

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Attila Balázs

The triplets of a four-week-old cougar at Nyíregyháza Zoo

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**NATO foreign ministers meet in Prague**

**Stats office reports on March foreign trade, April industrial PPI**

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Election campaign events**

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

## TOP STORY

# 'HEATED DEBATES' EXPECTED AT NATO MEETING

Heated debates can be expected at Friday's meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Prague, the foreign minister has said.

"We can expect war psychosis to peak and [participants] to support crazier ideas than ever," Péter Szijjártó said in Prague. Szijjártó said he did not expect "a friendly atmosphere", and he warned of "a very dangerous situation". "Apparently our European colleagues have plunged themselves with great vigour into the deepening pits of war psychosis ... and I believe that the presence of the Americans and the British will even stimulate this hysterical state," he said. "And I expect the meeting of NATO foreign ministers to be surrounded by an even greater pro-war atmosphere than before..." he said. Regarding a proposal to allow Ukrainian forces to use Western weapons to fire into Russian territory, he said the Russians far from lacked equipment and were bound to retaliate, leading to "many, many more casualties". Arms deliveries to Ukraine would increase the number of weapons on both sides of the front, causing more deaths. "Even the NATO decision to cross the red line that we drew ourselves two years ago in February is very dangerous. NATO crossed this red line by increasing its own role in coordinating weapons deliveries and the training of Ukrainian soldiers," he said.

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## **NATO PREPARING FOR UKRAINE MISSION 'AT FULL TILT'**

Preparations for NATO's Ukraine mission have been progressing at full tilt in recent weeks, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said, adding that this was "extremely dangerous" and contrary to the alliance's original mission, as the organisation was not under attack. "There is no need to use war rhetoric or create war tension," the minister said. "This is a defence alliance, not one designed to attack." He said the government had made it clear in recent weeks that "no Hungarian soldiers can take part in such operations, no Hungarian territories can be used for such operations and no Hungarian taxpayers funds can be used either." Yet Hungary was being "put under pressure to join this", he added. "Naturally, I will continue to resist tomorrow, and make it clear that there is no way Hungary can be forced to join this operation. And it is still unclear how the mission can go ahead without Hungarian taxpayers' money being used. So heated debates can be expected tomorrow," Szijjártó said.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: WAR IN UKRAINE CAUSING 'SERIOUS ECONOMIC DAMAGE'**

Apart from the casualties and destruction, the war in Ukraine "is

causing serious economic damage", which underlines the importance of establishing peace as soon as possible, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, said in Brussels, adding that "unimpeded economic development" was conditional on peace. Europe "is facing serious difficulties and its economy is quickly deteriorating," foreign ministry statement quoted Szijjártó as saying at the council meeting with foreign trade on its agenda. "The situation has been deteriorating since the outbreak of the war." Szijjártó said the EU's "ill-advised" measures had dealt a serious blow to the bloc's competitiveness, adding that in wake of the EU sanctions against Russia "energy prices and inflation have skyrocketed". He said that unlike the US and China, the EU had failed to take measures to protect their own businesses. "What's more, the EU has introduced further red tape hindering economic growth". While the US administration allocated 370 billion dollars to support strategic industries, "member states here need a permit from Brussels to provide a subsidy for investment projects from their own coffers," he said, adding that the European Commission's procedures "often take years to complete".

The minister slammed the EU for applying "an ideological approach to economic issues, as a consequence of which the world is falling into blocs again, which also hinders economic growth." "Brussels and other western European capitals are seeking to destroy absolutely sensible East-West cooperation," he said, adding

that this could potentially "knock out" the European economy. It was "indispensable" to help the EU "become a winner rather than a loser in the global economy's most significant revolutionary transition; that is, the transformation of car making," he said. Hungary is a good example of the benefits of cooperation between East and West, Szijjártó said, adding that cooperation with Eastern countries had brought the country "to the forefront of the global technological revolution, with tens of thousands of modern jobs." Hungary has "thus become the meeting point for Eastern and Western economies, thanks to a marked presence of German, Chinese, and South Korean companies," he said. The Hungarian government "will not support any measures ... that could hinder, prevent, or make more expensive cooperation between the EU and China," he added. The minister insisted that the European and Hungarian economies "could not grow as much without Chinese investments as with close cooperation."

Meanwhile, the council voted to increase duty on Russian and Belarusian food imports, Szijjártó said, adding that Hungary was the only country that had abstained. All this, the foreign minister said, "highlights the importance of peace". "Hungary has paid a high price for the war in the form of 10 billion euros of dearer energy bills," he said, adding that the country had also spent most of last year fighting inflation. The foreign minister insisted that the war and

sanctions in response were to blame for rising inflation instead of the government's "so-called mistaken economic strategy and bad decisions".

### **EU AFFAIRS MINISTER: ISSUE OF WAR AND PEACE AT STAKE IN EP ELECTION**

At stake in the upcoming EP election is whether there will be war or peace, Hungary's EU affairs minister said. "European institutions have allowed, either purposefully or out of negligence, Europe to drift into the Russian-Ukrainian war," János Bóka said in a post on Facebook. "And unless we send a strong message at the EP election that we do not support that process, in fact see it as dangerous and catastrophic, it will continue even after the ballot," the minister said, adding that the EU had failed in its efforts to improve the community's competitiveness over the past five years just it had failed to tackle the migration crisis and offer prospects to Europe's agricultural sector. He said change was needed in Brussels to resolve those issues and "keep the [European] community out of war".

