

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Ice plate pileup on Lake Balaton

UPCOMING EVENTS

EP plenary session

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

LMP protest against Debrecen battery plant

Stats office releases Nov 2023 construction figures

TOP STORY

DEUTSCH: FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES NEEDED IN BRUSSELS

Fundamental changes are needed in Brussels, and bureaucrats that use their power only to pressurise countries that want to pursue a sovereignty-based policy and represent their own national interests “must be chased away”, an MEP of ruling Fidesz said on Sunday.

Tamás Deutsch told public radio that fundamental changes are also needed among Hungarian MEPs because eight of them “who belong to the dollar left” repeatedly “side with Brussels on all issues when the bureaucrats attack the Hungarians”. “MEPs should be elected who use their mandate received from the Hungarian citizens to represent Hungarian interests in Brussels, even if it goes with taking up conflicts,” he said. Commenting on the issue of European Union development funding for Hungary, Deutsch welcomed the development that “sums visible also to the naked eye” were now being received but he added that resources had been “held back unlawfully for years”.

He called for resolute action “against political blackmailing by the Brussels bureaucrats” as long as the EU development monies due to Hungary in the current budget period are not fully transferred. “The Hungarian dollar left is a very intensive participant in Brussels’ unlawful blackmailing behaviour,” he said.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ MEETS LEADERS OF SLOVAKIA'S HUNGARIAN ALLIANCE PARTY

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó met the leaders of Slovakia's Hungarian Alliance party, in preparation of Prime Minister Robert Fico's visit to Budapest next week. Szijjártó said on Facebook that he and party head Krisztián Forró had reviewed the most important issues for Hungarians living in Slovakia. Szijjártó said Hungary's government was looking forward to the visit, and pledged to emphasise "crucial" development projects at the talks. "We are ready to increase the number of border crossings between the two countries so that the border connects rather than separates people," he said. Hopefully, "empty railways will fill up again, and there will be joint bus routes and new bridges," he said.

PRESIDENT NOVÁK TO ATTEND WORLD ECON FORUM IN DAVOS

President Katalin Novák will travel to Switzerland to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos between January 16-18, her communications office said on Friday. Topics at this year's forum include geopolitical instability, challenges facing Europe's security and topical international political and global economic issues, the office said. The Hungarian president will address

the forum and hold bilateral talks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, among others.

APPEALS COURT CHANGES SENTENCE IN CASE OF FORMER SOCIALIST MP CHARGED WITH ASSAULT

The Budapest Appeals Court has changed the first-instance ruling in the case of evangelical pastor and former Socialist lawmaker László Donáth, the court said on Friday. Donáth was accused of assault and indecency. An employee of the institute where he served as a pastor filed a complaint against him. The employee said Donáth had attacked them on June 8, 2019, choking and threatening the employee for leaving a cleaning trolley in a place he had previously prohibited it. The accuser then also reported indecent episodes between 2017 and 2019, the court said. The appeals court said on Friday that it rejected the indecency charges as they had been filed beyond the court deadline. It also reduced the fine imposed on Donáth from 1 million forints (EUR 2,600) to 250,000 forints, it said in a statement. The prosecution has appealed the ruling.

LMP: BUDAPEST'S RÁKOSRENDEZŐ IS 'GREEN GOLD RESERVE'

Budapest's Rákospuszta neighbourhood is a "green gold reserve" where more parks and green

areas should be developed, not buildings, the opposition LMP said on Saturday. Deputy parliamentary group leader Máté Kanász-Nagy told a press conference that the government planned skyscrapers and highrises for its "Rákospuszta" project that would turn the neighbourhood into an urban "heat island", making life difficult for residents. He called out Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony for not rejecting the project and suggested a "pact" may have been made with Construction and Transport Minister János Lázár. Kanász-Nagy complained that details of a new public transport tariff system had not been revealed by either the city council or the central government had said LMP had launched a petition to "rescue" Budapest public transport passes after the new system is rolled out on March 1.

PROTESTERS DEMAND PAY RISES FOR TEACHERS

Several organisations held a protest demanding wage increases for teachers in front of the Interior Ministry on Saturday. The demonstration was organised by the Egységes Diákfront (United Student Front), teachers' trade union PDSZ, Fridays For Future Hungary, Hang (Voice), ADOM Diákmozgalom (I GIVE Student Movement), Országos Közös Akarat (National Common Will) and Civil Bázis. Noel Perlaki-Borsos of the United Student Front said that the government was "going back on its

promises" and questioned the truth of the assertion that pay rises depended on "slips of paper from Brussels". PDSZ national board member Alexandra Pál said a 32.2% wage increase for teachers had been announced thanks to protestors "who knew no fear", but added that there was "no guarantee promises would be kept". She added that protests would continue to address not just teachers' pay, but the need for a "radical restructuring" of the education system. A few dozen people participated at the protest. As temperatures dipped, police offered hot tea to the participants.

RÉTVÁRI: TEACHER PROTEST ORGANISERS 'SHOW TRUE COLOURS'

Organisers of teacher protests on Saturday have "shown their true colours" by demonstrating for political reasons rather than for pay rises, an Interior Ministry state secretary said. Bence Rétvári said continuing demonstrations for higher pay even after details of pay rises were announced and the relevant regulations promulgated showed the organisers were not interested in the welfare of teachers but in protesting against the government. He noted that at most 5-7% of teachers had joined strikes and that less than 1% had rejected their new legal status. He added that the government had earlier announced the timeframe for raising teachers' pay, gradually, to close to 800,000 forints (EUR 2,100) by 2025.

