

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Balogh

New MOL headquarters

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**President Novák in Iraq**

**EU justice ministers meet in Brussels**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

## TOP STORY

# HUNGARY HELPING UKRAINE 'WHEREVER NEEDED'

Hungary has been pulling its weight in aiding and supporting Ukraine since the start of the war, a government official has said.

Help is being sent to wherever Hungary's Ukrainian partners need it, the parliamentary state secretary for foreign affairs said in Ukraine. Neither Transcarpathia nor the rest of Ukraine is being left without help, as Hungary is doing everything in its power to ease the suffering of the Ukrainian people, Levente Magyar said in Chop (Csap) while delivering power generators and food intended for the recently liberated city of Kherson. The southern Ukrainian city and its surrounding areas are without power, water or heating, Magyar said, noting that Ukrainian MP Yulia Hryshyna and Transcarpathia Governor Viktor Mykyta had requested aid for the region. The Hungarian government immediately reallocated 250,000 euros in funding to procure the necessary aid, which has been delivered in collaboration with the Hungarian Ecumenical Charity, Magyar said. Meanwhile, Magyar delivered 100 laptops together with Aleksandr Kostuchenko, the deputy minister for education, to a Hungarian and a Ukrainian-language school in Berehove (Beregszász), with 250 more to be sent to other parts of the country.

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## **OFFICIAL: HUNGARY'S AID WILL HELP IMPROVE ONLINE EDUCATION**

Humanitarian aid provided by Hungary would help improve online education, parliamentary state secretary for foreign affairs, Levente Magyar, said, noting that more and more schoolchildren were being forced to attend class this way due to air raid warnings and power outages. Magyar also handed over two minivans for Bucha -- as agreed with local leaders in the summer. Bucha Deputy Mayor Serhiy Shepetko noted that the Hungarian Ecumenical Charity had been the first to deliver humanitarian aid to the town after Russian forces retreated, and aid was constantly coming in. Magyar said Hungary has rebuilt and renovated a dozen institutions in Ukraine, adding that next year it will begin building a 10 million euro multifunctional local council service centre in Bucha.

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## **PARLT ADOPTS 5TH NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION PLAN**

Parliament has approved the energy ministry's report on the implementation of Hungary's 4th Environment Protection Plan and adopted the 5th environmental programme. The new plan is aimed at improving Hungary's natural environment, promoting protection of the quality of life of families and

communities, protecting natural values and resources, as well as making the economy greener and more circular, the ministry said. The overall aim is to make Hungary one of the most liveable countries in Europe by 2030 in which "to live and work in a safe and clean environment".

Measures outlined in the programme will contribute to easing Hungary's dependency on certain energy sources and to increasing its competitiveness. Increasing recirculation of waste and reducing the volume of illegal waste, as well as promoting sustainable lifestyles and consumption, are key objectives. The plan also aims at reducing pollutants and greenhouse gases, preserving biological diversity and re-cultivating the damaged natural environment, promoting environment-friendly transport and the use of renewable energies, the ministry said. The government plans to use a large amount of funds from the European Union's 2021-27 budget to finance water management projects, building and running circular economic systems, renewable energies and other key areas of environment protection, it added.

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## **FINMIN: CHURCHES GOVT'S STRATEGIC PARTNERS**

The government has considered churches its strategic partners ever since it entered into power in 2010 and will continue to support them,

the finance minister said in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary, addressing a church renovation project's closing ceremony. The Tiszántúl Diocese of the Reformed Church has spent a total of 50 billion forints (EUR 121m) on church renovation projects over the past twelve years, Mihály Varga said at the event. Under a project dubbed Orando et Laborando, the renovation of six churches has been carried out with the EU's 1.5 billion forint non-refundable support, the minister said. He noted that the government has supported the construction and renovation of more than 3,000 churches in Hungary and another 860 in neighbouring countries with the provision of 220 billion forints since 2010.

