

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Márton Mönus

World war centenary: memorial of Hungarian heroes inaugurated

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Conference on political reorganisation in Europe**

**22nd Kriminalexpó opens in Budapest**

## TOP STORY

# FUNDING EXTENDED TO SZEKLERLAND

Hungary will expand its cross-border economic development scheme aimed at helping ethnic Hungarian communities beyond the border to Szeklerland, Romania.

After talks with Hunor Kelemen, head of the ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ party, in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár), Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said the programme so far has only been implemented in Mureş County, targeting farmers and small companies. Last year, the Hungarian government disbursed 1.5 billion forints (EUR 4.7m) to the region's farmers and entrepreneurs, he said, adding that the 800 grant applications that have been submitted this year were still being assessed. Szijjártó also noted that next year's budget earmarks 50 billion forints for economic development schemes, a significant chunk of which will be geared towards Transylvania and Szeklerland.

The minister lamented the Romanian government's failure so far to approve the opening of a Hungarian cultural institute in Cluj-Napoca. He said the Hungarian government would gladly support the opening of a Romanian cultural institute in any Hungarian city. "I would encourage the Romanians to open as many cultural institutes in Hungary as possible," Szijjártó said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY- ROMANIA TRUST LEADS TO SOLUTIONS TO SENSITIVE ISSUES**

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said it was important for Hungary and Romania to achieve “success stories” together, arguing that this would create the trust that could allow the two countries to pursue solutions to any sensitive issues between them. Szijjártó welcomed progress made in such sensitive areas as relaunching the Catholic secondary school in Târgu Mureş (Marosvásárhely).

Kelemen said he and Szijjártó reviewed the “problematic issues” between Hungary and Romania. He said Romania’s ethnic Hungarian community was interested in continuous dialogue between the two countries and called for their strategic partnership to be strengthened. Szijjártó also held talks with ethnic Hungarian business leaders and was scheduled to have a working dinner with the local leaders of Hungary’s historical churches.

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## **OPPOSITION PÁRBEZÉD RE-ELECTS SZABÓ, KARÁCSONY AS CO- LEADERS**

Tímea Szabó and Gergely Karácsony were both re-elected unchallenged for another 18 months as the liberal opposition Párbeszéd party’s co-leaders at a party meeting on Sunday. At a news conference, Karácsony said Párbeszéd

will campaign together with the Socialist Party in next year’s European Parliament elections. In the meantime, Párbeszéd will seek out other partners for a wide-ranging “European alliance”. He said that whereas several opposition parties were preparing their own separate lists for the EP election, many civil society organisations and social movements shared Párbeszéd’s precepts. So it wants the broadest possible social support for their EP list with the Socialists, he added.

Szabó said Párbeszéd’s alliance with other opposition forces would only endure if Karácsony was re-elected as the mayor of the Budapest district of Zugló in next year’s local elections, with the support of their allies at local, regional and national level. Szabó said Párbeszéd’s key policy is to introduce a basic universal income. Also, the party wants to work to scrap the expansion of the Paks nuclear power plant and solve housing problems, she said. Further, health care and education will be priority areas, she added.

In response to a question, Karácsony said he continued to back a primary for selecting the opposition’s candidate for Budapest mayor and hopefully related agreements would be ready by the end of the year. Any attempt to split the opposition forces in the capital would be irresponsible and lead to the re-election of Fidesz’s István Tarlós, he added. With a primary, votes will converge on the best candidate as part of a democratic process, he said. “I find this principle more important than any personal ambitions,” he added.

The opposition Socialist and Párbeszéd parties will set up a joint list for next May’s European parliamentary elections, the leader of the Socialist Party said over the weekend. “The majority of Hungarians want Hungary to remain a member of the European Union,” Bertalan Tóth told a press conference on the sidelines of the party’s assembly meeting. Tóth said the two parties would fight to limit the influence of political forces working to disintegrate the EU on the bloc’s decisions.

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## **HOUSE SPEAKER KÖVÉR ON OFFICIAL VISIT TO PERU**

Hungarian House Speaker László Kövér held talks with Peruvian Prime Minister César Villanueva, Foreign Minister Néstor Popolizio and other officials in Lima, his press office said. Kövér, who is on an official tour to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru to strengthen Hungary’s ties with the region, said that Peru’s large population and fast-growing market offer excellent opportunities to Hungary. Kövér and Villanueva agreed that the recent reopening of the Hungarian embassy in Peru and the Peruvian one in Hungary had boosted political, economic, cultural, educational and technological cooperation. Trade has also benefited, they said.

