

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Croatian PM Andrej Plenković, former Colombian President Andres Pastrana, former Slovenian PM Janez Jansa and PM Viktor Orbán at CDI-IDC meeting in Bled

MTI/PM's Press Office/Zoltán Fischer

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**LMP presser on "increasing Russian influence"**

**Opposition conference with MEP Guy Verhofstadt in attendance in Budapest**

**DK rally in Szeged**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

## TOP STORY

# HUNGARY SUPPORTS 'ANY PEACE PLAN'

Hungary is "on the side of peace" and "will support any peace plan", Viktor Orbán said in Bled.

"We don't know which [plan] will succeed, but unless we take the first step we will never achieve peace," the prime minister told journalists on the sidelines of a meeting of leaders of the Centrist Democrat International in the Slovenian resort. Orbán said some saw an opportunity for a militarist settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, while others saw no such chance and called for a ceasefire and peace talks. "The real nature of the conflict has not yet been revealed; some consider it a proxy war, and others talk about a real war between the parties," Orbán said. It is not known which peace plan has a chance of succeeding, so Hungary backs all initiatives and is prepared to aid the process either as a mediator or as a venue for ceasefire negotiations, he added. Orbán said Hungary's stake in the war set it apart from countries in the region given the Hungarian minority living there and the Hungarian lives sacrificed, a "personal national loss" for Ukraine and Hungary alike.

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## **ORBÁN EXPLAINS WHY HUNGARY BLOCKED PEACE FRAMEWORK FUND PAYMENTS**

Explaining why Hungary has blocked further payments from the European Peace Framework fund, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said a meeting of leaders of the Centrist Democrat International in the Slovenian resort of Bled that the funds had been designated for European security, not for the war in Ukraine, with a view to boosting security throughout Europe. Most of the funds are being used to support Ukraine, he said, adding that Hungary wants to clarify whether the fund serves its original purpose or whether it is being channelled to supporting Ukraine.

The Centrist Democrat International's meeting is being held under the motto "Security, Justice, Peace", and Orbán is participating as one of its vice-presidents.

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## **NOVÁK IN NEW YORK: UKRAINE WAR, DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS THREATENING EUROPE**

Addressing a conference in New York, Hungarian President Katalin Novák said that the war in Ukraine affected Europe, which was also witnessing "demographic decline and challenges we have not faced before". Speaking at the conference on the Sendai Framework Agreement, which was

established by the UN to reduce the risks of disasters and increase resilience, the president said: "Hungary is a middle-sized country in the heart of Europe with a population of 10 million. We have no seas, nor significant natural resources. However, compared to our resources and local conditions, we have made outstanding efforts to help those in need," the president said. She noted the coronavirus pandemic, wild fires, floods and the war in Ukraine among serious challenges faced by Europe.

Novák noted that since 2017 Hungary has sponsored some 300 humanitarian and rehabilitation projects worth over 100 million dollars in 54 countries under its Hungary Helps aid scheme. She said that in February Hungary was among the first countries on the scene helping rescue operations in a devastating earthquake that hit Türkiye, with a team of 167 specialists and 29 search dogs helping to save 35 lives. Also, Hungary delivered more than hundred tonnes of medicines and medical equipment to Türkiye and dispatched experts to help rebuild a cultural centre and a church. "We were there to help at the floods in Pakistan last year, the year before at the Croatian earthquake," Novák said, highlighting the importance of helping one another beside "protecting ourselves".

"A final question: whom do we want to save our planet for if not for the next generation? We need strong families, where we can teach our children to care for their own environment and to

help those in need," she said. Quoting the words of Pope Francis during his visit to Budapest last month, the Hungarian president said: "Let us give a future of hope, not war, to the next generations. A future of cradles, not of graves." "Together, we can do even more in order to build a secure and sustainable future. Hungary is ready to help," she said.

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## **ORBÁN SPEAKS WITH ERDOĞAN**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán spoke with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan by phone and congratulated the Turkish president on his victory and the outstanding success of his AK Party in the first round of Türkiye's presidential and parliamentary elections, Orbán's press chief told MTI. Orbán wished Erdogan much success in the run-off, to be held on May 28. He told his partner that Hungary as well as Europe and the world needs a strong and stable Türkiye.

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## **ORBÁN MEETS N MACEDON PARTY LEADER, OFFERS TO SHARE EXPERIENCES**

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the leader of the ruling Fidesz party, held talks with Hristijan Mickoski, president of North Macedonia's VMRO-DPMNE party, in Bled on Thursday, his press chief said. The politicians are attending a meeting of leaders of the Centrist Democrat International held in the Slovenian resort. Political

cooperation between Fidesz and VMRO-DPMNE “is excellent in framework of bilateral ties as well as in the international arena”, Bertalan Havasi said. Orbán offered the help of Fidesz politicians who will share their professional experiences in various policy areas so that North Macedonia party’s candidates are prepared for government, he said.