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## **COURT REJECTS APPEAL FOR REVIEW OF RULES GOVERNING TEACHER STRIKES**

The Constitutional Court has turned down an appeal by opposition lawmakers seeking the top court's review of the rules governing minimum services teachers must provide during a strike action. In its ruling, the court said "stipulations defining minimum services during a strike action in schools are not against the constitution", and noted that strike actions were illegal with public service providers "whose operations fundamentally affect the population" unless a minimum level of services was ensured. They also said those minimum

school services were outlined in a 2022 law concerning Hungary's "special legal order". According to the opposition appeal, the effective regulations restrict strike rights to the extent that a strike "no longer has a potential to exert pressure" on the employer. "The regulations unnecessarily and disproportionately curb teachers' constitutional right to strike, while they are also in contravention with international agreements."

**ORBÁN ATTENDS MOL BOARD MEETING**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Thursday attended oil and gas company MOL's board meeting at the invitation of the management. CEO Zsolt Hernádi received Orbán, Energy Minister Csaba Lantos, Economic Development Minister Márton Nagy, political director Balázs Orbán and state secretary János Nagy, who attended a meeting on MOL's long-term business strategy, the effects of the Ukraine war, the energy crisis and European Union sanctions as well as Hungary's energy strategy, the PM's press chief said. Hernádi also showed the delegation around the new MOL headquarters, he added.

MOL opened its new headquarters, Hungary's highest building, in the Kopászi-gát area of south Budapest. MOL President-CEO Zsolt Hernádi told the opening event that 2,500 people will be working in the building to ensure the company's growth with

the further aim of securing Hungary's energy supplies.

The building was designed by FintaStudio, the Hungarian partner of Foster and Partners, and the interior design was created by Kinzo and the Minusplus planning and design office, he added. Construction was carried out by Market Építő. Director in charge of consumer services, Péter Ratatics, noted the building is 143m high, with total floor space of 86,000sqm. He added that the construction was financed by MOL from own resources, but he declined to reveal the total cost.

**FIDESZ MP TURNS TO AUDIT OFFICE OVER OPPOSITION'S FOREIGN FUNDING**

János Halász, deputy parliamentary group leader of ruling Fidesz, has turned to the State Audit Office (ÁSZ) in connection with the foreign funding received by the opposition prior to the spring general election. "More worrying details have emerged about the foreign financing of the left," Halász said in a video message, adding that the matter raised suspicions of illegal party financing. Halász said he has asked ÁSZ to investigate whether the law had been breached in the matter and to take the necessary steps if it uncovered illegal activity. Citing declassified secret service reports, the MP noted that the civil organisation known as Action for Democracy had transferred 1.8 billion forints (EUR 4.5m) worth of funding to the opposition

Everyone's Hungary Movement (MMM). The organisation transferred 1.4 billion from that sum to political consulting firm DatAdat, he said. Halász said MMM's financial records indicated it had spent over 172 million forints on social media ads during the election campaign period between January 1 and April 3, whereas their official campaign report indicated spending of 530 million. MMM spent the money it received on political activity, Halász said, arguing that the social media ads had been run in support of the opposition's candidates. He noted that under Hungarian law, parties are not allowed to accept any form of financial support from foreign organisations or citizens. Yet one of Action for Democracy's key figures, Dávid Korányi, who is chief advisor to Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony, recently admitted that the opposition had also received donations from institutions and not just small donors, Halász said. Meanwhile, Zsolt Wintermantel, group leader of ruling Fidesz in the Budapest city assembly, said he has sent a letter to Karácsony asking what duties Korányi had performed and how much he had received in remuneration. "It is publicly known that Dávid Korányi was chief advisor to the mayor and had organised the donation drive and the Action for Democracy background institution from America, which provided the left-wing's campaign with 3 billion forints," Wintermantel said, adding that Fidesz wanted to know the details of Korányi's contract, his responsibilities, whether

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he had been paid for his work and if he had been given accommodation and a travel allowance. Fidesz's Budapest chapter said on Facebook that Karácsony had sacked Korányi in response to public pressure but still owed Budapest residents answers.