CONCERT HONOURS MEMORY OF 1956 MARTYR

A concert was performed in honour of Árpád Brusznai, a martyr of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, in Veszprem, in the west of Hungary, on Saturday. Speaking at the event, marking the hundredth anniversary of Brusznai's birth, President Katalin Novák said heroes were people that "put their ideas into practice", adding that their greatness came from the fact that they were "no different from us". "They were boys and girls, fathers and mothers, people facing the challenges of everyday life," she said.

LMP DEMANDS IMMEDIATE PAYMENT INCREASE TO FOSTER PARENTS

Opposition LMP calls for immediately raising the pay of foster parents and adjusting their allowances to the rate of inflation, the party's spokesperson for welfare and family policy said on Sunday. "There is a shortage of foster parents in the Hungarian system, totalling only 5,400 according to Central Statistical Office figures, two-thirds of whom are based in towns and villages with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. And there are 400 foster parents who care for six children," Krisztina Hohn told a press conference. Foster parents are entitled to receive a basic pay and allowance of 54,000 forints (EUR 142) per child in a normal

case. If they care for a child with special needs, they receive 62,000 forints per month, she said. The pay foster parents receive is extremely low despite a recent increase of 25%, Hohn said, arguing that the rate had not kept pace with inflation. "Poverty now also affects children raised by foster parents in many places, which is unacceptable because the state must provide for those children," said Hohn.

HUNGARY COMMEMORATES SOLDIERS LOST AT THE DON BEND

Soldiers of the Second Hungarian Army who lost their lives in battle with Soviet forces at the Don bend 81 years earlier were honoured at a commemoration in Budapest's Fiume Street cemetery on Friday. Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said 100,000-120,000 Hungarian troops had been killed, wounded, taken prisoner or gone missing in action during the WWII battle. Chief of the Hungarian Defence Forces Gábor Böröndi called the battle one of the bloodiest defeats in Hungarian history.

GOVT OFFICIAL COMMEMORATES PERSONS DEPORTED TO SOVIET LABOUR CAMPS

The outcome of war is always different from the intended result, so "the only correct and morally acceptable position is to demand ceasefire and peace", the interior ministry's state secretary said on

Sunday, commemorating persons who were deported to Soviet labour camps in the Gulag after the second world war. Rétvári, a co-ruling Christian Democrats lawmaker, said that despite an agreement between Hitler and Stalin in the summer of 1939 to never attack each other and divide Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union, they ended up turning against each other in the world war that followed. After the war, the Soviets deported all ethnic German women aged between 18-30 and men aged 17-44 from areas that the Soviets had occupied, he added. In addition to ethnic Germans, all persons considered enemies by the occupying Soviet forces and the Communist leaders that served them were taken to Gulag camps, Rétvári said. At the time, Hungary did not have its sovereignty and independence to prevent such actions, he added. "This is why independence and sovereignty are great treasures for every country, so that they can protect themselves from such attempts by the large powers," Rétvári said in Zebegény, north of Budapest, a constituency represented by him. Addressing the commemoration, Ernő Ferenczy, the local deputy mayor, noted that in January 1945 several hundreds of ethnic German residents in Zebegény and the surrounding villages had been taken to forced labour camps "just because of their ethnicity". "Many of them rest in unmarked graves in foreign land." Following the commemoration,

participants including Imre Ritter, an MP representing Hungary's German minority, laid a wreath in front of the local Havas-Boldogasszony church.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, SERBIA AND SLOVENIA COULD LAUNCH ELECTRICITY EXCHANGE IN H1

Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia could start operating a regional electricity bourse in the first half of the year, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said on Saturday. Decisions on the exchange have already been taken at the expert and corporate level, Péter Szijjártó said, adding that all that was necessary now was government approval. Cooperation between European countries to face the challenge of energy security has "never been more important", he added.

AIR CHINA TO EXPAND DIRECT BUDAPEST-BEIJING FLIGHTS

National airline Air China will operate its Beijing-Budapest flights three times a week from April, up from the current two, Budapest Airport (BA) said on Friday. Air China launched its direct Budapest-Beijing flight in 2015 which had to be terminated due to Covid. The airline resumed its service in the summer of 2022 but suspended it again for a couple of months in March 2023, BA said in a statement. Direct flights twice a week were launched in June last year. Two Chinese airlines, Air China and China Eastern Airlines, operate

currently eight direct flights between Beijing and Budapest. Beside Beijing, the three other cities of Shanghai, Chongqing and Ningbo can be directly reached from Budapest, said BA.

MORE THAN 14,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON SATURDAY

Fully 4,879 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Saturday, while 9,568 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 68 people, ORFK said on Sunday.

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE: 2023 HOTTEST, 8TH WETTEST YEAR RECORDED

The year 2023 was the hottest and the 8th wettest year in Hungary since records started in 1901, the HungaroMet meteorological service said on Friday. The median temperature in 2023 was 12.23 degrees Celsius, 1.5 degrees higher than the average 10.75 C. between 1991-2020, and 0.2 degrees higher than 2019, the hottest year up to then, HungaroMet said. The average precipitation last year came to 767.1mm, 124% higher than the average between 1991 and 2020, the service said. The rainiest year ever recorded remains 2010, with a national average of 980.9mm, HungaroMet said.