

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Tibor Kapu, the Hungarian astronaut selected to be sent to the ISS

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Election campaign events**

**Stats office reports on April commercial lodgings**

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

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ SLAMS IDEA OF EUROPEAN CONSCRIPTION

Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, on Tuesday called for rejecting “the very idea of European mandatory conscription”, saying it must be made clear that “no one will take young Hungarians to the Ukrainian front”.

Speaking at a campaign event in Nagykőrös, in central Hungary, Szijjártó said that with the EP election campaign in its home stretch, the “war psychosis in Brussels has reached its peak”. He said this was evidenced by several of his counterparts calling the French president’s remarks about the possibility of sending European troops to Ukraine “an excellent idea” at the EU’s Foreign Affairs Council meeting on Monday. He said “the idea of European conscriptions is obviously about taking young Europeans to the Ukrainian-Russian front to fight.” “And we know full well how this usually works: well, boys, the ones closest will be the first to go. And then they’ll want to take young central Europeans and Hungarians to the Ukrainian-Russian front. Oh no they won’t!” “The very idea of European conscription must be rejected,” Szijjártó said. “It must be made clear that no one will take young Hungarians to the Ukrainian front with any kind of force or on the basis of any decision.” Szijjártó said the only solution to the conflict was a diplomatic settlement.

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**TRUMP: ‘ORBÁN DOESN’T WANT WAR; I DON’T WANT WAR EITHER’**

“If you look at Viktor Orbán, ‘cause we don’t want to see wars, I don’t want to see wars,” Donald Trump, the former US president, said in an interview with the podcast Timcast. Miklós Szánthó, the head of the Centre for Fundamental Rights in Budapest, published the interview on his Facebook page on Tuesday. The Republican presidential candidate said the US had not taken part in wars besides the conflict with the Islamic State terrorist organisation, “but we completed it one hundred percent”. “I don’t want wars. I think it’s so horrible, so unnecessary, and so costly in terms of lives and money -- in that order -- and it destroys these countries,” the former US president said. Trump said that had he been president at the time the war in Ukraine and the October 7 attack on Israel would never have happened. Trump called Orbán “a very powerful guy”, and he cited the Hungarian prime minister as saying that “the problem with the world today is that Donald Trump is no longer president”.

**SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY WON’T BACK RUTTE AS NATO SEC-GEN**

Hungary does not support Mark Rutte’s candidacy for NATO secretary general, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said

on Monday, adding that as full trust was a basic requirement in the alliance, and the Dutch leader had in the past talked about “bringing Hungary to its knees”. At a press conference held in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely), Szijjártó welcomed that Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, an “eastern candidate” for the post, had emerged. He said much talk focused on strengthening the alliance’s eastern flank but “it doesn’t occur to anyone that if a threat is from the east, then the secretary general might also be from the east”. The minister said that in NATO “you even have to die for each other, so it must be led by someone in whom we can trust hundred percent”. The minister confirmed that he had a tough debate with his Lithuanian counterpart in Brussels earlier in the day. He insisted that Gabrielius Landsbergis was “one of the most pro-war politicians” among the EU foreign ministers. “No matter how much someone shouts at me ... I still favour peace,” he said.

**SZIJJÁRTÓ AT WHO GA: POLITICISING INTL ORGANISATIONS ‘EXTREMELY DANGEROUS’**

One of the fallouts of the war in Ukraine is that international organisations have become “over-politicised”, which the Hungarian government considers “extremely dangerous”, the foreign minister said in his address to the general assembly of the World Health Organisation in Geneva. Péter Szijjártó said “crises

can only be resolved successfully if responses are professional and based on common sense.” According to a statement from the foreign ministry, Szijjártó added that the war in Ukraine posed a “new crisis, which could be even more serious than the almost-forgotten coronavirus pandemic”, resulting in huge geopolitical changes, including politicisation of international agencies. “One of the lessons to be learnt from the years of the pandemic is that fighting epidemics must not be considered an ideological issue,” he said. “Had Hungary approached the pandemic on a political or ideological basis, we would have had several thousand more victims.”