### **KOVÁCS: QUESTIONS AT ORBÁN'S PRESSERS NOT PRE-SCREENED**

Questions at Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's hours-long press conferences are not pre-screened, Zoltan Kovács, the state secretary for international relations

and communication, said on the X platform on Wednesday. Reacting to recent remarks by Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, Kovács said De Croo "has distinguished himself for his Hungary-bashing and Orbánophobia so we're not surprised at this latest smear, but he's also got a loose relationship with the facts".

Kovács said De Croo had "clearly never seen any of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's hours-long press conferences - no, the questions are not pre-screened". "One might suggest that the honourable PM of Belgium spend less time throwing cheap jabs at his fellow EU prime minister and more time contemplating why he's struggling to win re-election on June 9 in the national vote," Kovács said. "There was that unfortunate story about the national budget a while back, but perhaps also it's time to change that pro-war stance."

De Croo said in response to a question from Belgian daily De Knack on Wednesday that he did not want to cooperate with the Vlaams Belang party under any circumstances, because "we are not going to plunge Flanders into chaos". He said he believed in democracy, adding that if he were an "Orbán-like prime minister", his spokesperson would have asked to be given the questions in advance, "and you would have only been allowed to ask me the questions that I liked". "Fortunately, we don't live in such a country," he added.

### **POLLSTERS EXPECT 5 PARTIES TO CLINCH EP MANDATES**

The ruling Fidesz and Christian Democrat (KDNP) parties are expected to receive most mandates at the European parliamentary elections on June 9, with another four parties standing a chance to make it to the EP, the representatives of five polling institutions said in a roundtable discussion on Thursday. Presenting their findings, heads of the Alapjogokért Központ, the Nézőpont institute, Magyar Társadalomkutató, Real-PR 93 and Századvég agreed that the runner-up was likely to be the Tisza party followed by the alliance of the Democratic Coalition (DK), the Socialists and Párbeszéd, with the radical Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) and the Two-tailed Dog party (MKKP) bringing up the rear.

Nézőpont's head, Ágoston Sámuel Mráz, said the pollster's survey conducted with a 1,000-strong sample between May 20 and 22, found that Fidesz-KDNP had the support of 47% of voters, while 24% supported the Tisza party, 9% the DK-Socialist-Párbeszéd alliance, and Mi Hazánk and MKKP stood at 7% each. Other parties "have no chance of getting in", he said.

While turnout is notoriously difficult to forecast, it is expected to be similar to that of previous elections, Mráz said. The last EP election mobilised 43% of voters, while 48% turned out for the last local election, he said.

Similarly, Alapjogokért has found that the ruling parties's support was the strongest (47%), with Tisza at 26%, the DK-Socialist-Párbeszéd group at 8%, and Mi Hazánk and MKKP at 6% each.

Gyula Juhász of Magyar Társadalomkutató cited a larger survey conducted over 3 weeks that probed the opinions of 4,000 voters, saying that the results showed Fidesz-KDNP's "enormous" lead growing as the elections drew near, and stood at 51% at the time of polling. Meanwhile, Tisza polled at 25% DK-Socialists-Párbeszéd at 8%, while Mi Hazánk and MKKP were teetering near the parliamentary threshold, at 4-5%, he said.

**GOVT OFFICIAL:  
HUNGARIAN WEEKEND  
SCHOOLS 'CLOSE  
CONNECTION POINTS'**

The 260 Hungarian weekend schools operating around the world serve as one of the closest points connecting the diaspora communities with Hungary, a deputy state secretary in the Prime Minister's office said at a conference organised for volunteers teaching in those schools, in Budapest.

Péter Szilágyi told the participants that they are "one of the most important keys" of preserving the community of all Hungarians. He said that since 2011 the government has paid special attention to diaspora Hungarians, noting programmes launched for them and the setting up of a network of weekend schools. Hungarian weekend schools educate some 11,000 children with the help of 1,000 teachers, Szilágyi said.

**KSH: 6,139 BIRTHS, 9,396  
DEATHS IN APRIL**

The number of births fell by 3,9% in April compared with the same month in the previous year, while deaths went down by 10%, according to preliminary data published by the Central Statistical Office (KSH). Meanwhile, the number of marriages was up by 6.4% with 3,688 couples tying the knot in the same period. Fully 6,139 children were born in April, while there were 9,396 deaths. The natural population loss was 3,257 people compared with 4,067 in April 2023. Fully 83,012 children were born between May 2023 and April 2024, 7.6% fewer

than in the same period of last year. Altogether 125,930 people died in the same period, 4.9% fewer than last year. There were 8.0 live births and 13.6 deaths per thousand inhabitants in the first three months.

**MINISTRY: HUNGARY GAS  
RESERVES AT 75%**

Gas volume in Hungary's storage facilities is at 75%, the fourth highest in Europe, the energy ministry said on Facebook. The nearly 5 billion cubic metres of gas currently stored in Hungary's facilities is twice the total amount Hungarian households used last year, the ministry said. According to European Union targets, Hungary was required to fill its reserves to 65% of capacity by July 1, a threshold the country reached by May 1, the ministry said. The final target is 90% of capacity by Nov. 1 for all member states, it said. Hungary has also managed to cut gas consumption by one fifth in two consecutive years, compared with the average of the previous five years. Due preparation and more conscientious consumption have contributed to uninterrupted supply security, the ministry said.

