

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Attila Balázs

Members of the Nyírség Dance Group present traditional Easter "sprinkling"

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases 2023 Q4 budget report, figures on Feb industrial output, foreign trade

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

TOP STORY

BÓKA: HUNGARY'S EU PRESIDENCY TO ENSURE INSTITUTIONAL TRANSITION

With the European Parliament elections afoot, a key task of Hungary's EU presidency from July will be to ensure institutional continuity and the conditions for responding to challenges during the transition, the EU affairs minister said.

Commenting on his interview to Phileleftheros, a Cyprus newspaper, János Bóka noted that his visit to Cyprus was part of a tour of EU member states with a view to readying Hungary for the presidency. The trio presidency programme worked out with Spain and Belgium, endorsed by the EU Council, will focus on the bloc's economic competitiveness, its demographic challenges, and migration, he said. Also, priority tasks will include a medium-term review of the cohesion policy, bolstering European security and defence policy based on Europe's defence industry, and adopting next year's EU budget, he said. Bóka insisted that the EU had seemed to have lost its influence globally, and in the Middle East in particular, adding that the EU must be made capable of independently assessing its strategic interests and finding means to enforce these. He called the EU a "platform of cooperation" between strong member states, and he said "a change in attitude" which may be ushered in after the EP elections.

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>



SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARIAN AID REACHES AFRICA

A Hungarian aid shipment has arrived in Africa and around 10,000 tonnes of grain are being unloaded on the shores of Sudan, the foreign minister said on Friday. Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook that he had spent two days in Africa during the week and saw first-hand the extreme effects of the war in Ukraine on the continent, especially the food crisis.

This is why Hungary joined the World Food Programme initiative and the government decided to finance the delivery of 10,000 tonnes of Ukrainian grain to Africa at a cost of 3.5 million dollars, he said. "We don't just talk, we act, playing our part in every big initiative to resolve the global food crisis," he added. Szijjártó said the process of getting the grain to Africa had been slowed and hindered by some who were only interested in their own profit, but the delivery had finally arrived, "not in Europe, but in Africa, where the Ukrainian grain is actually needed".

PRESIDENT SULYOK HAS TALKS WITH ISRAELI COUNTERPART

President Tamás Sulyok had phone talks with Isaac Herzog, his Israeli counterpart, on Thursday, the Hungarian presidential palace told MTI in a statement. Herzog congratulated Sulyok on his recent election, and

the two presidents reviewed topical bilateral and global issues, the statement said. At the talks, Sulyok highlighted Hungary's being "a close ally and best friend" to Israel, as well as being a strategic partner in Europe. He expressed his sympathy with the families of victims of the October 7 attack, as well as with all residents of Israel. The statement quoted Sulyok as saying that Israel has the unalienable right to protect its sovereignty and the security of its people. Hungary firmly condemns all forms of anti-Semitism, Sulyok said, noting "the importance of Holocaust remembrance" with special regard to taking care of Jewish shrines, synagogues and cemeteries. He added that Hungary's Jewish community was also a link between the two countries. At the end of their conversation, the two presidents mutually invited each other for an official visit.

MINISTRY: DRAFT INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON RÁKOSRENDEZŐ TO GO BEFORE PARLIAMENT

The government will submit to parliament on Thursday evening a draft agreement between the governments of Hungary and the United Arab Emirates for the development of an area around the Rákosrendező railway station in Budapest, the ministry of transport and construction said. The ministry said the development project would enable a full revamp of a 130-hectare area in central Budapest

where currently 170,000 cubic metres of waste and dangerous waste pollute the environment and threaten the health of the current residents. Thanks to a 5 billion euro development, a new city centre can be developed with residential buildings, shopping centres, community areas and public parks, it added.

RÉTVÁRI: EU MEMBERS 'EXPECTED TO SUBMIT MIGRANT SETTLEMENT PLANS'

"Brussels is planning to accelerate the process of distributing migrants across member states," Bence Rétvári, state secretary at the interior ministry, told MTI on Thursday, adding that the EU was also planning to launch "a pro-immigration campaign". Following the EU migration pact's taking effect this summer each member state "will be given six months to prepare an implementation plan," Rétvári insisted. "Brussels is seeking to cut a part of cohesion funding and use it for migration purposes ... they will employ staff to control if the distribution quotas are implemented," he said. "Brussels continues managing migration rather than stemming it ... they want to carry through their will ... even if that harms Hungarian and European families," he added.

The European Commission would use public funds "to launch a comprehensive pro-immigration campaign in each member state to cast a favourable light on the

migration pact and would involve the EU representations in those countries," the state secretary said. "It is understood in Brussels that people won't support migration and they seek to convince them through a campaign in the press that they would benefit from accommodating illegal migrants in line with the quotas," he said. "All this of course will cost a huge amount of money and it raises the question of how the bureaucrats ... that have not seen any migrants ... wish to finance that," Rétvári said. Using cohesion funds for the purpose would be "shocking", he said, adding that "it simply means that for Brussels the migration pact has precedence before health, education, welfare services or developing businesses and infrastructure". "Brussels would not admit that their migration policy has failed and they seek to forcefully pass laws and regulations ... they aim to distribute migrants among the members and to fine those members that refuse to accommodate migrants, to the tune of 8 million forints (EUR 20,000) per migrant," Retvari said.