“Instead, we used the fantastic achievements of scientists irrespective of which geographical direction they had come from, whether from the East or from the West.” Hungary therefore implemented “the fastest and most successful” vaccination campaign in the European Union, the minister insisted.

Concerning Hungary’s upcoming EU presidency, Szijjártó said that the government would have two health-related priorities. Given that cardiovascular problems are a leading cause of mortality in the EU, the Hungarian presidency will prepare an European cardiovascular strategy and action plan, with a proposal to set up a “joint platform to coordinate clinical testing and with more emphasis on prevention and rehabilitation,” he said.

Further, he noted that the number of organ donations had dropped by 25% due to the coronavirus pandemic,

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and he proposed preparing a European transplant strategy.

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### **GULYÁS: FRENCH PRESIDENT MUST RESPECT 'HUNGARY'S JUDICIARY IS INDEPENDENT'**

Hungary "has a stamp [of approval], even from Brussels", proving that its judiciary is completely independent, and "the French president should also respect that fact", the head of the Prime Minister's Office said. Gergely Gulyás responded to remarks by French President Emmanuel Macron, who said in Dresden on Monday that some countries took money from the European Union but did not promote the independence of the judiciary or the press, cultural diversity, or the autonomy of universities. "It is not a tendency but reality in Hungary," Macron said. Gulyás told MTI that without that "stamp" of approval, the EU would not have released a large part of the funding it owed to Hungary. "We expect the French president to respect those facts, even in the last phase of the campaign preceding the European parliamentary elections, and not to question facts that even the European Commission has verified," Gulyás said

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### **DEFMIN: HUNGARY WON'T SUPPORT SENDING EUROPEAN TROOPS OR MANDATORY CONSCRIPTION**

Hungary does not support either the deployment of European troops

to the war in Ukraine or European mandatory conscription, the defence minister said in Brussels on Tuesday. In a statement sent to MTI after a meeting with his EU counterparts, Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said that in the final stretch of the European parliamentary election campaign, certain member states were putting forward "risky proposals that could easily lead to an aggravation of the war". He said member states were increasingly coming forward with the "chilling idea" of sending soldiers from European member states to Ukraine. Certain politicians, he added, were already talking about mandatory conscription at the European level. He said this would primarily concern the youth of the member states closest to Ukraine, such as Hungarians, adding that this was unacceptable to Hungary. Szalay-Bobrovniczky said the main topic of Tuesday's meeting was the EU's military support for Ukraine. He said the majority of member states wanted to even intensify the use of military equipment, and some were increasingly open about the possibility of even sending troops to Ukraine as part of the bloc's training mission. "The proposal that EU member states should shoot down Russian missiles above Ukraine is also shocking," the minister said, warning that raising this possibility would lead straight to a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO member states. He said such proposals failed to take into consideration that sending weapons and troops and the possibility of any

intervention could only lead to a protraction of the war. Only a ceasefire and peace talks could end the conflict, he added. Hungary, he said, refused to compromise on its stance that this was the only way to bring an end to the fighting. The defence minister said the Hungarian government refused to back any steps that would lead to an escalation or prolongation of the war, endanger the security of Hungarians or harm Hungarian interests.

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### **AZBEJ: HUNGARY DONATING EUR 10 M TO ADVANCE PEACE PROCESS IN SYRIA**

Hungary is donating nearly 10 million euros with the aim of advancing peace in Syria and helping Syrian refugees return to their homeland, the state secretary in charge of aid to persecuted Christian communities said on Facebook on Tuesday. Speaking on the sidelines of an international conference held in Brussels on support to Syria and to countries accommodating Syrian refugees, Tristan Azbej said he was promoting the Hungarian government's "pro-peace and anti-migration position and solidarity with persecuted Christians" at the conference. He said Hungary's position urging the international community to do everything to ensure that Syrian refugees could return had been shared by Lebanon and other neighbours of Syria. "Western proposals under which refugees and migrants would stay in other countries

without limits are dangerous and unacceptable," Azbej said, arguing this would seriously burden the recipient country and enhance risks for them.

