

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



President Novák meets Hungarian troops serving in Iraq

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

## TOP STORY

### MEP: EU 'IMPOSING ITS WILL ON HUNGARIANS'

Fidesz MEP Tamás Deutsch has said Brussels bureaucrats are intent on imposing their will on Hungarians by whatever means possible when it comes to sanctions, illegal migration, and changes to the child protection law.

Deutsch told public radio that Hungary had fulfilled all of its 17 commitments, yet the European Commission was sticking to the same punishment recommendations against Hungary it had made to the European Council at the start of negotiations. The EC's problem, he said, was not with Hungary's 17 commitments or the rule of law, but Hungary's objection to Brussels forcing its stance on migration, sanctions, and the child protection law.

Commenting on Belgian liberal MEP Guy Verhofstadt's suggestion that Hungary's funding should be withdrawn each time it opposes EU policy, Deutsch accused Verhofstadt of being a "Hungary-hater". Deutsch likened what was happening within the European Union to domestic violence within the family, "and domestic violence is one of the most serious crimes". The ruling party politician said that 85-90% of Hungarians agreed that Hungary should reject illegal migration, protect its borders, and maintain the child protection law. They also reject "catastrophic" sanctions, he added.

## **DEUTSCH: C EUROPEAN STATES PUNISHED FOR 'NOT YIELDING TO BRUSSELS DEMANDS'**

Tamás Deutsch, an MEP of ruling Fidesz, told public broadcaster Kossuth Rádió that Brussels was "lying" when it talked about European values and protecting democracy by taking action against Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians and Croats over the rule of law. The bureaucrats' real problem with the countries -- Hungary and Poland in particular -- was their unwillingness to yield to the demands of Brussels, he added. Deutsch slammed "Brussels" for attaching "imaginable and unimaginable conditions" to Romania and Bulgaria's Schengen accession, even though the two countries had fulfilled all the conditions. Meanwhile "cocky, arrogant, western member states" had stymied their Schengen membership nevertheless, he said. Referring to a bribe scandal involving a vice-president of the European Parliament, he said it was becoming clear that the European left wing was receiving "incredibly large sums of money" from beyond the EU, and he also referred to a similar case involving Hungarian left-wing opposition politicians. Meanwhile, the Fidesz MEP said, the European and Hungarian left wing were the loudest complainers when it came to highlighting external corruption and interference.

## **EC ASSESSMENT SHOWS HUNGARIAN REFORMS INSUFFICIENT TO UNBLOCK FUNDS**

The European Commission said on Friday that according to its latest assessment, Hungary's changes in legislation adopted to address the EC's rule of law concerns and the use of European Union funding have not been sufficient to fully unblock the funds. Despite 17 remedial measures introduced by Hungary to address the concerns, "the overall assessment by the Commission was that, notwithstanding the steps taken by Hungary, the overall risk for the Union's budget remains unchanged," the statement released by the EC showed. As a result, the Brussels body maintained its earlier proposal to suspend one-third (7.5 billion euros) of cohesion funding allocated for Hungary in 2021-2027.

## **PRESIDENT NOVÁK MEETS IRAQI COUNTERPART IN BAGHDAD**

Hungarian President Katalin Novák met her Iraqi counterpart in Baghdad on Friday, as part of her four-day official visit to Iraq. "We just had a historic meeting with Abdul Latif Rashid, President of Iraq, as no Hungarian President has ever visited Baghdad before. We both agreed that international terrorism is our common enemy and we condemn all

of its forms. Hungary's commitment is shown not only in words, but also in deeds, as Hungarian military forces participate in the fight against the Islamic State," Novák said in an English-language post on Facebook.

The two presidents discussed the Hungarian government's Hungary Helps aid programme designed to support the most vulnerable groups of society including children, women and persecuted Christians, Novák's office said in a statement. "We firmly believe that help must be provided where trouble emerges instead of bringing troubled people to Europe," the office quoted her as saying.

