

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tiborllyés

Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky (L) and command officers at the run commemorating the 175th anniversary of Hungarian Armed Forces

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**EU defence ministers meet in Stockholm**

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Stats office releases data on Feb consumer prices**

**Events marking International Women's Day**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

## TOP STORY

# HUNGARY 'SUPPORTING LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES'

Hungary is ready to continue taking a fair share in supporting the world's least developed countries to strengthen their stability and prevent future waves of migration, the foreign minister said in Qatar on Tuesday.

Péter Szijjártó told a UN conference in Doha that the negative effects of the war in neighbouring Ukraine directly affected Hungary, the ministry said in a statement. Though regional, the war's consequences are felt around the world, he added. He said the war highlighted the fragility of the existing international system, with serious challenges appearing in global food and energy supplies which could lead to security risks. "Food shortages and increasing energy prices could lead to serious security risks in countries that have a low level of development and lack stability," he said. This could easily lead to the spread of extreme ideologies and a growing sense of danger, which are among the main triggers of mass illegal migration, he said.

Europe faces serious security risks from the east, and it would barely handle a challenge from the south in the form of increased illegal migration, he added. "In the light of the war in Ukraine, it is more important than ever to support the least developed countries to prevent further mass waves of illegal migration," he said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY TO ISSUE \$250 M CREDIT LINE FOR LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

Hungary has announced 250 million dollars-worth of aid credit to improve the situation in water management, health care and food security, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told a UN conference in Doha on Tuesday. Hungary is ready to maintain its contribution to these efforts and support all UN and European Union initiatives aiming to increase support for the affected countries with a view to enhancing their stability, he said. He cited among past government measures a 760 million US dollar credit line by Eximbank to the least developed countries in order to promote cooperation.

The coronavirus pandemic has posed a huge challenge to poorer countries, and Hungary has contributed 1.7 million doses of vaccine to help protect the globe, he said. Considering that vaccine stocks are still abundant, Hungary is ready to increase this contribution, he added. Additionally, Hungary has supported Christian communities in the affected countries with around 8 million US dollars through 65 projects, he said. "As a country with one thousand years of Christian statehood, we feel responsibility for Christian communities in need around the world," he added.

## **QATAR'S NEWLY APPOINTED PM HOLDS FIRST MEETING WITH SZIJJÁRTÓ IN DOHA**

Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Qatar's newly appointed prime minister, held his first meeting after taking his oath of office with Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó in Doha on Tuesday. Szijjártó said on Facebook that he had set out from the conference centre in Doha "to meet my good friend Foreign Minister Mohammed Al Thani, but by the time I arrived, I was met by Prime Minister Mohammed Al Thani, as his first guest, around five minutes after he took his oath." From now on, Qatari-Hungarian cooperation will have a supporter at the highest level, Szijjártó said. "We now have even better prospects for obtaining LNG gas from Qatar," he said, adding that this would contribute to Hungary's energy security in the foreseeable future. The minister also congratulated Qatar on its success in hosting the 2022 World Cup.

## **PRESIDENT NOVÁK: FORCES AT WORK TO 'TEAR FAMILIES APART'**

Addressing the 67th annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York, President Katalin Novák said that support for women should rest on the assumption that most women are mothers or will be at some point. Novák called motherhood a "privilege"

but women should not be forced to choose between motherhood and a career. In the West, she noted at the event held on Monday, women enjoy similar opportunities to men in terms of education, career, and workplace advancement. The main difference "is whether we have children or not", she said, adding that she has three children.

The president said the traditional family, the basis of Judeo-Christian culture, was "under attack". The family and family values must be protected, she declared. Novák said that forces were at work "to tear families apart" and discourage young people from having children. Many see family life as outdated, she said, yet "our values do not change with the passage of time".

Families comprising a mother, father and children "are in the crosshairs", she said, adding that many "look down" on those who successfully raise children.

She said the Hungarian family-oriented model was under attack and forces were working to "prevent us from deciding how to raise our children".

The president said that people who had not assumed responsibility for raising children "want to raise our children". "[B]ut we will protect our children, our culture and our traditions," she said. Meanwhile, Novák quoted Pope Francis as saying that "there are no just wars". The president underlined Hungary's "firm commitment to peace". "We Christians, we Hungarians, we mothers" do not want to add fuel to this war, "we want to end it," she said, adding

that the suffering mainly affected families. On the event's sidelines, the president had a bilateral meeting with Morocco's foreign minister.