Azbej noted that the nearly 80 participants of the conference did not include any religious leaders from the Middle East. "Not only is it pointless to discuss Syria's future without religious players, without the churches; it is also impossible to make peace and help the most vulnerable," he said. Hungary has previously helped "those suffering in Syria" with a donation of 25 million euros and will continue promoting stability in the region, helping Christian communities and contributing to the prevention of migration, he said. Azbej said the Hungarian donation includes health equipment for Egypt to help with services delivered to Syrian refugees, as well as a contribution to humanitarian programmes in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq in coordination with Christian partner organisations.

**SZIJJÁRTÓ HIGHLIGHTS  
'EXCEPTIONAL  
SIGNIFICANCE' OF EP  
ELECTIONS IN HUNGARY,  
ROMANIA**

The European parliamentary and municipal elections on June 9 "will be exceptionally important" both in Hungary and Romania, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely) on Monday. The more MEPs Fidesz and the Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania

(RMDSZ) have, "the stronger the voice of peace in Brussels will be", he told a joint press conference with Hunor Kelemen, RMDSZ's leader. "Romania and Hungary have lived in the neighbourhood of war for two and a half years... It will not come as a surprise that we Hungarians want the swiftest possible peace." "We Hungarians don't want to get involved in the war in the neighbourhood ... we do not want a nuclear war," he said.

Szjijártó noted that Hungary and Romania are scheduled to hold their European parliamentary and municipal elections on the same day. "On June 9 we will decide whether we want peace or war, and we will elect the officials to lead local communities," he said. Both Fidesz and RMDSZ supported peace and trusted that there would be as many pro-peace deputies in the EP as possible, Szijjártó said. The two parties have an interest in good Hungary-Romania cooperation, he said, adding that "the stronger RMDSZ is in Romania, the easier it is to build good ties." "The stronger representation RMDSZ has in municipalities, the stronger the Hungarian communities will be, and the stronger they are, the stronger and more stable support they can provide for good cooperation between Hungary and Romania," Szijjártó said, calling on ethnic Hungarian voters in Romania to support RMDSZ. Szijjártó said he had pledged continued, close cooperation between the Hungarian government and RMDSZ, "in order to build further success stories in

bilateral cooperation, especially in the economy. The government will work together with RMDSZ to promote Romania's long-deserved Schengen entry," he added.

**KNESSET'S ROTHMAN  
IN BUDAPEST: RULE LAW  
OFTEN GETS USED  
AS 'WEAPON'**

Simcha Rothman, Member of the Knesset, in his address at a Budapest conference on the "Rule of Law As Lawfare" on Tuesday, gave an outline of democracy and the justice reform in Israel and the war in Gaza. Speaking at a panel discussion, Rothman, chair of the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee, said that "Israel has a strong and independent justice system and this will stay so even after the reforms," referring to a reform law package. He said "the rule of law" and "constitution" were nice words but "if they lose their meaning, if what is black is called white, than nothing will stand in the way of power", adding that "the rule of law can be used against Hungary and other EU member states as a weapon". Commenting on accusations of genocide against Israel, Rothman said that his country "is the only one that does not commit a genocide", adding that "even peacekeeping missions claim civilian victims". He called accusations of genocide "a clear abuse of the rule of law".

István Stumpf, a member of the prime minister's Strategic Council,



told the same conference that Europe was currently “struggling to find an identity of its own”. “What we see is not a constitutional crisis but one of identity, and the debates on the rule of law are in fact reflections of a conflict between different sets of values,” Stumpf said in his address. Talking about an ideal concept of the rule of law, Stumpf said a discussion of the rule of law “has become a part of daily politics with the two sides of the political spectrum routinely accusing each other of disrespecting the rule of law.” He said Europe in recent decades had lost its “role of setting an example and acting as a renewer,” and insisted that “an overgrowth of EU bureaucracy and the suppression of the national interest has created a shadow power that lacks any democratic authorisation and is only interested in building a federal structure above member states”. “This is a war between the ideals of sovereign nation states and an ideal of sovereignty and democracy superimposing nations,” he said. A lack of consensus concerning the definition and essence of the rule of law “could be used as a weapon against nations ... accusations against some members is actually a legal disguise for antagonistic interests, preventing values and ideals different from those of the mainstream from being presented as an alternative vision for Europe’s future,” Stumpf said.