Novák discussed with the Iraqi president the Russian-Ukrainian war, and they were in agreement that the sides should make peace as soon as possible. The Hungarian president afterwards travelled on to Tel Skuf where she participated in a community prayer for peace. Novák also visited a kindergarten in the town in northern Iraq where Hungary has helped rebuild several residential houses, schools and a church destroyed by ISIS. Later on, Novák visited Alqosh and met Lara Yussif Zara, the mayor.

Accompanying Novak, Tristan Azbej, the foreign ministry's state secretary for aiding persecuted Christians and the coordinator of the Hungary Helps scheme, told public media that "due to our Christian identity, we stand up for persecuted Christians, the most persecuted religious community in the world, with 300 million of its followers suffering persecution as a

result of their beliefs". He noted that in Tel Skuf that Hungary has provided a humanitarian emergency aid to the town and contributed to rebuilding 900 residential houses allowing nearly 1,000 families return to their homes.

Later, in Erbil, President Katalin Novák met Hungarian troops serving there and told them Hungarians wanted peace in their homeland and on their borders. On the visit to the base in Iraqi Kurdistan, where she was received by contingent commander Gábor Hraska, Novák "conveyed the respect and thanks of the Hungarian people", and warned of the possible escalation of the 10 month war in Ukraine. Hungary needs its troops to maintain and preserve peace, she said. Further, Hungary needs experienced soldiers who have useful practical experience as well as theoretical knowledge for the protection of the homeland, she said. International terrorism is another common enemy, she said. "You are fighting against international terrorism here, in Kurdistan." Tamás Vargha, a state secretary of the defence ministry, also greeted the troops.

The president and Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of the autonomous Kurdistan Region, inaugurated the Meltho International School on Saturday. "We Hungarians are a people of action," Novák said, "and now we are here to support you and your communities." Hungary exercises humility in foreign relations, Novák said. "We are respectful and do not lecture others. We want to understand and get to know our partners," she

said. Hungary also sees democracy as a priority, and condemns all forms of violence and terrorism, she added. The Hungary Helps programme embodies the commitment to helping local communities, "facing challenges where they arise rather than forcing people and communities to leave their homelands", she said. The newly inaugurated school will hopefully contribute to the development necessary to maintain a strong community, she said. "As the first female president of my country, I hope that opening this school will also contribute to strengthening the role of women," she added.

Barzani thanked Hungary's help and "Christian brotherliness" in "investing in the future of the people of our region", and thanked Novák for her visit. Novák also met Yazidi women, assault survivors at the hands of the Islamic State. "Yazidi women who were abducted and assaulted along with thousands of others by the Islamic State solely because of their religious faith, have shared heart-breaking stories with me. Hungary will help in that situation too, through the Hungary Helps programme," she said on Facebook.

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### **DEMONSTRATION FOR EDUCATION HELD IN FRONT OF PUBLIC MEDIA HEADQUARTERS**

A demonstration by students, teachers, parents and supporters was held in front of the public media MTVA

headquarters in Budapest on Friday evening. Participants at the event organised by the Unified Student Front and the Pala Movement demanded trustworthy and objective programming by the public media which, they said, failed to inform the public about the real situation of public education and did not let them express their opinion on the matter.

Student speakers said the MTVA headquarters was "a symbol of oppression and silence", and they smashed a television set with a hammer on a stage in front of the building.

The demonstrators gathered earlier in the day at Flórián Square and marched to MTVA's headquarters chanting "Free country!", "Free education", "Pay our teachers" and "Silence is no order". Many of the demonstrators carried Hungarian and EU flags and flags symbolising chequered shirts, an outfit that has become associated with teacher demonstrations, as well as flags of the teachers' unions PDSZ and PSZ. They carried lit torches and demanded the resignation of the interior minister, who is at the helm of the ministry in charge of education.

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### **SOCIALISTS CALL ON GOVT TO DISCLOSE CONTENT OF CABINET MEETING**

The Socialists have called on the government to disclose the contents of the Saturday cabinet meeting, also attended by Zoltán Maruzsa, the state

secretary for public education, and Péter Horváth, the head of the National Teacher Association. Socialist co-head Ágnes Kunhalmi told an online press conference held in front of the interior ministry on Sunday that the party wanted to know “the prime minister’s views on the protests in the sector and their dire [working] conditions”. She said the protests were fuelled by the low wages and professional issues, but also by “the government’s failure to keep their promise” to raise wages apace with the minimum wage. “Had the prime minister kept his promise to teachers, they would have had an 80% wage hike by now,” she said.

