

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/PM's press office/Vivien Cher Benkő

PM Orbán meets Syrian Christian leaders

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels

Events related to the war in Ukraine

TOP STORY

FIDESZ TO SUPPORT FINLAND NATO BID, DECIDE ABOUT SWEDEN'S LATER

The parliamentary group of ruling Fidesz will support the ratification of Finland's NATO accession bid at a vote set in the national assembly for March 27, while it will make a decision in connection with Sweden at a later time, the leader of the group said on Friday.

"I am informing you on behalf of the Fidesz group that we have made a decision to support Finland's NATO accession," Máté Kocsis said on Facebook. "We will move the relevant vote in parliament to an earlier date, to March 27, and will unanimously support Finland's bid. As regards Sweden, our group will make a decision later." Kocsis in his post reminded "domestic and international players" that the Hungarian parliament was "a sovereign body" beholden only to Hungarian voters. "We therefore do not accept any kind of pressure exerted either from abroad, or by Hungarian left-wing politicians working on foreign orders, by NGOs, or by any media outlet regarding when, at what pace and what matters parliament should discuss, and on which day it should hold a vote on those," Kocsis said. He said the greater the pressure was to have a decision made quickly, the more thorough consideration was required.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI's real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



FIDESZ: STATE AUDITOR LAUNCHES PROBE INTO OPPOSITION'S FOREIGN CAMPAIGN FINANCING

The head of the State Audit Office (ÁSZ) has launched an investigation into the foreign campaign donations received by the left-wing opposition ahead of last year's general election, Erik Bánki, the (Fidesz) head of parliament's economic committee, said on Friday. Bánki said in a video message that László Windisch had informed him in a letter of ASZ's ongoing investigation into the left's foreign campaign financing, saying there were "strong suspicions" that the donations constituted illegal party financing and that the opposition parties had violated the election law by accepting them. He said he will propose that the economic committee hear Windisch on March 27 in connection with his findings on the matter. Detailing Windisch's report, Bánki said that in light of the suspicions that the left had violated the election law, the ASZ chief had turned to the tax authority, seeking information about how the funds were used. In the hearing, the economic committee will want to hear what sort of abuses the investigation was pointing to, and when the outcome of the probe would be known, Bánki said. New information is surfacing about the affair every week, he said, insisting that the opposition was "caught in a spiral of lies". "At first they

talked about micro-donations, but then it turned out that this wasn't true, because there were large donors supporting the opposition with large sums," he said, adding that the total sum received from abroad "in one of the most serious attempts of the past 30 years to influence the elections" had amounted to 4 billion forints (EUR 10m) worth of US dollars.

"Then they tried to distance themselves from the affair, but it turned out that Dávid Korányi, the chief advisor to [Budapest Mayor] Gergely Karácsony, tried to send these donations to Hungary through the Action for Democracy organisation, of which he is the leader." Bánki said this made it clear that the opposition had tried to influence the outcome of the election from abroad.

ORBÁN MEETS SYRIAN CHRISTIAN LEADERS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met the leaders of three Christian Churches in Syria in his office on Friday, Orbán's press chief said. Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, Youssef (Joseph) Absi, Patriarch of the Syrian Melkite Catholic Church, and Patriarch John X of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the East thanked Hungary and its government for the help and assistance provided to Syria which was hit by a devastating earthquake in February, Bertalan Havasi said. The press chief noted that Hungary had provided 50

million forints (EUR 127,000) to the Hungarian Maltese Charity for setting up three mobile clinical units in Syria's earthquake-hit region. Hungary is planning to collect and extend further donations to be distributed by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in north-eastern Syria, he said.

POPE GRANTS HONOUR TO HUNGARIAN MALTESE CHARITY INTL HEAD

Pope Francis has awarded Dániel Solymári, director of international relations at the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, the Knight Cross of the Order of Saint Sylvestre, the oldest decoration the Holy See bestows on secular individuals, the charity told MTI in a statement. Solymári was presented with the award by Cardinal Péter Erdő, the Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, and Youssef Absi, the patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, at the Primate's Palace in Budapest on Friday. He received the honour in recognition of his work concerning the international relations of the pontiff and the Holy See, mainly in the areas of international aid and humanitarian diplomacy.

The charity noted that the Knight Cross of the Order of Saint Sylvestre was among the most rarely bestowed decorations, having been given to less than ten Hungarian citizens, according to records available since 1945.

POTÁPI ATTENDS MARCH 15 COMMEMORATION IN CANADA

Árpád János Potápi, state secretary at the Prime Minister's Office in charge of ethnic Hungarian communities, attended a celebration marking the anniversary of Hungary's 1848-49 revolution and war of independence in Calgary on Saturday. The official said in his address at the commemoration that "the spirit of all Hungarians is rooted in the freedom all generations from King Saint Stephen I have longed for". He added, however, that "Hungarians' freedom is curbed both in Transylvania and in Transcarpathia" and insisted that Hungarian education was being suppressed in Ukraine and the use of Hungarian symbols was restricted in Romania. "Transcarpathia Hungarians are in an especially great danger because they are dragged into a war which is not our war," he said. The Hungarian government condemns Russia's military aggression, but "an attack against Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty cannot justify the curbing of the rights of the Hungarian national minority," he said. He added, however, that "our first and most important dream is to have peace". Potápi thanked the Canadian Hungarian Cultural Council for its efforts to help Ukraine Hungarians. The council, he said, had been instrumental in making the local Hungarian community "one of the most active in the diaspora".

WH: WASHINGTON WELCOMES TÜRKIYE PROGRESS ON FINLAND NATO BID, URGES HUNGARY RATIFICATION

The United States welcomes the progress made by Türkiye in the ratification of Finland's NATO accession bid while urges Hungary to conclude its ratification process for both Finland and Sweden without delay, a statement by the National Security Advisor at the White House said on Friday. The statement by Jake Sullivan welcomed "President Erdogan's announcement that he will send Finland's NATO accession protocols to the Turkish Parliament" and encouraged Türkiye "to quickly ratify Sweden's accession protocols as well". "In addition, we urge Hungary to conclude its ratification process for both Finland and Sweden without delay," the statement released by the White House said. "Sweden and Finland are both strong, capable partners that share NATO's values and will strengthen the Alliance and contribute to European security. The United States believes that both countries should become members of NATO as soon as possible," it said.

DEFMIN CALLS FOR HUNGARIAN-MADE EQUIPMENT FOR ARMY

The government is committed to ensuring Hungarian-made weapons

from domestic suppliers to the Hungarian military, the defence minister said on Saturday, adding that meeting that goal was of strategic importance for the country's security. Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky visited a shooting range at Táborfalva, in western Hungary, where hand guns and protective gear used by the police and the military were tested, and said on Facebook that the development of "guns, machine guns, light and submachine guns" had started. "You need strength to make peace; we keep working," the minister said.

JAZZFEST BUDAPEST TO START ON APRIL 26

The second Jazzfest Budapest festival will be held in the capital from April 26 to May 17 at ten venues, the organisers told MTI in a statement. The festival will include performers from five continents and 22 countries, such as Lizz Wright, Avishai Cohen, Stanley Clarke, Simon Phillips, Stacey Kent, Stefano Bollani, Anouar Brahem, Bugge Wesseltoft, Enzo Favata and Paal Nilssen-Love. Hungarian performers will include László Dés, Mihály Dresch, Kálmán Oláh, Viktor Tóth, Kálmán Balogh, Yancha Nagy János and Luca Kézdy. "We want to raise the bar higher than last year, not in terms of size, but in quality," festival founder and GetCloser Concerts artistic director Attila Kleb said in the statement.