

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV / Zsolt Szigetváry

National flag lowered at Parliament to mark defeat of 1956 uprising

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Commemorations of 1956 uprising defeat**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

**LMP presser on "green consultation"**

**Italian film festival begins in Budapest**

## TOP STORY

### EP DELEGATION VISITS MEDIA AUTHORITY

A delegation of the European Parliament's culture and education committee has paid a visit to Hungary's national media authority NMHH and held talks with its president, the communications directorate of the authority said.

András Koltay briefed the delegation led by Sabine Verheyen about the Hungarian media market, media pluralism and the application of EU laws in Hungary, NMHH said in a statement on Friday. Koltay also gave the delegation an outline of the authority's tasks and operation concerning the broadcast system, frequency management and supervision of postal services. The NMHH president told committee members that the authority operates as an independent organisation and carries out its supervisory and regulatory duties in line with EU laws and regulations. Asked about the local media market and news consumption, Koltay said that it was diverse with thousands of media outlets operating in Hungary. He described local news consumption also as diverse, noting availability of numerous sources of information. The situation of media pluralism in Hungary and the Hungarian position in connection with the planned European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and digital services were also discussed at the meeting.

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## **EP DELEGATION CALLS FOR CONTINUED DIALOGUE WITH HUNGARY**

The delegation of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) called for continued dialogue with Hungary "for better mutual understanding and to strengthen European values", at a press conference held at the end of a three-day visit to Hungary. Sabine Verheyen, an MEP sitting in the European People's Party (EPP), said they had held "fruitful, constructive, sometimes controversial" discussions. They will assess the experiences in Brussels and will draft a report in an attempt to "consider the complex situation and to avoid jumping to conclusions", Verheyen said. She said the committee objected to the "division of Hungarian media into pro-government and opposition outlets". Media should be politically and financially independent to be able to function as a check and balance, she said. The media is indispensable for a functional democracy, and so its independence must be guaranteed, Verheyen said. This means that all outlets have the right to praise or criticise the government or the opposition without being branded anti-government or pro-opposition, she added. The delegation also looked into the situation of public education in Hungary, Verheyen said. She said she discussed the much-critiqued Hungarian education system with Regional Development Minister Tibor Navracsics, who "has contributed much to European education policy" as

a European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports between 2014 and 2019.

The visit focused on "culture and media policy, artistic and academic freedom" in Hungary, according to an EP statement issued last week. The delegation met Culture and Innovation Minister János Csák, Regional Development Minister Tibor Navracsics, and Budapest deputy mayor Anett Bösz, besides NGOs and media outlets. "We want to discuss with all sides the recent developments in education, cultural and media policies in Hungary -- in the light of some concerns brought to the attention of our members by Hungary's academic and artistic community and civil society," Verheyen said before the visit.

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## **PRESIDENT NOVÁK RECEIVES HUNGARIAN ARMED FORCES COMMANDER**

President Katalin Novák received on Thursday Commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces, Romulus Ruszin-Szendi, and Director General of the Military National Security Service, János Béres. Ruszin-Szendi told journalists that he briefed Novák about the armed forces and its development and training activities. "Our situation is reassuring," he said, adding that Hungary was not under any direct threat in connection with the war in Ukraine. The job of the Hungarian army is to guarantee peace and a safe

environment for the Hungarian people, so soldiers are present at the borders and they are cooperating with police forces there, he said. István Kun Szabó, the president's chief military advisor, said the army normally submits quarterly reports to the president, but due to the war situation and tensions in the Western Balkans, consultations are planned to be held every two weeks.

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## **FINMIN: DECLINE IN HUNGARY TAX-TO-GDP RATIO LARGEST IN EU**

The decline in Hungary's tax-to-GDP ratio last year was the largest in the European Union, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said on Friday, citing data compiled by Eurostat. The Eurostat data show that the share of taxes and social contributions as a percentage of GDP in Hungary fell to 34.0% in 2021 from 36.1% in 2020. The average tax-to-GDP ratio for the EU as a whole stood at 41.7% in 2021. "The government continued to cut taxes this year, too, reducing employers' taxes by 600 billion forints (EUR 1.46bn), preserving the country's top position among EU countries in 2022 as well," Varga said on Facebook.

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## **FLAG FLOWN AT HALF- MAST IN FRONT OF PARLIAMENT**

Hungary's flag was hoisted and lowered to half-mast in front of Parliament on Friday morning, in commemoration of the anniversary

of the defeat of the 1956 uprising against Soviet rule. The flag was lowered in a military ceremony, with President Katalin Novák and army chief Major General Romulusz Ruszin-Szendi attending. Bence Rétvári, parliamentary state secretary of the interior ministry, and András Zs Varga, head of the top court Kúria, also attended the event.