**KÖVÉR HAILS HUNGARY, SLOVENIA’S ‘EXEMPLARY’ MINORITY RIGHTS**

The “shared success story” of how Hungary and Slovenia guarantee the rights of minority citizens in each other’s countries can set an example for European Union institutions and the entire world, Speaker of Parliament László Kövér said after meeting his Slovenian counterpart on Thursday. Kövér and Urška Klakočar Zupančič met representatives of Slovenia’s Hungarian and Hungary’s Slovene minority communities in Szentgotthárd, in western Hungary, and attended an event marking the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian-Slovenian bilateral agreement on minority rights. Addressing the event, Kövér said the agreement served as an effective means of strengthening ethnic peace, national fairness and political stability. He said these values were especially important given how unresolved issues around national minorities always resulted in ethnic conflict and political instability, and could eventually lead to local or world wars, and he cited

the Yugoslav Wars and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war as examples.

The bilateral agreement was in many ways ahead of its time and could serve as a model for the development of a minority protection regime at EU level, which the bloc’s nearly 50 million minority-status voters have been wanting for years, the speaker said. He said the unique aspect of the Hungarian-Slovenian agreement was that identified the national community as the subject of special protection. It defines the individual rights of minorities in the areas of culture, education, language use, media, political participation, contact with the mother nation, and recognises collective minority rights, Kövér said.

Also, under the agreement, both countries made a commitment to take into consideration the special interests of local minorities when it comes economic and regional development plans and ensure their economic and social development, Kövér said. Hungary and Slovenia also vowed not to the public administrative bodies of local councils to the detriment of minorities, he added.

Klakočar Zupančič said both Slovenia and Hungary continued to treat minority rights as a top priority, adding that national minorities in the two countries would continue to embody cooperation and respect. She said the agreement contributed to good neighbourly relations between the two countries and proved that people who speak different languages could still understand each other, and

that national minorities were an asset rather than a threat to the country they live in.

After the ceremony and a joint press conference, Kövér and Klakočar Zupančič visited a bilingual primary school in the nearby village of Apátistvánfalva and a Slovene national minority country house in Órfalu. In the afternoon, the speakers visited the town of Lendava (Lendva) in Slovenia’s Prekmurje (Muravidék) region, where they attended the signing of an updated version of a 2012 cooperation agreement between the Hungarian and Slovene national minority umbrella organisations in Prekmurje and Hungary’s Rábavidék.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER VISITS BAKU**

Sándor Lezsák, deputy speaker of the Hungarian parliament, visited Baku and attended celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the birth of former Azerbaijani leader Milli Majlis Heydar Aliyev, parliament’s press office said. In his address to the Azerbaijani parliament, Lezsák referred to Hungary as “a rock in the middle of Europe on which Azerbaijan can always rely and where it will always find friends”. Lezsák noted that Hungary and Azerbaijan were strategic partners, which “provides a firm basis for broadening their cooperation”. Lezsák also had talks with Sahiba Gavarova, speaker of the Azerbaijani parliament, deputy speaker Ali Huseynli, and other officials.

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## **UKRAINE CONFLICT - US ECONOMIST: ORBÁN ONLY EU LEADER 'TO SEE UKRAINE SITUATION REALISTICALLY'**

US economist Jeffrey Sachs praised Prime Minister Viktor Orbán as “the only European leader who sees the situation in Ukraine realistically”, in an interview published in the daily Magyar Nemzet on Thursday. Sachs, a professor of Columbia University, said Orbán “grasped” that the war in Ukraine was “pointless and unnecessary”, brought about by the enlargement of NATO. “Unlike other European leaders, Orbán also recognises that Russia will not concede defeat on the battleground without escalating the conflict into a nuclear war,” he said. To stop the war, the US should pledge not to enlarge NATO with Ukraine and Georgia, and Ukraine should declare itself a neutral state. The UN Security Council and states like Germany, Türkiye and Brazil should guarantee maintaining the peace treaty, he said. Further, NATO should “strictly curb” weapon deliveries to Ukraine, which in turn should receive a timeline to join the EU, he said. Sanctions should be withdrawn, he added.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ INAUGURATES EXPANSION OF LOGISTICS CENTRE IN NE HUNGARY**

Hungary's role is growing stronger in east-west transit routes, Péter

Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said at the inauguration of the expansion of a logistics centre in Kiskváda, in northeast Hungary, on Thursday.