### **KOC SIS TELLS MPS: HUNGARY PRO-PEACE, WILL STAY THAT WAY**

Hungary is pro-peace and intends to stay that way, Máté Kocsis, the leader of Fidesz's parliamentary group, told MPs on Tuesday in connection with a bill declaring Hungary's position a year after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. The bill calls for a ceasefire and peace negotiations as soon as possible, and states that Hungary will continue to refrain from sending weapons or soldiers to Ukraine. Kocsis said the longer the delay, the greater the losses would be, noting that the bill expresses Hungary's commitment to peace and underlines its condemnation of Russian military aggression while recognising Ukraine's right to self-defence. He said economic and energy sanctions adopted in Brussels had not succeeded in steering Russia towards peace, so Hungary opposes broadening EU sanctions. Further, the bill calls on the government to continue helping refugees from Ukraine. It also notes that the war had a grave impact on the Transcarpathian Hungarian community. It would be irresponsible to declare that only Russia or Ukraine can win the war, Kocsis said, adding that the onus was on war supporters to convince peace supporters about the wisdom of arms deliveries.

### **ORBÁN TO DELIVER MARCH 15 SPEECH AT REVOLUTIONARY POET PETŐFI'S BIRTH HOUSE**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán will deliver his speech marking the anniversary of Hungary's anti-Habsburg revolution of 1848-49 on March 15 at the birth house of 19th century poet and revolutionary Sándor Petőfi, the state secretary for international communication and relations said. The operative board overseeing the safety aspects of the March 15 celebrations has concluded that the scheduled events can go ahead as planned, Zoltán Kovács said on Facebook on Tuesday.

The traditional award ceremony for handing over the Kossuth and Széchenyi Prizes will be held on Tuesday, the eve of the holiday, Kovács said. The state commemorations on March 15 will, as always, begin with the hoisting of the national flag in front of Parliament, he said. Commemorations will also take place in the southern Hungarian town of Kiskőrös, where Petőfi was born 200 years ago, with the prime minister delivering his speech at the revolutionary poet's birth house at 3pm, Kovács said.

### **SHORTLISTED APPLICANTS FOR HUNGARIAN ASTRONAUT PROGRAMME PRESENTED**

Four applicants shortlisted for the Hungarian astronaut programme dubbed Hungarian to Orbit (HUNOR)

were presented on Tuesday, and they will start a two-year training programme, the foreign ministry said. The four-member team includes a doctor and three engineers, and one of them will spend nearly one month on the international space station, the statement said. Gábor Magyar, who is in charge of astronaut recruitment and training in HUNOR, told the event that 240 valid applications had been assessed in line with the requirements of the European Space Agency, NASA, the International Space Station and the programme's private company partner, Axiom Space. The shortlisted applicants include 33-year-old electrical engineer Gyula Cserényi, 31-year-old space development engineer Tibor Kapu, clinical orthopaedic surgeon Ádám Schlégl and 40-year-old aviation design engineer András Szakály.

### **ENERGY MINISTER HOLDS CONSULTATIONS WITH WATER MANAGEMENT REPS**

Energy affairs minister Csaba Lantos held consultations with representatives of the Hungarian water management association MAVÍZ on Monday, discussing the challenges affecting the sector and possible solutions, the ministry said in a statement. In February, the ministry of energy affairs set up the secretariat for water public utilities, which is tasked with the regulation and supervision of the sector as well as ensuring cooperation

with key stakeholders, it said. Hungary's relevant national strategy is aimed at developing a modern and sensibly-sized, energy-efficient water utility network which enables resource-efficient and sustainable operations serving the interests of the Hungarian public, the statement said. An integration process started this August enabling local councils to transfer their water utility assets to the state on a voluntary basis. This can make operations more sustainable, while so-far neglected developments can be carried out in order to reduce losses from the network. In the case of local councils that opt out of integration but need help to maintain their water services, the government assesses the possibility of contributing to their efforts and providing support on the basis of individual agreements, the statement said.

### **JOBBIK LEADER INVITES PM TO DISCUSS HUNGARIAN POSITION ON WAR**

Márton Gyöngyösi, the leader of opposition Jobbik, on Tuesday said he is inviting Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to discuss and establish a Hungarian national position on the war in Ukraine. Gyöngyösi told a press conference that he will request that the prime minister convene Hungary's political parties for such a meeting. Russia's war on Ukraine has claimed masses of victims, including ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia,

Gyöngyösi said. He said the conflict appeared to be "a war launched by Russia against our civilisation" rather than just a regional one between two neighbouring peoples.

