

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Black Swan 2022 exercise, reconnaissance paratrooper above Hajdúszoboszló airport

MTV/Zsolt Czeglédi

UPCOMING EVENTS

War in Ukraine

Ecumenical Charity press conference

Stats office releases industry and construction figures for March 2022

TOP STORY

ORBÁN MEETS SYRIAC ORTHODOX PATRIARCH

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Budapest on Thursday.

The patriarch was one of the Orthodox Christian leaders who turned to Orbán for help in “stopping the European Commission’s plan to impose sanctions on Patriarch Kirill of Russia”, the prime minister’s press chief said, Bertalan Havasi, said. Including a Christian leader on a sanctions list would “set a precedent that would confuse millions of Christians,” the patriarch said. He also thanked Hungary for consistently aiding Christian communities in need. Orbán pledged Hungary would not support sanctioning religious leaders as such a step would impact the religious freedom of Hungarian communities “which is sacred and inviolable”. Earlier, a government official said Hungary rejected sanctions against religious leaders. Tristan Azbej, the state secretary for aiding persecuted Christians, told public television that whereas Hungary condemned Russia’s attack on Ukraine and supported various sanctions, the government supported brokering peace and “sees counterproductive, nonsensical sanctions as harmful”.

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LEFT WING 'IN CRISIS'

After their failure in the April general election, the coalition of opposition parties has fallen apart and, with the exception of the Democratic Coalition led by Ferenc Gyurcsány, the rivaling parties are in a state of crisis, according to an analysis of opinion polls carried out by the Twenty-First Century Institute. Relative newcomer Momentum has been "struggling with a permanent leadership crisis", the think-tank said. Founding member and former leader András Fekete-Győr still dominates the party and as group leader "he will put his stamp on it" while the departure of Anna Donáth as Momentum's leader "will cause uncertainty and managerial instability." The think-tank cited "information in the opposition press" suggesting an active connection between Gyurcsány's party and the youthful Momentum movement. Gyurcsány wants to form a DK-Momentum coalition similar to the pre-2010 Socialist-Liberal coalition, it added.

Both LMP and Párbeszéd identify as green parties, the analysis said, but "they can hardly be called real parties as they lack a mass base and are led by media politicians". LMP's leadership, it added, was "quite unstable", while the co-leaders of Párbeszéd indicated after the election that they would not run for office. Due to the uneasy election cooperation between the two green parties, environmental politics and

their party identities have faded, the think-tank said.

Regarding the conservative Jobbik party, the Twenty-First Century Institute said the party had lost its nationalist credentials after teaming up with the left wing and taking up its positions on key international issues, including relations with Hungarians beyond the border and the European Union. "The party is intellectually vacant," the think-tank said. Even though Jobbik recorded "its biggest loss" in the general election, Péter Jakab was re-elected leader at a recent party conference by a dwindling number of delegates, indicating a shrinking party organisation and membership. As radical party Mi Hazánk entered parliament for the first time, Jobbik's room for manoeuvre has narrowed, and it will be impossible for it to return to its former right-wing narrative, the institute said.

Only the Democratic Coalition is stable and free of a leadership crisis, according to the think-tank. It is the sole party with a stable organisational hinterland and the resources to develop a strong opposition policy, it added.

SOCIALIST MEP CALLS FOR NEW POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY PLAN

István Ujhelyi, MEP of the opposition Socialists, has said the government should prepare a new plan to access the European Union's post-pandemic economic recovery funds. Ujhelyi told

MTI that the European Commission had not granted its approval to the government's earlier plan, adding that "neither the document's content nor its passage in lack of broad consultations met [the commission's] criteria". He also added that the EU's reservations concerning the rule of law in Hungary had also contributed to the EC's decision to withhold Hungary's recovery funding. According to Ujhelyi, a new plan should focus on efforts to facilitate aid to make homes energy-efficient, while the government should introduce food vouchers for the poor, and make instant developments in health care "with regard to human resources in the first place". "I expect the government to finalise its new plan following deep and meaningful consultations with local governments and professional organisations," Ujhelyi said.

BLACK SWAN 2022 EXERCISES HELD IN SZOLNOK

The Black Swan 2022 international special operations military exercise concluded in Szolnok, in central Hungary, on Thursday, with a day of drill demonstrations. The NATO exercise involved over 700 troops from nine countries, along with 15 aircraft and other equipment, according to a statement.

Major General Tamás Sándor, inspector for Special Operations of the Hungarian Defence Forces Command, said at the Szolnok helicopter base that

all partner countries of the Regional Special Operations Component Command (R-SOCC) were involved in the exercise led by Hungary, including Austria, Croatia, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and the US also participated, he said. The R-SOCC last year reached initial operational capability, he said, adding that the aim of the Black Swan exercise was for the R-SOCC to deepen that capability and to be able to carry out special operations on the territories of three countries. The command aims to achieve full operational capability by the end of 2024 and to be able to go on stand-by from 2025, he said. The 12-day exercise is being held in Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia with some 715 soldiers having carried out more than 40 special operational tasks. The tasks are being synchronised and led by the Hungarian R-SOCC command, he added. Unlike last year, this year's exercise also saw the participation of Czech and Romanian troops in the performance of tasks in Hungary, Slovakia and Norway, the major general said.

The exercise mainly covered military areas, but operations were also carried out in 13 civilian areas, Sándor said, adding that the R-SOCC set up an international, Hungarian-led staff in Szolnok to lead the operations. Also, for the first time, Hungary's counter-terrorism force TEK was included in the exercise, he added.

POLICE: NEARLY 10,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON WEDS

Fully 5,246 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Wednesday, while another 4,382 from Ukraine crossed via Romania, the national police headquarters said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 544 people, the police website said on Thursday. 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 77 refugees, 43 children among them, by train, according to the municipal police website.

NBH DEPT GOV: HUNGARY ECONOMY ROBUST

Hungary's economy is robust, with first-quarter growth estimated over 8%, which could put full-year growth around 4%, central bank deputy governor Barnabás Virág has said. While the tight monetary policy remains, it is moving from an "aggressive" phase to something more "gradual", he told a conference organised by Világgazdaság. Consumer price inflation may peak in the third quarter and average annual inflation

was likely to be "around 9-10%" this year.

BIRD FLU DETECTED IN NE HUNGARY

Bird flu has been identified at a duck farm in Nyírbátor, in north-east Hungary, food safety authority Nébih said on Thursday. Protection and surveillance zones were established after the virus subtype H5N1 was detected at the farm. Over 93,000 ducks are being destroyed. Until now, recent outbreaks of bird flu have affected farms only in the south of Hungary, in Bács-Kiskun County and Csongrád-Csanád County.

BUDAPEST INTL AIRPORT REPORTS HIGHEST PASSENGER NUMBERS SINCE START OF PANDEMIC

Fully 997,454 passengers passed through Liszt Ferenc International Airport in April, the highest monthly number since the start of the pandemic, operator Budapest Airport said. The passenger count is an increase of 1,400 percent from April last year. Passenger numbers over Easter were 6% higher than over the rest of the month. Cargo volume at the airport amounted to 17,245 tonnes in April, up 3.3% from a year earlier.