.

### **FIDESZ MEP SLAMS UKRAINE'S 'ANTI- HUNGARIAN' ELECTION CAMPAIGN**

Fidesz MEP Andrea Bocskor has slammed what she called an "anti-Hungarian" election campaign in Ukraine, saying it was based on the "intimidation" of ethnic Hungarian

leaders, journalists, teachers and organisations. "It is not enough for Kiev to have declared its aspirations for European integration on multiple occasions," Bocskor said in a statement, stressing that Ukraine "must also adhere to European rules". Recounting her address to Monday's plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Bocskor said Ukraine's central election committee had once again rejected the establishment of an electoral district with a Hungarian majority in western Ukraine's Transcarpathia region. She insisted this meant that representatives of the Hungarian community would face "unequal conditions" in the elections.

Bocskor said that while the Transcarpathian Hungarian community had hoped for swift changes after the spring presidential election, "the grave abuses seen in the campaign give cause for concern." Among the alleged abuses, she cited vote-buying, the fielding of candidates with similar names and no political background, the misleading of voters and "intimidation by the secret service". "The Hungarian minority living in Ukraine deserves the same rights and opportunities as the ones the majority is entitled to, which is why they have a right to representation," Bocskor added.

On Monday, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó lambasted as "unprecedented, unacceptable and un-European" a series of raids carried out by Ukrainian authorities of the homes of the leaders of Transcarpathian Hungarian organisations. He also said Hungary

saw Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's new president, as a "new hope" and hoped that his recent encouraging statements would become reality. If the new president's words are reflected in actions and if the Transcarpathian Hungarian community regains its rights, Hungary will be happy to get back to cooperating closely with Ukraine, Szijjártó told Hungarian reporters during a break in a meeting with his EU counterparts in Brussels.

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### **SOCIALISTS WITHDRAW SZANYI FROM VICE CHAIR POST**

The ethics committee of the Socialist Party has withdrawn Tibor Szanyi from the party's vice chairman post, the party told MTI. Szanyi's membership was suspended in June, in the wake of sharp remarks he made concerning his party's leadership after the European Parliament elections. In a recently published article, Szanyi said that his party's leaders were "concentrating only on securing one or two municipals posts still available as well as the party's remaining assets".

Szanyi has been vice chairman of the party since last year. He failed to renew his mandate to the EP in the European election.

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### **CONSTRUCTION SECTOR OUTPUT GROWTH SLOWS TO 26.3% IN MAY**

Output of Hungary's construction sector climbed by an annual 26.3%

in May, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) show. Output of the buildings segment was up 27.0%, lifted by construction of factories and warehouses, KSH said. For the period January-May, construction sector output was up 40.4% year on year.

László György, a state secretary at the innovation and technology ministry, told news channel M1 that the construction industry had been growing for three consecutive years, with productivity reaching 23% in 2018. The sector is expected to receive orders to the tune of 25 billion forints between 2018 and 2023, he said, adding that facing that work load would require a 10 to 11% annual growth.

Commenting on the data, analyst Gergely Suppan of Takarékbank said unseasonably cold and wet weather and a higher base could both have played a part in the May slowdown in output growth. Suppan said he expected about 25,000 new homes to be completed this year, forecasting full-year output growth of around 30% in the sector.

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### **MORE HUNGARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ENTER THE LABOUR MARKET**

The employment rate among Hungarians with disabilities has reached 35%, nearly double the 18% rate in 2011, according to an estimate by the local unit of



staffing company Trenkwalder. The company said the rate has been lifted by measures to help place people with disabilities in jobs as well as the labour shortage, but it is still well under the average rate for Europe which stands around 50%. Employers who hire Hungarians with disabilities are exempt from the 17.5% payroll tax on those staff, while companies at which people with disabilities don't make up at least 5% of headcount must pay an annual 1.3 million forint rehabilitation contribution for each employee short of that threshold.

### **BMW APPOINTS NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR HUNGARY**

German carmaker BMW has appointed a new head at its Hungarian unit, BMW Group Magyarország said. Maciej Galant will take over as managing director of BMW Group Magyarország from August 1, replacing Massimiliano Di Silvestre, who is leaving to become head of BMW Group Italy. Galant has been head of BMW Group Slovenia

for the past three years. Before that, he was sales director at BMW Group Poland.

### **CLEARING RIVER TISZA FROM 8,000 TONS WASTE TO TAKE 4 MONTHS, OFFICIAL SAYS**

Clearing the River Tisza from an estimated 8,000 tons of waste accumulated during the spring floods will take at least four months, the director of the General Directorate of Water Management (OVF) said. Floating communal and plant waste covers 17,000 square metres on the upstream side of the Kisköre dam, István Láng said. At its thickest, the accumulated waste measures over three metres, he added. This year's pollution is about twice the amount of waste habitually collecting at the dam in the spring, Láng said. The OVF has expanded warehouse space in its winter port and employees work in 12-hour shifts to move the waste onto a 200-ton barge, he added.

### **SEPARATION OF SIAMESE TWINS TO BE CONCLUDED IN BANGLADESH**

A Hungarian medical team of the Action For Defenceless People Foundation will perform the last operation to separate a pair of Siamese twins conjoined at their skulls and brains in Bangladesh, the foundation said. Preparatory surgery to separate two-year-old Rabeya and Rokaiya was performed in Hungary on January 25 this year. During the operation, led by dr Gergely Pataki, a tissue expander system of Hungarian design was implanted. The operation was part of the second phase of a series on interventions aimed at separating the twins.

The first phase, including ground-breaking work to separate the blood flow of the brains, was conducted by a Hungarian team led by István Hudák in Bangladesh in August 2018. The foundation told MTI in a statement that the "twins are in an optimal condition" which allows their final separation within a short period of time.