Hungarian family-owned company Transit-Speed invested 3.8 billion forints (EUR 10.3m) to build two new warehouses. The investment was supported by a 1.4 billion government grant, Szijjártó said. The investment will create 20 new jobs and will expand capacity to fill 200 trucks a day with grain arriving by train from Ukraine, Szijjártó said. It will bolster transports to struggling African and Middle Eastern countries, and “contribute to prevent a food crisis and thereby further migrant waves,” he said.

Later on Thursday, Szijjártó inaugurated an industrial park in Kemece, in northeast Hungary. The park was constructed with 1.2 billion forint (EUR 3.2m) support from government and European Union funds, Szijjártó said.

Similar investments are key to drawing foreign companies to Hungary, by offering ideal circumstances for moving here, he said. The Kemece Industrial Park is situated near “a modern automotive centre being constructed around Debrecen and Nyiregyhaza, unique in European and even in global comparison.” Talks are ongoing with companies interested in the park, in an effort to shorten supply lines, “a lesson interested parties have learned from the times of the coronavirus pandemic,” Szijjártó said.

## **UNIONS APPEALING TO TOP COURT FOR SACKED TEACHERS**

Teachers' trade unions will appeal to the Constitutional Court in the case of teachers dismissed from their jobs because of civil disobedience, Socialist co-leader and MP Ágnes Kunhalmi told a press conference, noting she collected the signatures of 50 MPs to support an initiative by teachers' unions to thwart a government decree under which teachers' participation in acts of civil disobedience could be considered a serious breach of obligations. Civil disobedience is “customary in bourgeois democracies”, she said, adding that the dismissal of teachers “shows that Hungary is not a democracy nor a rule of law”.

Union PDSZ leader Erzsébet Nagy said that under the government decree a teacher involved in civil disobedience “may not be dismissed instantly; they could work all year long and be given notice of immediate effect on August 1”.

Nagy also said current problems in education could be resolved without the government's contested draft on the legal status of teachers, which would “strip them of acquired rights”. She also insisted that “the crazy draft” was the only bone of contention between the Hungarian government and the EU preventing the country from accessing community funding. “Raising salaries, reducing work load and paying for overtime would all be possible without the status law,” she said.

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## **LMP: BATTERY MAKERS DON'T COMPLY WITH HUNGARIAN LEGISLATION**

Battery makers should be made to operate in compliance with strict environmental protection rules, a green lawmaker said, noting that LMP submitted three related proposals to parliament, but the legislative committee withheld them from the agenda as governing MPs voted them down. LMP proposed fining plants in breach of their obligations in proportion to the company's profits and companies that fail to comply with environmental protection rules should pay back the multi-billion state aid, László Loránt Keresztes, chairman of the parliament's sustainable development committee, told an online press briefing. Further, LMP also wanted battery plants to regularly monitor air, water and noise pollution and publish the results.

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## **UKRAINE CRISIS - ALMOST 9,500 REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON WEDNESDAY**

Fully 5,116 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Tuesday, while 4,384 came to the

country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 42 people, ORFK said on Thursday.

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## **NAVRACSICS INAUGURATES VESZPREM JEWISH CEMETERY MEMORIAL PARK**

The reconstruction of a Jewish cemetery in Veszprém shows the city will never forget its deceased residents and will nurture values and traditions they represented, Regional Development Minister Tibor Navracsics said at the inauguration ceremony on Thursday. The project costing more than 60 million forints (EUR 160,000) in which the cemetery in Szél street has been turned into a memorial park was long due, the minister said. "With it, a piece of the past has been brought back into the present in order to be handed over to the future," he said, noting that the project was one among those that were aimed at preserving the traces of the Jewish community that had perished in horrendous acts. No burials have taken place in the cemetery since 1882 due to the rocky ground, but it holds some 450 graves from the preceding period of 150 years,

he said. The reconstruction has been carried out as part of the Veszprem Balaton European Capital of Culture (EKF) programme.

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## **HUNGARIAN EXHIBITION FEATURING NEW ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM OPENS IN VENICE**

The new building and the ornaments on the facade of the Budapest Ethnography Museum are the focus of an exhibition that opened in the Hungarian pavilion at the 18th Venice Architecture Biennale 2023 on Thursday. Speaking at the opening, Júlia Fabényi, national commissioner of the Hungarian pavilion, said that the exhibition entitled Reziduum - The Frequency of Architecture, presents the new museum building through various art forms. Lajos Kemecsi, the museum's director, noted the museum holds the largest and most comprehensive collection of folk art in Hungary. An installation using laser lights at the Venice Biennale exhibition displays the metal structure embracing the Budapest building's facade. The exhibition also features a new instrument, a soundroll, designed by architect-composer Péter Mátrai, he said. The Biennale will be open to the public from May 20 until Nov. 26.