The government is expecting European Union resources to fund wage hikes, but the “issue is one of sovereignty as education is a competency of member states,” she said. “Since the government is not divulging what happened at the cabinet meeting on Saturday, the Socialists are calling on Zoltán Maruzsa and Péter Horváth to tell the public what they told the prime minister,” she said.

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### **CBANK TO FILE CRIMINAL REPORT OVER DK DEPT LEADER’S REMARKS**

The National Bank of Hungary (NBH) is filing a criminal report over remarks by opposition Democratic Coalition deputy leader László Varju, the central bank said on Friday. The bank said in a statement that at a press conference earlier on Friday, Varju

had “intentionally misinterpreted” central bank governor György Matolcsy’s presentation at a recent meeting of parliament’s economic committee. Varju’s “false claims endanger public trust in financial stability”, the statement said. The central bank will take legal action and firmly calls on DK to retract those “irresponsible statements made for political profiteering, and refrain from spreading fake news in future”, it said.

The bank cited a stability report it published in late November showing that the Hungarian banking system has robust capital reserves and operates with considerable liquid assets. NBH calculations and stress test data show that banks’ shock resilience is excellent and they are in significantly better condition than at the time of the 2008 crisis, it added. “These are the bare facts and everything else is intentional dissemination of misleading information and fake news,” NBH said.

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) later called on the government to reassure bank clients they will not touch their savings, and DK also accused the ruling parties of threatening to strip Varju of his parliamentary positions. DK shadow prime minister Klára Dobrev told an online press conference on Saturday that Varju earlier had called on the cabinet to reassure people over the security of their savings.

Earlier this week, Varju cited central bank governor György Matolcsy as saying that Hungary would be among the five most vulnerable countries

in the world. Further, Matolcsy said inflation would be between 14 and 18% in 2023, and added that there was no longer coherence between the government’s economic policymaking and the central bank.

Dobrev insisted that at the news of Varju’s press conference, Fidesz had threatened to strip him of his positions in parliament and to launch a criminal investigation. The National Bank of Hungary (NBH) also filed a complaint against Varju, she said. “We reject all government threats; neither the shadow cabinet nor DK can be intimidated,” she said, calling on the government to clarify whether they “agree with Matolcsy’s assessment” and whether they want to “access private savings”.

In response, Fidesz said the leftist party was “acting on orders and helping the attack on the forint ... by spreading fearmongering messages and fake news”. “The speculators of Soros’s ilk earn money by attacking the forint. [Dobrev] is spreading fake news because it is in the interest of her clients,” the statement said.

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### **FIDESZ MP TURNS TO TAX OFFICE NAV WITH COMPLAINT ABOUT FOREIGN CAMPAIGN FINANCING OF LEFT WING**

Fidesz’s deputy group leader has raised a complaint with the national tax office NAV in connection with the foreign campaign financing of Hungary’s left wing. In a video

statement, János Halász noted that several of Hungary's authorities and secret services are in the midst of examining the case, adding that many questions had yet to be answered. He accused the leader of the Everybody's Hungary Movement (MMM), Péter Márky-Zay, and other people on the left of successively contradicting themselves. At first they "kept quiet" about the "dollars rolling in", before admitting to receiving funds in the hundreds of millions of forints. Later, it was revealed that money flowing in had reached 3 billion forints (EUR 7.6), he added. Márky-Zay, the opposition's candidate for prime minister, insisted that the sums had accrued through micro-donations, yet foreign NGO Action for Democracy had contradicted this statement, and finally he admitted that institutional donors had also made donations, he said.

Halász further accused groups linked to the chief adviser of Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, of channelling 1.85 billion forints to various recipients in Hungary. Oraculum 2020 Kft received 1 billion while Gordon Bajnai's DatAdat received 148 million from the NGO. Also, he said MMM had made transfers totalling 1.4 billion forints to DatAdat's Austrian parent company. The Fidesz politician said there were well-founded suspicions that budget fraud had been committed. He added that the tax office should clarify the details of the case and take criminal action if required.

