

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Máthé

Tamás Sulyok, the president-elect, addresses MPs in parliament

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Plenary session of parliament**

**V4 prime ministers meet in Prague**

**Events related to the wars in Middle East, Ukraine**

**Cbank Monetary Council's rate-setting meeting**

## TOP STORY

# MPS ELECT SULYOK PRESIDENT

Hungary's parliament elected Tamás Sulyok, the outgoing head of the Constitutional Court, as head of state in a secret ballot on Monday.

Sulyok, who was the sole candidate for the post, received 134 votes of 139 valid ballots, with 5 lawmakers voting against him. Prior to the vote, MPs of the opposition Democratic Coalition, the Socialist Party, Jobbik and Párbeszéd left the chamber. After the announcement of the outcome of the vote, the president-elect took the presidential oath of office. Sulyok will assume office as the seventh Hungarian president since the 1989-1990 change of political system on March 5. In a speech after his election, Sulyok said he wanted to build trust through mutual understanding free from prejudice. He said he believed in "the broadest possible transparency" when it came to bestowing awards or granting clemency. Sulyok promised to work for a fair balance of constitutional fundamental rights and values. He said the prerequisite for the existence of the state and the nation was mutual trust between individuals and groups of society, adding that he considered national constitutional identity and statehood based on popular sovereignty to be fundamentally important constitutional values.

## **SULYOK VOWS TO HELP THE VULNERABLE**

Tamás Sulyok, the president-elect, said those in a difficult situation, those unable to care for themselves, the elderly, ill and lonely “can always count on my attention and support”.

Sulyok was born on March 24, 1956 in Kiskunfélegyháza. In 1980, he graduated from the Faculty of Public Sciences and Law of the József Attila University of Szeged. In 2004, he gained a qualification in European law from Budapest’s ELTE university and obtained a PhD from Szeged university in 2013, his thesis being on the constitutional status of the legal profession, the regulation of the internal market of the European Community and the connections between legal services. Between 1997 and 2014 he headed a private legal practice, and from 2000 until his election as a constitutional judge in 2014 he was the honorary consul of Austria in Szeged. Since September 2005, he has taught constitutional law as a visiting lecturer at Szeged university. He was deputy president of the Constitutional Court from April 2015 and in November 2016 parliament elected him as the court’s president.

## **HUNGARIAN MPS RATIFY SWEDEN’S ACCESSION TO NATO**

Hungarian MPs on Monday approved a proposal on ratifying Sweden’s accession to the North Atlantic Treaty

Organisation (NATO), approving the law on the protocol of accession with 188 votes in favour and 6 against. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed parliament’s vote. “I welcome the Hungarian parliament’s vote to ratify Sweden’s membership in NATO,” he said on social media platform X. “Now that all Allies have approved, Sweden will become the 32nd NATO Ally. Sweden’s membership will make us all stronger and safer.”

## **ORBÁN: ‘ZERO TOLERANCE’ FOR CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN**

In Hungary, children have absolute and full protection, the prime minister said, addressing the opening day of parliament’s spring session on Monday. Meanwhile, Viktor Orbán also asked MPs to support the election of the new head of state and to adopt the parliamentary resolution on Sweden’s NATO accession. Regarding the issue of child protection, the prime minister said: “Anyone who commits a crime against a child must be punished and must serve their punishment without any preferential treatment ... and no pardon... Human discretion is not sufficient: laws must ensure that such cases never happen.” Orbán called for regulations to ensure that criminals sentenced for crimes against minors should not be eligible for parole “for any reason”. He asked lawmakers “to close that door”, and he also called on law courts to make their rulings in proceedings under way with that

in mind. Concerning the child abuse case at an orphanage in Bicske, in western Hungary, Orbán said it raised serious concerns apart from the presidential pardon, which had been granted to one of the defendants. Orbán asked why the director of the home, the primary defendant in the case, “could only be sentenced for a second attempt”, adding that the question must be answered. The prime minister noted he had instructed that all the heads of child protection institutions be screened, adding that “the eligibility criteria must cover [the person’s] lifestyle, sexual deviancies and psychological suitability.” Crimes against children will be “met with strong sentiments” because “everybody thinks about their children, and authorities are rightfully expected to conduct the fullest most comprehensive investigation,” he said.