### **OFFICIAL: GOVT 'COMMITTED' TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, SURVEY PLAYS MAJOR ROLE**

An interior ministry official has said the government is committed to improving the quality of education, and it is important to understand the opinion of parents. A questionnaire sent to parents canvasses their views on the way teachers evaluate students based on their own experiences, Zoltán Maruzsa, the state secretary for public education, said on Thursday. He said this was a vital type of feedback concerning the performance and development of students. "Evaluation is a way of shaping a child's character and attitude," he said, adding that more than 100,000 parents have returned the questionnaire.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ ANNOUNCES HUF 18 BN NISSIN FOODS INVESTMENT EXPANSION**

Japanese food company Nissin Foods is spending 18 billion forints (EUR 43.8m) to expand its plant in Kecskemét, in central Hungary,

implementing one among many investments that have helped Hungary "pass the stress test" and maintain growth despite world economic challenges, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said. The government is supporting the investment, which will create 50 jobs, with a 1.3 billion forint grant, Péter Szijjártó said. Nissin Foods buys 56% of raw materials from local SMEs, and the investment will bolster them too, he said.

Szjijártó said that despite the "double whammy" of the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the Hungarian food industry has avoided a comprehensive crisis. At the same time, "as in energy policy, only those countries are really safe that can satisfy demand from domestic produce," he said. Hungarian food products are "very innovative and internationally competitive, and the government is committed to ensuring as much support as possible", he said.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: RAILWAYS VITAL FOR HUNGARIAN ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Rail transport and haulage are vitally important for the growth of the Hungarian economy, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Thursday, welcoming the launch of a joint company producing control and signalling equipment by Hungary's V-Híd Építő and Czech market-leader AZD Praha. Establishment of the Hungarian majority-owned JV V4SIL will not only create jobs but will also

guarantee the future supply of skilled workers, he said.

Szjijártó said that among the lessons to be learnt from the series of crises that typified recent years is the growing value of rail transport and haulage. During the coronavirus pandemic, supply chains often broke down, but the railways "proved to be crisis-proof", he added. The events of the recent period also demonstrated the extent to which vulnerable countries that were unable to keep their critical infrastructure under their own control had become, he said. He also noted the railways' favourable environmental aspects, adding that "if we're able to transfer a large part of transport to railways, then we'll be able to cut down a significant source of environmental pollution."

### **BUDGET DEFICIT HUF 3,466.4 BN IN NOV**

Hungary's cash flow-based budget, excluding local councils, had a 3,466.4 billion forint (EUR 8.4bn) deficit at the end of November, the finance ministry said in a preliminary release of data. The deficit widened by 876.0 billion forints from the previous month. The central budget deficit reached 3,367.2 billion forints at the end of November. The social security funds were 389.7 billion forints in the red, while the separate state funds had a surplus of 290.5 billion. The full-year cash flow-based budget deficit target is 3,152.7 billion forints.

The ministry said the balance of the 2022 state budget was sustainable

and the deficit target of 4.9% of GDP achievable. Meanwhile, it noted that pensions had increased again in November by 4.5% following earlier top-ups of 3.9% and 5%, bringing the overall pension hike this year to 14%. Hungary's 2.5 million pensioners have also received a bonus worth a total 23.5 billion forints, the ministry said. Government spending on pensions reached a 4,421.0 billion forints by the end of November, the ministry added.

### **TRADE DEFICIT OVER EUR 1 BN IN OCT**

Hungary posted a 1.0 billion euro trade deficit in October, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data. The gap widened from 745 million euros in September, but narrowed from 1.580 billion in August, the largest in a series of consecutive monthly deficits running for more than a year, an anomaly for Hungary where trade surpluses are the norm. Exports rose by an annual 21.0% to 12.4 billion euros, while imports increased by 25.7% to 13.4 billion. For the period January-October, Hungary's exports increased by an annual 19.9%, while imports rose by 29.5%. The trade deficit reached 6.809 billion euros for the period.

### **HUNGARY INFLATION 22.5% IN NOV**

Consumer prices in Hungary rose by an annual 22.5% in November, accelerating from a 21.1% increase

in the previous month on higher household energy and food prices, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Thursday. Food prices rose by 43.8% as the price of bread jumped by 81.8%, egg prices by 102.9% and dairy products by 79.0%. The government earlier rolled back prices for a number of staples, including pork, cooking oil and flour, in an effort to dampen inflation. Household energy prices increased by 65.9%, lifted by new consumption restrictions for regulated utilities prices in force from Aug 1. Gas prices rose by 124.3% and electricity prices by 28.3%. Consumer durable prices increased by 14.4%. Prices of spirits and tobacco products increased by 13.8%. Month on month, CPI was 1.8%.

