

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamas Vasyari

Mark Cavendish of the United Kingdom, winner of the third stage of the Giro d'Italia

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Stats office releases prelim figures on foreign trade in March**

**Plenary session of parliament**

**War in Ukraine**

## TOP STORY

# HUNGARY WON'T VOTE FOR NEW EU SANCTIONS

Hungary will withhold its vote for the latest EU package of sanctions unless a solution is found to Hungary's concerns over its energy security, the foreign minister has said.

"Today I spoke by phone again with my friend Shahid Abdullah, president of the United Nations General Assembly, whom I often consult with regard to the war in Ukraine," Péter Szijjártó wrote on Facebook. He asked him to continue applying UN pressure to secure a ceasefire and build peace. "Securing peace as soon as possible would be in the best interest of us Hungarians," he added. Regarding the latest proposed EU sanctions package, the minister said that Shahid Abdullah knew very well that Hungary had voted for all the sanctions packages so far, but the latest would upend the security of Hungary's energy supply. "We will not vote for this package," Szijjártó wrote.

In a post on Saturday, Szijjártó said the effect of European Union's planned sanctions package against Russian fossil fuels on Hungary's energy security and economy would be akin to a "nuclear bomb". The "Brussels package" would mean that the price of petrol would jump to 700 forints (EUR 1.8) per litre, and diesel to 800 forints, he said. Hungary will not support such a package, he said.

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**DEUTSCH: HUNGARIAN LEFT-WING MEPS ARE FIGHTING AGAINST THEIR OWN COUNTRY**

Hungarian left-wing MEPs are doing all they can to undermine their own country, Fidesz MEP Tamás Deutsch told public radio in an interview on Sunday. Deutsch accused Hungarian left-wing MEPs of spreading “the biggest possible lies” about the coronavirus epidemic. He also insisted that besides the Polish opposition led by Donald Tusk, Poland’s former prime minister, only Hungarian left-wing MEPs had taken “every opportunity ... to snoop against their own country”. The Fidesz politician said Hungarian left-wing MEPs, when the seven-year EU budget was in the process of being adopted in 2019-2020, “worked with all their might to ensure their own country got as little EU funding as possible.”

Meanwhile, on the subject of the EU’s proposal regarding sanctions on Russian oil, Deutsch called the situation “serious and dangerous”. He accused the Hungarian left wing in recent weeks of initiating the oil and gas sanctions instead of “championing the interests of the Hungarian people”. The Fidesz MEP said Hungarian left-wingers had always taken the side of Brussels rather than the Hungarian people in international debates. But now he asked all Hungarian left-wing MEPs “speak out against the oil embargo”.

Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi said in response that Deutsch was “either

ignorant of the facts or deliberately lying”. Ujhelyi said he had made it clear “multiple times, weeks ago” that Hungary would only support sanctions on Russian fuels if it received compensation and support from the European community. Hungary, at the same time, would have to take steps “immediately” to enable its industry to process raw materials other than Russian crude, to ensure secure supplies for households and industry, he said.

Ujhelyi said he had recently sent a letter to the European Commission asking for consideration of the individual situations of member states regarding the “embargo of oil imports”. “This tool is only effective if we aim carefully with it. If the shot goes wide, it can cause grave harm,” he said. He called on representatives of the Hungarian ruling parties to stop “spreading lies”, and on public media to “adequately” inform the public about the position of all political players.

**GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY AGAINST SANCTIONING RELIGIOUS LEADERS**

Hungary rejects sanctions against religious leaders, the state secretary for aiding persecuted Christians told public television on Sunday, commenting on the European Union’s plan to sanction Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church. Tristan Azbej, who also heads the Hungary Helps aid programme, said that whereas Hungary condemned Russia’s attack on Ukraine and

supported various sanctions, Hungary supported brokering peace and “sees counterproductive, nonsensical sanctions as harmful”. The Russian Orthodox Church has some 160 million members and 40,000 priests worldwide, Azbej noted, adding that the EU’s “crazy” proposal would ban the patriarch from entering the bloc, isolating religious people from their spiritual leader.

The Syrian orthodox patriarch, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Hungarian eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church, among others, have turned to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, “the last voice of Christianity and common sense in the EU”, regarding the European Commission’s proposal, which he said would create a dangerous precedent of “keeping other churches in check, and subjecting them to politically motivated sanctions”. Hungary sees religious freedom as “sacred and inviolable”, and will not support sanctioning religious leaders, he said. Meanwhile, Hungary has provided aid worth 2 billion forints (EUR 5.2) to Ukraine, he said.

**MOL SUPPORTING UKRAINIAN ENERGY NETWORK**

Hungarian oil and gas company MOL is supporting the Ukrainian energy network’s operations, and has so far offered material support worth 290,000 euros as part of the International Association of Oil and



Gas Producers (IOGP) equipment support programme. Responding to Ukraine’s specific requests, MOL transported equipment worth 50,000 euros to the border. The programme coordinated by the European Commission’s directorate-general for energy and Ukraine’s energy ministry aims to help repair war damage to the Ukrainian energy network and keep it up and running, MOL Group said. “We have taken up solidarity with Ukraine and are committed to industry cooperation in support of maintaining the operations of Ukraine’s energy network,” Ádám Homonnay, MOL’s head of exploration and production, said in the statement.