Kövér and Popolizio said that the two countries’ agreement on eliminating double taxation created more predictable conditions for

Hungarian and Peruvian businesses. They agreed that due to its geographical location and traditions, Hungary had amassed considerable knowledge in flood protection and water management, which could help Peru face the challenges of climate change. Hungarian pharma firm Gedeon Richter is also present on the Peruvian market, Kövér noted, asking the Peruvian authorities to raise Hungary's health safety rating to allow the company a larger share "in protecting the health of Peruvian citizens". Kövér also met the deputy head of Congress, Segundo Tapia, and the head of the foreign affairs committee, Luis Galarreta.

Meanwhile, in Lima on Saturday, Kövér inaugurated a memorial plaque dedicated to "the innocent victims of Hungary's 1956 revolution and freedom fight". Addressing the ceremony, Kövér said the plaque also paid tribute to the Peruvian people's solidarity with the Hungarian people "who started an armed revolt for their freedom against the world's most terrible power, the godless and inhuman communist Soviet Union." The speaker stressed that the two nations are connected by a multitude of strong ties, including their common western Christian culture.

Kövé presented a Gold Cross of Merit to Catholic priest Tibor Szeles. The high honour was granted him by Hungarian President János Áder in recognition of his efforts to help members of Peru's Hungarian community keep their national identity.

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## **HUNGARY, SLOVENIA DEFENCE MINISTERS DISCUSS MIGRATION, BORDER DEFENCE**

Peace in the Western Balkans is of paramount importance to Hungary and Slovenia alike, Defence Minister Tibor Benkő told public television after talks with his Slovenian counterpart Karl Erjavec. The two ministers agreed that EU member states have to protect their own borders themselves as well as the Schengen border. Erjavec praised the Hungarian army and police's role in border protection. Benkő noted that thousands of Hungarian troops had served along the southern borders since the migrant crisis in 2015. Their number was cut back this July, but over 2,000 stand by to be deployed to the border as quickly as possible, he said.

The two ministers agreed that the accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the EU should be facilitated. Hungary is working to speed up the process, and help the two countries join the EU before 2025, the accession date set by Brussels, he said.

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## **LMP: GOVT IMPLEMENTS STAFF CUTBACKS IN UNCONSTITUTIONAL WAY**

The opposition LMP party has derided the government for implementing layoffs in an unconstitutional way as part of its programme to cut back

bureaucracy. Erzsébet Schmuck, the green party's deputy group leader, told a news conference on Sunday that the government had left a significant number of public employees in the lurch for several months and failed to communicate the redundancies to the individuals concerned in person but instead via computer, thereby debasing their human dignity protected by the constitution. The layoffs also infringe the right to a healthy environment guaranteed by the fundamental law, given that staff working on environmental issues are being cut by 44% when redundancies in other areas average 10%, she added.

Schmuck insisted that the government was steadily undermining the institutional system of environmental and nature protection. Compared with the rest of Europe, Hungarian towns suffer from extremely poor air quality, she said, adding that environmental protections were needed all the more. Cutbacks in every case should be based on impact studies, she said, calling on the government to put in place the legal and institutional frameworks for guaranteeing a healthy environment and protecting nature.

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## **SOCIALISTS CALL ON GOVT TO COMPENSATE DISABLED PEOPLE AFTER TOP COURT RULING**

The Socialist party called on the government to compensate people on disability pensions after the Constitutional Court ruled that the

pensions can only be cut or withdrawn after an individual review of changes in the beneficiary's state of health. Lawmaker Lajos Korózs, who also heads parliament's welfare committee, told a press conference that the measures the top court objected to had impacted some 186,000 people. The government has cut or altogether withdrawn the pensions of tens of thousands, "driving dozens to suicide", he insisted. The Socialist party demands that the government immediately set up regulations to compensate "those they have humiliated", Kórozs said.

### **HUNGARY ALLOCATES EUR 7.8 M TO TURKEY REFUGEE SUPPORT**

Hungary is allocating over 7.8 million euros to the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, to be paid over the course of four years, the government's official gazette Magyar Közlöny said. The EU set up the fund in 2016, when it paid Turkey 1 billion euros from the EU's budget and 2 billion from the member states' contributions to support the 1.2 million migrants stranded there, the European Commission's website said. Hungary will pay over 1.7 million euros in 2019 and over 6 million through 2020-2023, Magyar Közlöny said.

