

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Police leaders lower wreath in commemoration of river tragedies near Margaret Bridge

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**NATO foreign ministers meet in Prague**

**EU trade ministers meet in Brussels**

**Stats office publishes April demography figures**

**Election campaign events**

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

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ IN MINSK WARNS OF WAR ESCALATION

Hungary “is shocked” by statements about sending Western troops to Ukraine, the possible use of nuclear weapons and even introducing conscription in Europe, the foreign minister said in Minsk.

Both countries must face the “dramatic consequences” of the war in Ukraine on a daily basis, Péter Szijjártó said at a joint press conference with Belarusian counterpart Sergei Aleinik. “We Hungarians have already paid a huge price irrespective of the fact that it is not at all our war ... Hungary’s goal is clear: we want to stay out of that war in neighbouring Ukraine.” He insisted that there was no military solution to the war, adding that “in the battlefield there are only death and destruction”. “But as long as we are in government in Hungary, we will not allow a single Hungarian to be taken to the Ukraine-Russia front... We strongly protest against introducing mandatory conscription in Europe,” he said.

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said Hungary and Belarus have signed a nuclear energy cooperation deal under which “Belarusian experience could be used in the Paks upgrade project”. “I hope that Belarusian companies can soon join US, German, and French companies that are currently working at the Paks nuclear plant construction as partners of Rosatom,” he added.

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## **HUNGARY SEEKS COOPERATION IN AREAS NOT AFFECTED BY SANCTIONS**

The Hungarian government wants to develop its cooperation with Belarus in all areas that are not affected by the EU's sanctions against Russia, the foreign minister said in Minsk, adding that Belarus was also ready to cooperate. Péter Szijjártó also noted that he was accompanied by representatives of 24 Hungarian companies on his visit, and added that the delegation was set to have 92 bilateral talks while in Minsk.

Szijjártó called Belarus as "an extremely important factor" in Hungarian energy security, noting that 80% of Hungary's crude oil supplies come through Belarus, with a total of 4.5 million tonnes last year and nearly 2 million tonnes delivered since the start of 2024. Secure oil supplies to Hungary "would be impossible without the Druzhba pipeline", he said. He noted that "no other pipeline of such capacity comes to Hungary".

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said in the next sports season Hungary would continue to offer an opportunity for Belarusian sports teams to play their matches in Hungary "just as it had done in the case of Israel and Ukraine." He noted that Israel's national football team, the Ukrainian handball team and Belarusian teams had played cup matches in Hungary in the past season. The Hungarian government is against

"mixing up geopolitics and sports" and "we are also against political factors determining who is allowed to compete in the Olympic Games and who is not," he said.

Addressing a Hungary-Belarus business forum, Szijjártó said: "We Hungarians do not believe in a policy of sanctions. That policy, in our experience over the past two and a half years, has failed, caused enormous damage, and more to European economies than to the Russian". He noted that bilateral trade totalled 142 million euros last year and has already grown by an annual 20% so far this year. Company leaders in the delegation he is heading represent the food, agriculture, pharmaceutical, construction and machinery sectors, the minister said. Szijjártó said that the Hungarian government will continue to allow Belarusian nationals to obtain a Hungarian visa without restrictions, adding that "we will not accept any sort of pressure on the matter". Citizens of Belarus can apply for a visa in eight cities, he added. Speaking about cooperation in education, the minister mentioned the government scheme ensuring 50 yearly grants for Belarusian students studying at a Hungarian university.

## **KÖVÉR MEETS EGYPTIAN COUNTERPART IN BUDAPEST**

Speaker of Parliament László Kövér met Egyptian counterpart Hanafi Gebali in Parliament on Wednesday, the National

Assembly's press office said. Hungary considers Egypt a key strategic partner in the Middle Eastern and north African regions with which it can maintain close cooperation as countries pursuing a foreign policy based on sovereign and national interests, Kövér said, adding that the two countries were bound by their religious and cultural tolerance and respect for traditions and families. Kövér said Hungary appreciated Egypt's role in stabilising the north African region, underlining that Europe's security began with north Africa. He said the world was facing a dangerous situation unlike any it had encountered before, adding that the world's leading politicians were unaware of this danger, and countries like Egypt and Hungary had to aim to have a bigger influence on global developments than the more powerful countries.

Parliament's press office cited Gebali as saying that Egypt had made strenuous efforts to put a complete stop to the illegal migration waves heading towards Europe. He asked Hungary to support the recognition of and financial compensation for this scheme by the European Union during its upcoming presidency of the Council of the EU.

Kövér praised the two countries' economic relations, underlining that Hungarian exports to Egypt had grown 1.5-fold and bilateral trade turnover had more than doubled over more than a decade. Kövér and Gebali hailed their countries' cooperation in agriculture, the defence industry and tourism and the manufacturing of joint Hungarian-

Egyptian rolling stock as “success stories”. As regards the Russia-Ukraine war, the speakers said both their countries urged an immediate ceasefire and political talks. Gebali also said Egypt was making every possible effort to bring an end to the armed conflict in the Gaza Strip, and asked for Hungary’s help in this, noting that it enjoyed good relations with both the Arab states and Israel.