**JAKAB RE-ELECTED AS JOBBIK LEADER**

Péter Jakab was re-elected as leader of the opposition Jobbik party at a party conference on Saturday. Jobbik’s press office said Jakab received 71.4% of the votes, while his opponent, János Stummer, got 27.8%. Of the 245 ballots cast, 243 were valid, the statement said.

**NÉZŐPONT: ONLY GYURCSÁNY LESS POPULAR THAN JAKAB**

Péter Jakab, on the cusp of re-election as the Jobbik party’s leader, has been outdone in the unpopularity stakes only by Ferenc Gyurcsány, the former Socialist prime minister who now leads the Democratic Coalition, according to a survey by the Nézőpont Institute.

Only 23% of active voters thought Jakab should fill a top post, the survey published on Saturday found. Asked the same question about Gyurcsány, only 10% would entrust him with a position of responsibility. Nézőpont said that Jobbik’s support base had also waned since the election four years ago, when 20% of voters backed the party. Now, Jobbik would only capture 3% of voters in an election held this Sunday, it added.

Meanwhile, Péter Márki-Zay, the former prime ministerial candidate of the united opposition who is the mayor of Hódmezővásárhely, and Anna Donáth, the leader of Momentum, each captured 24% of active voters in Nézőpont’s poll, though 70% would not entrust Márki-Zay with a position of authority, while 42% responded the same way when it came to Donáth -- whose name recognition is low, with 27% of active voters unsure who she was. Among left-wing leaders, Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, who is giving up his position as leader of the Párbeszéd party, is the most popular (32%). Nézőpont conducted its representative survey of 1,000 adults by phone from April 25 to 27.

**KÖVÉR: HUNGARY FACING ‘EROSION OF PARLT NORMS’**

Hungary is facing the erosion of parliamentary norms as a new generation of parliamentarians seem unwilling to adhere to house rules, Speaker of Parliament László Kövér

said in an interview broadcast on public radio on Sunday. Put to him that the opposition had accused him of being overly “strict” with opposition lawmakers, Kövér said the new generation of MPs entering parliament “do not have a sense of the moral responsibility or the dignity” of the chamber. Citing the inauguration session of the new parliament as an example, when opposition politicians left the chamber after the oath-taking ceremony, Kövér said: “These young people are not quite aware of the weighty significance of receiving a mandate to represent people in parliament.” The younger generation had “upended not only unwritten rules that more or less everyone respected, but is also unwilling to heed written regulations,” he said.

He insisted the opposition had been “infected” with the thought that, if they won the election, they would only need a simple majority rather than two-thirds to “ditch the Fundamental Law”. “We face the erosion of centuries-old parliamentary norms. The question is not whether I am strict or not, but how these people and ideas have made it inside Parliament in the first place,” he said.

Regarding the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat (KDNP) alliance’s achievements, which won a fourth consecutive term this year, Kövér said multiple mandates to govern with a two-thirds majority had enabled it to implement “constitutional corrections amounting to a second regime change, using the experiences of the

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period since 1990". "The legislative process that started in 2010 was basically completed in the past cycle," he said. "Although it still needs tweaking -- such as expanding the definition of the state of emergency in view of the war -- that process was a historic feat, and it was an honour to sign those laws as speaker," Kövér said.

### **POLICE: OVER 14,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON SATURDAY**

Fully 6,079 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Saturday, while another 8,179 from Ukraine crossed via Romania, the national police headquarters said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 618 people, the police website said on Sunday. Holders of such permits must contact a local immigration office near their place of residence within thirty days to apply for permanent documents, it added. Budapest police received 390 refugees, 162 children among them, by train, according to the municipal police website.

### **SZILI: 'INTEGRATION ONLY ASSIMILATION' WITHOUT COLLECTIVE RIGHTS**

Integration of the Transylvanian Hungarian community into the Romania mainstream, in the absence of collective rights, would only amount to assimilation, Katalin Szili, the prime ministerial commissioner for the coordination of tasks related to the aspirations of autonomy in the Carpathian Basin, said in Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) on Saturday, at the opening session of the Hungarian National Council in Transylvania.

After conveying thanks from Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and Árpád János Potápi, the state secretary for Hungarian communities abroad, Szili said the Hungarian nation had never been as strong, united or determined in obtaining guarantees of its security and prosperity as it was now, and she thanked the council for its firm commitment to autonomy.

"Let me send a message to the Romanian mainstream: don't believe your politicians. Our aspirations are

not about breaking anything apart but rather, based on the principle of European subsidiarity, about becoming a community that can forge its own destiny," she said. "We need dialogue to ensure common understanding that this is all about a community's survival, its future, and the identity of our children and grandchildren."

### **BUDAPEST TAXIS HIKING FARES**

The cost of taking a taxi in the capital will rise by one third from Monday, on the back of a rise in fuel prices, higher inflation, and an increase in the minimum wage. The basic taxi fare in Budapest will rise from 700 forints (EUR 1.8) to 1000, while the per-kilometre fare will go up from 300 forints to 400. The per-minute fee will rise from 75 forints to 100 forints, based on a decree issued by the metropolitan assembly on 13 April. The fare increase is the result of a compromise reached between taxi companies and the Budapest administration, Ambrus Kiss, one of the city's deputy mayors, said when the decree was announced.