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## **SOCIALISTS START PREPARATIONS FOR 2024 ELECTIONS**

The Socialist Party has started to prepare for the local and European parliamentary elections in 2024, the party leadership said on Saturday, after the final board meeting of the year. István Hiller, the board's chairman, told an online press briefing that the party was ready to "cooperate with all democratic forces ... to weaken the Fidesz regime." Co-leader Ágnes Kunhalmi noted that the local elections will be held on the same day as the European parliamentary elections in 2024. The opposition will be successful only if they field one candidate against the Fidesz candidate in each constituency, she said, and proposed primary elections to select them.

Co-leader Imre Komjáthi spoke of the importance of the European parliamentary elections for Hungary, which he said was "isolated" in the EU. "Fidesz MEPs have eroded its credibility". The Socialists are ready to run on their own, but are open to cooperation with other "democratic opposition" parties, he said.

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## **JOBBIK: FIDESZ SHOULD NOT RISK HUNGARY'S EU FUNDS**

Fidesz should not risk losing Hungarian EU funds which "belong to Hungarian citizens", Brenner Koloman, the opposition Jobbik party's deputy

group leader, said on Sunday. The ruling Fidesz party's parliamentary majority has endorsed an "extreme anti-European political statement" that "puts EU funding at risk", Koloman told an online press briefing on Wednesday. He said Jobbik rejected extreme positions, so it holds that neither a United States of Europe nor "the extreme anti-European standpoint" of Fidesz was in the interests of Hungarians.

The Jobbik politician said 12 years ago Hungary became a "single-party state approaching authoritarian countries as Russia, Turkey and China, while Fidesz went as far as attacking members of the German or Dutch parliaments." Jobbik allies itself with the position of the founding fathers of the EU -- Christian European politicians who believed in the social market economy and good cooperation between European nations, he said. "The rule of law is an old European conservative value," he said, calling for "balanced civic democracy" and action against "Fidesz corruption". Only then will Hungary secure its EU funding, he added.

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## **BRUSSELS PROPOSING EXCISE TAX HIKE ON FUELS, GOVT SEEKS DEROGATION**

The European Commission has proposed raising excise tax on fuel, according to business daily Világgazdaság, adding that Hungary is seeking an exemption until end-

2023 from the obligation. If the EC refuses Hungary's request, the tax for petrol would rise from the current 0.28 euros per litre to 0.6 euros, and for diesel from 0.26 to 0.33 euros, resulting in a tax rise of 32.5 forints, based on the official exchange rate on Oct. 3, the paper said. The EC made the related request on July 8, but considering the war and the energy crisis, it then offered member states a 6-month opt-out. Portugal and Sweden have secured a derogation until the end of the year. The paper said it was possible the EC would only grant Hungary a suspension of a maximum of six months. The government has said a longer period is necessary owing to the unfavourable forint exchange rate in October, among other reasons. A derogation must be considered within three months of receipt of all the related information.

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### **AROUND 9,500 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON SAT**

Fully 5,463 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Saturday, while 4,120 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 168 people. Altogether 134 refugees, 57 children among them, arrived in Budapest by train, ORFK said on Sunday.

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### **HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL TO LAUNCH WORLD-CLASS CLINICAL RESEARCH TRAINING AT SEMMEWEIS UNI**

Boston's Harvard Medical School (HMS) and the Semmelweis University (SE) on Friday signed a partnership

agreement on HMS launching a postgraduate clinical scholars research training programme at Budapest's SE next year, SE said. Applicants admitted to the programme running between July 2023 and June 2026 will participate in live workshops and webinar classes to learn skills that are essential in high-level clinical research projects in areas including epidemiology, biostatistics, medical ethics and professional leadership, SE said in a statement. Under the agreement, HMS will provide the curriculum and oversee its implementation whereas SE will contribute 50% of 50 scholars' grant of participation each year. The Semmelweis University has earmarked 250,000 dollars in contribution for the programme, it said. The agreement was signed by Ajay K. Singh, director of HMS's training programme, and Béla Merkely, the rector of the Semmelweis University.