Orbán thanked the outgoing president, Katalin Novák, for her work. He noted her resignation had been triggered by her decision to pardon someone convicted of covering up child abuse, adding that she should have rejected the appeal made for his pardon. “She did not do so, and her resignation was right,” Orbán said. Meanwhile, Orbán said Hungary was a strong and stable country, and the process for appointing the next head of state should be done in such a way as to cause the least possible disruption in the country’s affairs, adding that the election should take place without delay. Orbán thanked the parliamentary groups of the

allied ruling Fidesz and Christian Democrat parties for “acting in that spirit” and “showing again that they are worthy of the trust of voters”. He thanked Tamás Sulyok, the current head of the Constitutional Court, for accepting the nomination for Hungary’s next president, and asked lawmakers to support the presidential candidate. Orbán said Sulyok had “vast experience, venerable knowledge and undisputable authority”, adding that the top court’s decisions “showed a clear path” regarding the most important issues over the past years and he had won the consent of the legal profession and the public as well. “I think Hungary now needs such a president,” he said.

The prime minister also asked MPs to support a draft decree on Hungary granting its approval for Sweden’s NATO accession. Hungary’s ties with Scandinavian countries have involved many disputes, and “several external parties have tried to mediate... This has hindered rather than contributed to the resolution of those disputes,” he said. “Hungary is a sovereign country and will not be dictated to ... whether in terms of the subject or timing of its decisions,” he said. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson’s visit to Budapest last Friday “contributed to the fair and respectful relations between the two countries”, he added. “There have been and will be differences in opinion since we Hungarians and Swedes are not alike, but we treat our differences with consideration, as serious nations

do,” Orbán said. Orbán said defence-industry cooperation between Sweden and its accession to NATO would strengthen Hungarian security. In addition to extending the existing Gripen contracts, Hungary is also buying four new JAS-39 Gripen fighter jets, which will give the country the capability to carry out NATO operations outside its airspace, he said.

Meanwhile, Orbán called for an immediate ceasefire and peace talks with Russia to conclude the war in Ukraine. “We Hungarians have said from the beginning that there is no military solution to this conflict; the war should be ended rather than deepened and broadened,” Orbán said. He said Hungary provided care for Ukraine’s wounded and war-disabled, helped with restoring the country’s electricity grid and was carrying out the biggest humanitarian operation in its history. Orbán also said the government had taken important decisions since parliament’s autumn session regarding the expansion of the CSOK home purchase subsidy, wage hikes and green energy production and storage.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ: SECURITY OF HUNGARY, HUNGARIAN PEOPLE PARAMOUNT DURING WAR**

The security of Hungary and the Hungarian people are paramount in the midst of a war, Peter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, told lawmakers in parliament on Monday, arguing that

a ceasefire in Ukraine and peace talks “must happen as soon as possible”. “We condemn war ... war goes with suffering,” Szijjártó said in response to a statement made by a Ukrainian national minority representative Liliána Grexa. “We stand by Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, and we also support Ukraine’s sovereignty,” the minister said, noting that the government had adopted this position from the very beginning of the war. Szijjártó said that calling for an end to the war was the only right stance morally speaking. Many of Transcarpathian Hungarians have died, he said. “Not one Luxembourger, Dane or Dutch person has died in this war. But several Hungarians have,” he added. Noting a visit he made to the Uzhhorod (Ungvár) cemetery in January, he said that seeing the graves of people “who died senselessly at a young age” had convinced him of the need to boost peace endeavours.

Arms shipments and sanctions, he added, were “a strategic mistake” and the policies had “clearly failed”. Referring to a European Union decision to increase funds for arms shipments by 5 billion euros, Szijjártó said Hungary withheld its veto after receiving an assurance that the country would not have to participate in the deal. Further, the minister said sanctions had failed “to bring the Russian economy to its knees” while it had caused Europe hardships. “It’s time to stop the hypocrisy in Europe ... and for European countries to stand on the side of peace...” he said.

Szijjártó vowed that the government would stick the course with the "largest humanitarian action" in Hungary's history. He said Hungary had allowed more than one million refugees from Ukraine into the country and provided access to health care and education to those who stayed, while supporting their employment. Fully 1,558 kindergartens and schools have refugee students attending, while 500,000 families in 20 Ukrainian counties have received support from Hungarian state, church and charities, he said. Also, Hungary is helping to rebuild schools and hospitals, and has provided 14,000 children with camping holidays. The minister said the government wanted relations between Hungary and Ukraine to be based on mutual respect, and for that to happen current disputes should be resolved. These, he added, had arisen because the rights of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community had been "violated continuously".