### **MI HAZÁNK LAWMAKERS FORM GROUP**

The radical Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) movement has formed a parliamentary

group, deputy leader Dóra Dúró said. The group consists of four lawmakers, all former members of the conservative Jobbik party: Dúró, former Jobbik deputy leader János Volner, István Apáti and Erik Fülöp. Mi Hazánk recently split from the Jobbik party, a formerly radical nationalist party which has moved towards the centre. Its leader, László Toroczkai, had made an unsuccessful run to lead the party before attempting to set up a platform within it. This platform later became the new radical party. Dúró told a press conference that the move is meant "to demonstrate that the four lawmakers will represent the policies of the Mi Hazánk Movement in unity and cooperation, even if it yields neither financial benefits, nor extra speaking time in parliament." The group will decide "without any tactical considerations" whether or not it will support the proposals submitted to parliament, she said.

### **AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES HAND OVER AFGHAN RAPE SUSPECT TO HUNGARY**

An Afghan man suspected of raping a woman in Budapest earlier this year has been handed over to Hungarian investigators by the Austrian police, the Budapest police (BRFK) said. The 18-year-old Afghan is suspected of having sexually assaulted a woman in the toilets of a fast-food restaurant in central Budapest on September 9, the BRFK said. He was granted asylum in Hungary and resided in the

country since last year. The suspect was detained on a train to Frankfurt in the area of Linz on September 10 by Austrian police officers. He had also been wanted for two incidents of indecent exposure in the summer. Hungarian police on Friday arrested the suspect and initiated his preliminary detention.

### **RULING PARTIES CALL ON EC TO EXPLAIN PREPAID DEBIT CARDS ISSUED FOR MIGRANTS**

The ruling Fidesz and Christian Democrat (KDNP) parties have called on the European Commission to answer several questions regarding prepaid debit cards reportedly issued to migrants, the alliance's spokesman, István Hollik, has said. Earlier this week, Fidesz's Lajos Kósa, head of parliament's defence and law enforcement committee, cited recent reports about tens of thousands of prepaid debit cards made available to migrants by the European Commission and the United Nations Refugee Agency UNHCR.

The debit cards are reported to have been used by migrants on the "reactivated Balkan migration route", Hollik told a press conference. The EC should explain the origins of the cards, the amounts deposited on them, and the reasons why the scheme "was kept secret", he said. The cards are said to be funded by monies from the EU, the UN and US financier George Soros, Hollik said. The ruling parties expect

information on the bodies financing tens of thousands of migrants on their way to the southern borders of Europe, Hollik said, adding that terrorism may be financed in this way.

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### **SEVERAL HUNGARIAN CITIES PLAGUED BY POOR AIR QUALITY**

The air quality in the cities of Budapest, Kecskemét and Nyíregyháza has deteriorated to unhealthy levels, a post on the chief medical officer's Facebook page said on Saturday. In 15 other cities and towns, concentrations of particles in the air exceed what is considered to be a safe level, the statement said. Those alerts have been issued in Debrecen, Dunaújvaros, Eger, Hernádszurdok, Miskolc, Pécs, Putnok, Sajószentpéter, Szeged, Szolnok,

Szombathely, Tököl, Vác, Várpalota and Veszprém. It added that in certain places the concentration of nitrogen dioxide in the air also exceeds what is considered to be a safe level. The National Public Health Centre has asked residents of the cities in question to use public transport instead of their cars. It recommends that the most vulnerable groups should avoid outdoor physical activity and spend less time outdoors overall.

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### **WWI MEMORIAL UNVEILED IN BUDAPEST**

A memorial dedicated to the Hungarian heroes of the first world war was inaugurated in Budapest's Fiumei Street cemetery on Sunday. No war in Hungary's history has claimed more lives than the first world war, state secretary at the

human resources ministry Bence Rétvári said at the ceremony. Out of the 3.8 million people mobilised from Hungary's then territory, 661,000 died, 743,000 were wounded and 734,000 were POWs, he said. The memorial, the first to be erected in Budapest since the change of regime, is in line with the objective laid down in the fundamental law, namely to restore historical continuity broken during the Nazi and communist occupations of the country, Rétvári said.

The state secretary said the first world war had brought about a clash between empire-building forces, and a free Hungarian nation would never have lined up to fight in the war. "This means that if we are seeking peace, we have to take sides with free nations as it is always the empire-building forces that plunge the world into tragedy," Rétvári said.