DK, SOCIALISTS, PÁRBESZÉD TO RUN ON JOINT LIST AT EP ELECTIONS

Opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), the Socialists and Párbeszéd will run on a joint list at the European parliamentary election and in the local elections in Budapest this summer, DK said on Thursday. DK MEP Klára

Dobrev told a press conference that the three parties had signed a long-term strategic agreement, the statement said. "The government has failed at several fronts, it has lost control over the country's everyday life, its credibility has collapsed at home and abroad, and the paedophile crisis has revealed its corruptness," Dobrev added. She also said that in addition to ruling Fidesz, the opposition was getting fragmented, with an unprecedentedly high number of opposition parties to run at the election. "The three-party alliance is aimed to offer a solution," she added.

In line with the statement, the alliance is planned to remain in force beyond June 9, "they will continue working together, and they will join forces for the EP and Budapest lists and later have a joint prime ministerial candidate", she said. Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony was quoted saying that the alliance would be dedicated to demonstrating that politics is a matter of service and not a matter of rule. The three-party alliance will have joint lists which will establish a fair and correct cooperation in the next term, he added.

SZENTKIRÁLYI: 'WHAT BELONGS TOGETHER IS NOW GROWING TOGETHER'

"What belongs together is now growing together," the Fidesz-KDNP candidate for mayor of Budapest said on Friday, responding to a strategic

cooperation agreement by the opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), Socialists and Párbeszéd. In a video message on Facebook, Alexandra Szentkirályi said the agreement by the opposition parties showed that "Gyurcsány's people aren't making any secret of the fact that they run city hall and the mayor". She said they had brought Budapest to the "brink of bankruptcy" in recent years and now promised to keep it there if it were up to them.

She noted that the agreement was for the long term and involved joint lists for the European Parliament and the Budapest municipal council elections as well as a joint candidate for prime minister in the 2026 general election.

"Today, Ferenc Gyurcsány has a mayor, while the citizens of Budapest have none," she said. "That's why there must be change in Budapest," she added.

STATE SECRETARY ESZTER VITÁLYOS APPOINTED GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON

Eszter Vitályos, a state secretary at the ministry of culture and innovation, has been appointed government spokesperson and state secretary at the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office effective April 1, a resolution published in the latest issue of the official gazette Magyar Közlöny shows. Vitályos was appointed by President Tamás Sulyok on the recommendation of the prime

minister. She will be replaced at the ministry of culture and innovation by Róbert Zsigó, the resolution shows. Vitályos said on Facebook that it was her "great honour" to accept the appointment. She added that she would remain an

MP representing the Pilis-Dunakanyar region.

LMP TO FILE POLICE REPORT OVER ACCIDENT AT N HUNGARY BATTERY PLANT

The opposition LMP-Greens is filing a report with the police over an accident at a battery manufacturing plant in Komárom, in northern Hungary. Several workers were taken to the hospital on Sunday after hydrogen cyanide had been released into the air at the plant of SK Batteries, LMP said in a statement, citing local news reports. The disaster management authority's mobile lab has not shown harmful amounts of dangerous substances in the air, the statement said.

Noting previous incidents, LMP slammed the government aim to establish further plants working with dangerous materials in Hungary, insisting that accidents in battery manufacturing and dismantling plants were becoming more frequent.

The party will ask questions of the government in parliament and file a police report against perpetrators unknown, in an effort to uncover those responsible, the statement added. It will also re-submit proposals to parliament to obligate battery plants to make their monitoring data public, "which [ruling] Fidesz has swept from the table so far", the statement said. LMP wished a speedy recovery to those wounded on Sunday.

HEAT RECORDS BROKEN OVER THE WEEKEND

Several heat records were broken in Hungary on Saturday, the national weather service HungaroMet said on its website. A daytime maximum of 27.6 degrees Celsius was measured in Kelebia, in southern Hungary. The last record (26.9C) was registered in Szerep, in eastern Hungary, in 1911. Meanwhile, the dawn temperature was also broken, with 15.8 C recorded in Koroncó station, in north-west Hungary, more than 1 C more than the daily minimum temperature of 14.3 measured in Lágymányos in 2017.

On Sunday, a daytime minimum of 16.6 degrees Celsius was measured in Napkor, in north-east Hungary. The last record (15.0C) was registered in Kaposvár, in southern Hungary, in

1926. The Budapest dawn temperature record was also broken, with 14.5 C recorded in Zugliget, nearly 2 C more than the daily minimum temperature of 12.6 measured at the Országút station in 2017. In the capital's 18th district, a maximum of 25.1 C was measured, breaking the record daily high of 25.0 C recorded in Ferihegy in 1989.

HUNOR: ASTRONAUT CANDIDATES COMPLETE ISOLATION TRAINING

Four candidates to become astronauts in the Hungarian to Orbit (HUNOR) programme have successfully completed a six-day isolation training session, HUNOR said on Facebook on Friday. During the training, the four candidates were placed in isolation in a 48-square-metre container with conditions similar to the International Space Station. They had to undertake simulated tasks like the ones they would in space, such as conducting experiments, while carrying on with everyday routines. The simulation also included emergency situations that required split-second decisions. The candidates' mental states and response to lack of sleep and stress situations were gauged during the training session.