### **OFFICIAL: GOVT SCHEME FOR HUNGARIAN VILLAGES REVERSES DWINDLING LOCAL POPULATIONS**

The government scheme for developing villages has led to the reversal of population declines in 1,200 localities, a government official said on Thursday in Felgyő, Csongrád-Csanád County, in southern Hungary. Alpár Gyopáros, opening a renovated school as part of the government's Hungarian Villages programme, said locals had testified to the demographic turnaround in the villages concerned. He said it was necessary to understand why local populations had shrunk and why young people had left the villages in order to provide solutions for reversing that trend. The programme's measures include providing financial support for families, developing secondary roads, rescuing local shops, and developing municipal public services linked to building renovations, while ensuring schools, kindergartens and medical clinics continue to be located in villages.

### **SOCIALISTS CALL FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO BENEFIT FROM TAO TAX RELIEF**

The opposition Socialists call for extending companies' entitlement for a relief of corporate culture and sports subsidies known as "tao" to grants offered to educational institutions, the head of parliament's budgetary committee said on Friday. Zoltán Vajda told an online press conference that under an amendment proposal his party submitted to next year's tax laws, corporate tax allowance would become available on support granted to educational and health-care institutions, in addition to the sports sector. Under the proposal, the institutions could use the support for the development and operation of infrastructure, the purchase of equipment and also for paying bonuses to their employees, he added.

The Socialists also propose reducing the VAT on electricity and natural gas services from 27% to 5%, which could result in savings of up to 100,000 forints (EUR 250) for families during the heating season, Vajda said. He said the Socialists considered it necessary to give exemption from personal income tax to those on minimum wage and to reduce personal income tax on low incomes. The lawmaker criticised the government's tax package, stating that nothing in it helped families and businesses in a difficult situation.

### **ISLAMIC STATE MEMBER DETAINED FOR EXTRADITION IN BUDAPEST**

A Budapest court has ordered the provisional arrest for the extradition of a man who is under an international warrant issued in Tajikistan for his activities as a mercenary, the metropolitan court has said. The international arrest warrant was issued by the Dushanbe regional court in May 2019, the statement said. The man travelled to Istanbul with his father in April 2016 and crossed the border illegally into Syria, where he joined the Islamic State terrorist organisation. He participated in war activities against state forces, which carries a sentence of up to 12 years in prison in Tajikistan. The court said at Thursday's hearing that it had assessed the conditions of extradition and provisional arrest for extradition exclusively. The man does not consent to being extradited, it added. The court ruling will be annulled if the official request for extradition is not received by Dec. 13. Additionally, the court ruled that the Tajik authorities must provide sufficient legal guarantees that no criminal proceedings unrelated to the matter at hand will be carried out against the man and they must state if a death penalty could apply according to local laws.

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## **OVER 11,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON THURSDAY**

Fully 5,827 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Thursday, while another 5,277 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 191 people, ORFK told MTI on Friday. 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 received 61 people, 23 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

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## **HOME BUILDING PERMIT ISSUES RISE BY 16% IN Q1-Q3**

The number of home building permits issued in Hungary rose by an annual 15.8% to 25,984 in the first three quarters of this year, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Friday. The number of permits issued for homes in Budapest went up by 99.3% to 8,400, while the number issued for homes in county seats and cities with populations over 50,000 edged up 1.0% to 4,517. In the country's

smallest settlements, the number of home building permits issued slipped 2.0% to 6,161. Late in July, Hungary's government announced a two-year extension, until the end of 2024, of a temporary 5% preferential VAT rate for home construction. The number of home completions rose by 7.7% to 13,617 in Q1-Q3. Home completions in the capital fell by 10.1% to 4,533, but rose everywhere else. Detached homes accounted for 46% of completions. Homes in multi-storey buildings with multiple dwellings made up 42% of the total and homes in residential parks 9%. The average new home size was close to 94 sqm, nearly 7 sqm more than in the same period a year before. The share of homes built by businesses stood at 62%.

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## **LARGEST HUNGARIAN EXHIBITION IN GERMANY SINCE 1989 OPENS IN BERLIN**

Magyar Modern - Hungarian Art in Berlin 1910-1930, the largest Hungarian art exhibition in Germany since the 1989-90 change in political system, opened on Thursday in the Berlinische Galerie. The show of more than 200 paintings, graphics, sculptures, photographs and other artworks

features Hungarian artists, among the largest communities of foreign artists working in Berlin at the time, and their contributions to the cosmopolitan culture in the capital of the Weimar Republic. On display are works by Aurél Bernáth, Béni Ferenczy, Lajos Kassák, László Moholy-Nagy and József Rippl-Rónai, among others, from Friday until Feb. 6. The Budapest Museum of Fine Arts, the Hungarian National Gallery, and the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Berlin have taken part in organising the exhibition and accompanying events.

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## **MICHELIN STARS AWARDED TO RESTAURANTS OUTSIDE BUDAPEST FOR FIRST TIME**

French restaurant guide Michelin has published its first country-wide selection for Hungary which features restaurants outside Budapest for the first time.

According to the National Selection of Hungary, Michelin's anonymous inspectors have awarded two stars to Platán Gourmet in Tata, in central Hungary, and to Stand in Budapest. A single Michelin star has been granted to 42 in Esztergom, in northern Hungary, and to Babel, Borkonyha, Costes, Essencia, Rumour and Salt in Budapest.