### **HUNGARY SPENDING HUF 1,000 BILLION A YEAR ON R+D+I**

Hungary spends approaching 1,000 billion forints a year on research, development and innovation, and if it keeps this pace up it will be among the world's top ten nations in this respect in 2030, the head of the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH) said. Addressing a medical conference in Budapest, Zoltán Birkner said that last year the country had spent 907 billion forints (EUR 2.19bn) on R+D, 18% more than in the preceding year. Over the past few years efforts to beef up Hungary's innovation capacities have focused on strengthening

R+D, establishing a new structure at universities, and promoting closer ties between research institutes and market players, he said. The NKFIH head underlined the need to establish strong links between sciences on the one hand, and the economy and industry on the other, namely between the generation and the utilisation of knowledge.

### **SOME 8,500 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON WEDNESDAY**

Fully 4,682 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Wednesday, while another 3,755 crossed from Romania, the National Police Headquarters (ORFK) said. Police issued 30-day residency permits to 121 people, ORFK told MTI on Thursday. Budapest received 20 people, 11 children among them, who travelled by train, ORFK said.

### **DEPUTY PM, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR PRESENT RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS AWARD**

Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and Israeli Ambassador Yakov Hadas-Handelsman awarded the Righteous Among the Nations posthumously to Mihály Kiss, a Salesian monk, in Budapest on Thursday. Addressing the ceremony, Semjén said: "The Holocaust showed not only the unbridled evil, but also the power of outstanding humanity." "We must

remember all those who saved the lives of others by risking their own as a Christian, and those who found the roots of their own faith in the tragedy of their Jewish brothers," he said. Righteous Among the Nations Award is the highest honour expressing the gratitude of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. It is granted to non-Jews in recognition of their humanity and courage in saving the life of Jews by risking their own, Hadas-Handelsman noted. Mihály Kiss earned the award for his outstanding courage in saving Jewish children by hiding them in the chapel of the Salesians' community building in northern Budapest. Kiss is the third Salesian monk to receive the award. The ceremony was attended by Michael Wallace Banach, the apostolic nuncio.

### TEN HUNGARIANS APPREHENDED IN EUROPEAN RAID

Hungarian police have interrogated 10 people on charges of human trafficking and forced labour as part of an international operation coordinated by Europol, the National Investigation Bureau's Rapid Response Unit (KR NNI) said. The operation carried out between October 24 and 30 was aimed at clamping down on rings specialised in human trafficking, sexual

exploitation and running panhandlers, the unit said on the website police.hu.

Local police authorities in Baranya, Fejér, Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Tolna counties carried out checks on 2,887 people, 1,811 vehicles, 3,344 documents and 293 spots, including locations of interest such as bars, massage parlours and farms. They interrogated ten suspects, all of them Hungarian nationals, six of whom were charged with human trafficking and the other four with forced labour. In the operation, 13 victims have been identified. Seven of them, five girls and two women were victims of sexual exploitation while another woman and five men were forced labour victims, KR NNI said.

### KÖVÉR MARKS 220TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING OF NATIONAL MUSEUM

For more than two centuries, the National Museum in Budapest has represented "one of the bastions of the defence of the Hungarian nation's spirit," Speaker of Parliament László Kövér said on Thursday, marking the 220th anniversary of the founding of the museum. Kövér attended a conference to mark the museum's anniversary and the inauguration of plaques to three of its past directors:

László Fejerpataky, Bálint Homan and István Zichy. He said the museum must remain "a modern bastion of the defence of the Hungarian nation's spirit" with a reach throughout the Carpathian Basin. He said the financial resources required for the museum to fulfil its tasks must be provided, and no matter how difficult the upcoming period might be for the budget, "we must protect our spiritual bastions from being acquired by foreign hands".

### SCHÜSSEL HANDED PETOFI AWARD AT HOUSE OF TERROR MUSEUM

Former Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel was handed the Petofi Award at the House of Terror Museum on Thursday evening. Gergely Gulyás, the prime minister's chief of staff, said at the ceremony that Schüssel was "at heart a freedom fighter". In 1998, Schüssel paved the way for EU membership talks with Hungary and was a reliable negotiator who backed the country's swiftest possible entry to the EU, Gulyás said, adding that he "represented the Europe that we still wanted to join". He added that whereas Brussels today was "characterised by incompetence and a lack of principle", Schüssel had been guided by his convictions.