The conference was co-organised by the Danube Institute, the Center for Fundamental Rights and The European Conservative magazine.

### **RÉTVÁRI: 3 MILLION PEOPLE USING STATE HEALTH APP**

The state-backed health app that contains people’s complete health documentation is now being used by 3 million citizens, a government health official said. From July 1, patients will be able to book an appointment for outpatient specialist care using the app, Bence Rétvári, the parliamentary state secretary of the interior ministry, told a conference. He said that owing to developments in the health sector, life expectancy at birth has increased from 74.7 to 76.9 years since 2010, and the number of healthy years went up from 57.5 to 62.5. Whereas the OECD member states have an average of 3.2 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants, Hungary has 3.3, as against the EU average of 4. Addressing current shortcomings, he said the outpatient management system must be improved and doctors and nurses should be relieved of red tape. Rétvári said the fact that 3 million people were now using the app, with 2.5 million logins taking place each month, would help to smooth out the mismatches between the typical availability of doctors and the times that patients tended to book appointments.

### **INTERIOR MINISTER, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR PRESENT RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS AWARD**

Interior Minister Sándor Pintér and Israeli Ambassador Yakov Hadas-Handelsman awarded the Righteous Among the Nations award posthumously and the Medals of Bravery to former Italian literally translator and diplomat in Hungary Antonio Widmar, his wife Irén Widmar and their daughter Lucia Karsai at a ceremony in Budapest. In his address, Pintér said “on this day we remember those who had the courage in horrid times, who, driven by their internal moral order, hurried to save the lives of persecuted Jews in the second world war by risking their own”.

The Israeli ambassador said fighting against any form of anti-Semitism and discrimination was a duty of not only Jews but each and every person. He said “it is our moral obligation to never forget and keep reminding our fellow people of the horrors of the Holocaust,” adding that learning the past and the deeds of Antonio Widmar and his family was owed to his grandson, historian László Karsai who had researched his family’s history. The ambassador said that values represented by the Widmar family such as courage, compassion, self-sacrifice, social responsibility and integrity would be guiding principles for future generations. Antonio



Widmar worked at the press section of the Italian embassy in Budapest before and during the second world war and provided false identification documents to journalist and poet László Hárs and other persecuted Jews. Hárs was hiding safely in the apartment of Widmar's wife and daughter in central Budapest's Széll Kálmán Square, it was noted at the ceremony.

The awards were presented to Zsuzsa Karsai. The ceremony was attended by state secretaries Bence Rétvári and Attila Fülöp and members of the family, including constitutional lawyer Dániel Karsai. The Righteous Among the Nations Award is the highest honour expressing the gratitude of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. It is granted to non-Jews in recognition of their humanity and courage in saving the life of Jews by risking their own.

### **LMP CALLS ON GOVT TO CEASE STATE SUBSIDIES FOR BATTERY INDUSTRY**

Opposition LMP has called on the government to cease state subsidies for battery plants, arguing that in addition to damage wrought on the environment, the Hungarian economy had become vulnerable to the industry becoming outsized. Economic data indicate that the industry has declined, Örs Tatlák, a national board member of the green party, told a press conference, noting that car production, including battery production, had fallen by 18%. Further, government

subsidies, he insisted, had weakened and distorted the structure of the economy. The government, he said, had already spent more than 1,500 billion forints (EUR 39bn) of taxpayer money on subsidizing the location of battery plants in the country, adding that the money could have been better spent on energy-saving, renewable energy and sustainable food production.