Gyöngyösi insisted that under Russia's "revived Brezhnev Doctrine", Hungary, being a former socialist central European country, was also a target of "Russian imperialist expansion". The Hungarian nation should present a united front in the current situation, he said, criticising the draft resolution on the war currently before parliament for "representing only the position of the ruling parties".

### **SURVEY: SUPPORT FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY GROWS IN HUNGARY**

The majority of Hungarians, 66%, support the use of nuclear energy as a way to provide safe and uninterrupted energy for households, up from 53% in 2020, according to a survey conducted by Társadalomkutató published in the daily Magyar Nemzet on Tuesday. Comparing the results of the 2023 survey to one conducted in 2020, Társadalomkutató said Hungarians' original support for nuclear energy strengthened over time, probably due to the war in Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis.

In 2020, 53% of respondents supported increasing the role of nuclear plants in Hungary's energy mix, while that ratio was 62% in 2023, the pollster said. Some 40% of respondents see nuclear energy

as key in safe energy supplies in 20-50 years, Társadalomkutató said. Regarding their effect on the environment, 43% of respondents said "weather-dependent sustainable energy" was the least damaging, while 23% named nuclear energy as the cleanest.

At the same time, 70% (up from 61% in 2020) said the Paks nuclear plant produced the cheapest energy in the country, while 59% (up from 50%) said nuclear plants were generally the cheapest energy producers. In 2020, 64% were aware that there was a nuclear plant operating in Hungary. That number went up to 70% by 2023, Társadalomkutató said. Fully 62% also supports the construction of new blocks, up from 51% in 2020, it said. Fully 57% of respondents agreed that they should be built "using cutting-edge Russian technology," against 53% in 2020, it said.

### **RECORD NUMBER OF WOMEN IN HUNGARY'S WORKFORCE**

A record 2.2 million women in Hungary had a job last year, even more than when employment was mandatory during the Communist era, according to a think-tank. Prior to 2010, governments focused on reducing the jobless number, while after 2010 the government has worked on boosting employment while supporting families, according to a report by the Szent István Institute. The employment rate of

women aged 20-64 was 59% 13 years ago; last year it was 75.3%, the study examining the position of women in the labour market between 1900-2022 found. The increase is the second largest, after Malta, in the European Union, according to the report published on Tuesday. Joblessness among women was 207,000 in 2010, now it is 80,000, while the number of inactive at 627,000 is also at a record low, the think-tank said. Also the employment rate of mothers with children below the age of 6 has grown apace in recent years, reaching 73% by 2021 -- ranking 9th in the European Union.

### **MORE THAN 7,000 UKRAINE REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON MONDAY**

Fully 4,041 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Monday, while 3,357 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 41 people, ORFK said on Tuesday. Budapest received 44 people, 6 children among them, by train, ORFK said.

### **HUNGARY JAN INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DOWN 0.2% YR/YR**

Hungarian industrial output fell by an annual 0.2% in January, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said on Tuesday. Adjusted for the number of working days, output declined by 3.2%. KSH said output of Hungary's automotive industry, as well as its computer, electronics and optical equipment sectors grew, while output of the food, drinks and tobacco products segment fell.

Month on month, output fell by 5.1%, based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. Commenting on the data, the ministry of economic development blamed the war in Ukraine and "failed Brussels sanctions" for "significantly harming" the Hungarian economy. The ministry said in a statement that sanctions against Russia had caused an energy crisis, putting the economy which heavily relies on energy in a tough spot, with knock-on effects including rising cost of raw materials and other types of inflation. Amid the current high interest rate environment, businesses must contend with borrowing rates of 20%, and this, too, is weighing on the economy, it said.

But weaker industrial output, the statement added, would be "temporary", noting that the government has adopted a package of 20 measures to combat inflation, prevent a recession, maintain full employment and protect families. Further, a 700 billion forint (EUR 1.6bn) loan scheme for industry and another 600 billion forint capital investment programme for businesses will help to bring inflation down into single digits by year-end and help the economy grow by 1.5% this year, the ministry said.

### **BIRD FLU DETECTED IN SE HUNGARY**

Bird flu has been detected again at a goose farm in Békés County, in southeast Hungary, and in birds in captivity in Komárom-Esztergom County in the north of the country, the food safety authority Nébih said on Tuesday. The H5N1 version of bird flu was diagnosed at a farm keeping 7,400 geese in Békés, and the culling of the animals has already started, Nébih said. The sick birds in Komárom-Esztergom County, also suffering from H5N1, will also be slaughtered, it said.