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### **FINMIN: HUNGARY RECEIVES HUF 184 BN IN EU FUNDING TO RAISE TEACHERS’ PAY**

Hungary has received a total 184 billion forints (EUR 478m) worth of EU funding to be used for a pay hike for kindergarten and school teachers, the finance minister said. Mihály Varga said 340 billion forints from central coffers had been used for the same purpose at the beginning of this year. Since last December, Brussels has released a total of 734 billion forints worth of funds withheld from Hungary before, Varga said on Facebook.

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### **ENERGY MINISTRY: HUNGARIAN DELEGATION VISITS ‘GEOTHERMAL INNOVATION WORLD LEADER’ ICELAND**

Attila Steiner, the energy ministry’s state secretary for energy and climate policy, and Bence Gonda, the deputy head of the Supervisory Authority for Regulated Activities, discussed the application of geothermal energy with

Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Iceland’s minister for environmental protection, energy and climate affairs, in Reykjavik. Iceland, a leader in geothermal innovation, “is a remarkable example” for covering household and industry electricity and heating needs entirely with renewable resources and green energy, Steiner said. The Hungarian delegation and Thórdarson were in agreement on the importance of geothermal energy today, noting it was valuable, safe, sustainable and renewable alternative source in the energy mix. The impending completion of Hungary’s National Geothermal Strategy may help Hungary to be the first EU member state to respond to the European Parliament’s opinion issued in January urging the acceleration of investments in the sector, Steiner said.

Hungary will place special emphasis on the topic of geothermal energy during its upcoming EU presidency in the second half of the year, he said, noting that Hungary has long been among the top five countries in Europe when it came to the use of geothermal energy.

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### **AGMIN CALLS FOR END TO EU’S ‘HYPOCRITICAL FARM POLICY’**

At the upcoming EP election on June 9 voters should “put an end to the hypocritical agricultural policy of the EU”, the minister of agriculture told public broadcaster M1. István Nagy said “while European producers are made to adhere to each single regulation”, controls on products

imported through the Ukrainian border have been lifted. “Uncontrolled Ukrainian grain is pouring into Europe in large quantities,” he said, adding that in April alone 1.4 million tonnes of maize and 750,000 tonnes of wheat had entered the European market. Nagy suggested that this year’s imports could even exceed last year’s record total. Ukraine has abandoned its traditional grain markets and is now shipping its grain to Europe rather than the Arab countries,” the minister said.

“Competition is impossible because for European farmers it means as if they had to stand at the start line with a leg or hand cut off,” Nagy said and called for creating “fully fair market conditions”. June 9 “will offer a chance to replace all those that view agriculture through dark green spectacles ... and return to normalcy”. He said the Hungarian EU presidency would offer a chance “to reverse trends ... before the new bureaucracy in Brussels enters office we will have a chance to think freely without being influenced.” Nagy noted that Hungary will host an informal meeting of his European counterparts in which participants would draft a recommendation for the community’s agricultural policy after 2027.

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### **POLICE COMMEMORATE VICTIMS OF HABLEANY AND VEROCE BOAT ACCIDENTS**

Budapest police on Wednesday commemorated the victims of the Hableány and Verőce River

Danube boat accidents in Budapest at Margaret Bridge, the site of the Hableány accident. Five years ago the Hableány tragedy claimed 27 lives, the police headquarters (BRFK) said on its website. On the evening of May 29, 2019, the Hableány tourist boat traveling north on the Danube was pushed under the water by a cruise ship. On board the Hableány were 35 people, 33 of whom were South Korean tourists and two were Hungarian crew. Only seven people were rescued alive from the river. Meanwhile, the motor boat accident at Verőce on the night of May 18, 2024, claimed the lives of seven people, and the Budapest police dropped a flower for each of the victims into the river in commemoration of the recent disaster.

### **GUEST NIGHTS FALL ON HOLIDAY BASE EFFECT**

Guest nights at commercial and private tourism accommodations in Hungary fell by 4.7% to 2,886,000 in April from the same period a year earlier, the Central Statistical Office

(KSH) said. The number of guest nights spent by domestic travellers fell by 8.9% to 1,316,000, and guest nights spent by foreign visitors slipped 0.9% to 1,570,000. In January-April, the number of guest nights at tourism accommodations rose by an annual 7.7% to 9,961,000.

The capital was the most popular destination in April, accounting for 1,250,000 guest nights. Lake Balaton was runner-up, with 369,000 guest nights. Revenue of commercial accommodations, which include hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, camp sites, resorts and hostels, rose by 3.6% to 69.2 billion forints (EUR 180m).

### **MCC YOUTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE: HALF OF HUNGARIAN 15-19 YEAR- OLDS USE CHATGPT**

Young Hungarians increasingly feel the impact of AI in their daily lives, according to a survey by the Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC) Youth Research Institute published on Wednesday. More than half of 15-

29 year-olds have used ChatGPT or similar AI apps and one in ten use them regularly, with 71% of them living in Budapest, 63% in county seats, 49% in smaller cities, and 42% in villages. While the majority regard AI as useful, more men than women think so. The research was carried out in January 2024 with a representative sample of 1,000 young Hungarians.

### **AUTHORITIES DETAIN MINOR ON CHARGES OF PROMOTING ISLAMIST PROPAGANDA**

Hungarian authorities have taken into custody a minor on charges of posting online propaganda content promoting the Islamic State terrorist organisation. The prosecutor's office has launched an investigation based on information from Hungary's Counter-terrorism force TEK. The suspect prepared a video with Hungarian subtitles promoting the Islamic State and uploaded it onto the terrorist organisation's site in December 2022.