Meanwhile, on the subject of the war in the Middle East, the minister said international organisations were denying or relativising the situation which "started with a brutal, hellish terrorist attack". He said it was vital to condemn the attack against Israel in the strongest possible terms, adding that a successful counter-terrorist operation in Gaza was in the interest of the entire world, with a view to warding off any further attacks of a similar kind. The priority of the international community "is to prevent the conflict from

escalating", he said. "We Hungarians are intervening, motivated by a desire to help. We pursue a foreign policy strategy based on mutual respect so that we can talk with all players in the Middle East crisis, countries that see things from all sides..." "We've managed to maintain our strategic alliance with Israel by upholding a partnership based on mutual respect while enabling dialogues with Arab countries," he added. "Had we not pursued this strategy ... then we wouldn't have managed to save the lives of Hungarian" hostages trapped in Gaza, he said.

### **KOCSIS: RULING PARTIES NOMINATE MEP LÁSZLÓ TRÓCSÁNYI FOR TOP COURT HEAD**

The allied ruling Fidesz and Christian Democrats (KDNP) will nominate László Trócsányi, the head of Hungarian Lawyers Association, to fill the post of the head of the Constitutional Court, Fidesz' group leader Máté Kocsis said on Facebook on Monday. The nomination will be announced after the vote scheduled in parliament on the election of Tamás Sulyok, the top court's outgoing president, as Hungary's next head of state. Trócsányi, who recently announced that he is stepping down as a Fidesz MEP, was justice minister in the third and fourth cabinet of Viktor Orbán between June 2014 and June 2019.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ CALLS FOR SUPPORTING EGYPT TO PREVENT ESCALATION IN MIDDLE EAST**

Egypt's stability and security is in Europe's vital interest and is paramount in terms of preventing the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, Hungary's foreign minister said after meeting his Egyptian counterpart in Geneva. Péter Szijjártó held talks with Sameh Hassan Shoukry on the sidelines of a regular session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Szijjártó said the effects of the security crisis in the Middle East were already palpable in the world and there was a risk of the conflict escalating regionally and globally. He said the international community's primary task was to prevent the crisis from escalating and Egypt played "a critical role" on this, adding that "with its moderate, wise and cautious approach" Egypt had always contributed to stability in the region and to maintaining security in Europe by holding back the waves of illegal migration. He also thanked Egypt for its continued mediation efforts since the outbreak of the war in Gaza. He thanked Shoukry for his diplomatic help in evacuating Hungarian citizens from the Palestinian enclave. Meanwhile, Szijjártó praised bilateral relations, noting the ongoing manufacturing of railway carriages for Egypt under the largest order ever received by Hungary's transport industry.

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## **COE CALLS ON HUNGARY TO IMPROVE ASSISTANCE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS**

Although Hungary has made progress in the implementation of the CoE's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the country's authorities should make further efforts to improve assistance to victims of human trafficking, the Council of Europe's GRETA group of experts said in a report. Authors of the report noted that the number of identified human trafficking victims in Hungary was 754 during the period of 2019-2022, marking a significant increase compared to the previous period covered by GRETA. According to the report, most identified victims were women and minors with sexual exploitation remaining the main form of exploitation. The report

welcomed the adoption of a new national anti-trafficking strategy, as well as guidelines issued by the chief prosecutor's office to facilitate the detection and prosecution of human trafficking cases. It also welcomed law amendments ensuring human trafficking victims free legal aid in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings. The report, however, noted that in practice victims have limited access to free legal aid and called on Hungarian authorities to remedy the situation.

In its report, GRETA expressed concern that only a few trafficking victims have received compensation from the perpetrators or the state and urged authorities "to systematically inform victims of their right to claim compensation, to make full use of the existing legislation on the seizure and confiscation of criminal assets". The report welcomed the law amendment which precludes punishment of minors for providing sexual services,

it however urged the Hungarian authorities to adopt a specific legal provision and guidance on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking.

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## **HUNGARIAN CITIZEN DETAINED IN KNIFE ATTACK IN POLAND**

Six people were injured in a knife attack at dawn on Sunday in Gdansk, and a Hungarian citizen was one of two people detained in the case, according to a police spokesperson. A 24-year-old Hungarian and a 30-year-old Polish citizen were detained, Magdalena Ciska said. The six injured were hospitalised, and one has already been discharged. The Hungarian consulate general told MTI that the investigation was ongoing, and police did not want to share detailed information for the time being. The case is not classified as a terrorist attack, but as "standard attempted homicide", an official of the consulate general said.