### **NUMBER OF REGISTERED JOBSEEKERS EDGES LOWER**

There were 225,978 registered jobseekers in Hungary in May, 1% fewer than the same month a year earlier and down 2% from April, the National Employment Service (NFSZ) said. Fully 3,070 Hungarians registered as jobseekers for the first time in May, while there were 26,804 jobseeker registrations, including repeats. Jobseekers receiving no benefits accounted for 43% of the total, while 35% had sought work for more than a year. Jobseekers were registered for 495 days on average.

Sándor Czomba, the state secretary for employment policy at the national economy ministry, said after the data was released on Tuesday that the steady decline in the number of registered jobseekers continued in May which saw the third lowest figure since the 1990 change in political system. There are now 1 million more people working than during the term of the previous Socialist-led government,

with an average salary three times higher, he said, adding that compared with 2010, the number of people looking for work has fallen by more than 400,000. The government's goal is to boost employment further by mobilising the domestic labour market reserves of around 300,000 people as well as increasing employment among the 20-64 year-olds from the 81 to 85%, financed by programmes worth 460 billion forints until 2030.

### **DEFENDANT IN 'ANTIFA CASE' SENTENCED TO 22 MONTHS IN PRISON**

A Budapest appeals court sentenced the secondary defendant in the so-called "antifa case" to one year and ten months in prison in a binding ruling on Tuesday. The German national had previously pleaded guilty to the charges and waived his right to a trial. On Jan. 29, the Budapest Municipal Court sentenced the defendant to three years in a maximum security prison for attempted battery and ruled that he be expelled from Hungary for a period of five years. According to the first-instance sentence, the defendant was a member of "an organisation of young adults sympathising with far-left ideologies" who had planned on "taking the ideological fight to militant far-right sympathisers who espoused fascist views" by carrying out violent attacks and taking part in demonstrations and protests. The court said the members of the organisation had travelled to Budapest

to take part in coordinated attacks in connection with the anniversary of the Nazi breakout of the Castle District during the siege of the capital on Feb. 11, 1945.

On February 9-10 last year, the members of the organisation used telescopic stun batons and pepper spray to attack several people whom they picked because they were wearing clothing indicating far-right views. The prosecution appealed for a harsher, and the defence for a lighter sentence. On Tuesday, the Budapest Court of Appeals reduced the first-instance three-year prison sentence to one year and ten months. On May 15, the appeals court decided to release the case's primary defendant into criminal supervision on bail of 16 million forints (EUR 41,600). The police said earlier that five coordinated attacks had been carried out on Feb. 9-11 in 2023 in Budapest, leaving four victims with serious and another five

with light injuries. Three suspects were arrested on Feb 11, including a 38-year-old Italian woman, a 29-year-old German man and a 26-year-old German woman.

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### **ALBANIAN NATIONAL APPREHENDED SMUGGLING ARMS, AMMUNITIONS IN S HUNGARY**

The police have detained an Albanian national who attempted to smuggle machine guns, handguns and several thousand rounds of ammunition from Serbia to Hungary, the public prosecutor's office of southern Hungary told MTI. The suspect was driving a minibus which was found to contain nine machine guns, three handguns and some 2,700 rounds of ammunition, a spokesperson said. Criminal proceedings have been initiated while the suspect is remanded in custody.

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### **BODY OF LAST VICTIM IN VERŐCE BOAT ACCIDENT RECOVERED**

The body of the last victim missing after a boat accident that took place on the River Danube at Verőce last weekend has been recovered, police said on Facebook on Monday evening. The 18-year-old woman's body was found in the area of Verőce, the police said.

In the accident late on May 18, the victims' motor boat collided with a cruise ship. One of the boat's eight passengers managed to swim ashore whereas seven died. The cruise ship's captain, a Czech national, was detained on suspicion of failing to provide help after the collision. An investigation has found that the helmsman of the boat was drunk and steering the boat in zig-zags across the river. Before the collision, the motor boat took a sharp turn but the ship ended up crushing the much smaller vessel nonetheless, the police said.