

PHOTO OF THE DAY



The Szeklerland Hockey Academy's newly inaugurated medical centre

UPCOMING EVENTS

Farm minister opens Hungarian stand at Berlin Green Week

Hungarian, Slovak defence ministers commemorate 2006 military aircraft crash

Trade unions, parties stage nationwide anti-government demos

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: BRUSSELS MUST BE THWARTED

Brussels is doing all it can to implement the United Nations Global Migration Compact, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister, told public television. "But we will prevent this."

In Spain last year the number of illegal border crossings doubled, Szijjártó told current affairs channel M1. In Turkey, 50% more illegal migrants were apprehended than in 2017 and the number of arrivals in Cyprus has doubled. The UN migration pact has put wind in the sails of global migration as it focuses on managing rather than stopping migration, he said. He noted that 40 UN members had not even voted for the compact and so, he argued, it cannot serve as a genuine international reference point. Officials in Brussels made the compact's adoption a matter of prestige even when Hungary made clear at the outset that there was no single European position to be represented, he said. Now they are doing everything they can in Brussels to lead the implementation of the global migration package, he said. "We will of course prevent this." Szijjártó noted that 9 EU member states, or one-third, did not vote for the package. "So it's not about European countries wanting to implement a global migration package as a united front," the minister said.

NÉZŐPONT: OPPOSITION WOULD NOT BENEFIT FROM JOINT LIST

The opposition parties would lose a third of conservative Jobbik supporters and a fifth of leftist supporters if they were to run on a joint list for the European parliamentary elections, according to a survey by think-tank Nézőpont Institute published on Friday. The ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrats (KDNP) would get 54% support, Jobbik 14% and the left-wing parties a combined 26% if every party were to run on separate lists, the survey showed. However, if the opposition ran on a joint list, then Fidesz-KDNP would get 60% and the "rainbow coalition" 33%, Nézőpont said. As many as 33% of Jobbik supporters and 20% of left-wing supporters said they would not cast their votes in the case of an all-opposition list, it added. Nézőpont said the main reason was probably the continued high rejection of DK leader Ferenc Gyurcsány, his negative rating currently standing at 73%. He remains the least popular Hungarian politician, Nézőpont added.

If the EP elections were held this Sunday and the opposition were to run on a joint list, Fidesz-KDNP would get 14 mandates and the opposition 8 mandates, instead of 13 and 7, respectively, Nézőpont said.

LMP DEMANDS IMMEDIATE PAY RISE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS, LAW ENFORCEMENT

Opposition LMP has called for an immediate pay rise for civil servants, the police and military to avoid a "failure of state and municipal systems", Márta Demeter, co-leader of the party, told a press conference. Demeter urged that employees of the public sector be granted "decent and competitive" wages, and proposed that the base amount on which monthly wages are calculated should be increased to 60,000 forints (EUR 188) from the current 38,650 forints for civil servants and police, and 44,600 forints in defence. She added that LMP would submit a draft to parliament to that end. Demeter insisted that "the state is not a good master" and argued that "wages in law enforcement and defence are deliberately kept low." "More and more people will leave the public sector, creating a greater and greater shortage of administrators, police officers, and fire fighters."

Answering a question about European Parliamentary plans to tie EU subsidies to the observance of the rule of law in member countries, Demeter said that such a mechanism would impact not only the government but the people, and it would not be a good tool for fighting corruption either. LMP advocates a distribution mechanism through which the funds would reach

residents "bypassing the government", Demeter said.

ENERGY OFFICE: NATURAL GAS SUPPLIES SECURED

Hungary had 2.7 billion cubic metres of natural gas held in domestic storage facilities as of Jan. 15 and natural gas supplies for the winter are being secured thanks to a combination of continual gas imports and domestic exploration, the energy office MEKH said on Friday. As a result of mild weather, natural gas consumption was lower in October and November last year than the national average in the same periods of previous years, the office said. Outtake increased in December and low temperatures between Dec. 16 and 21 resulted in increased consumption, reaching over 65 million cubic metres on Dec. 19. Average daily consumption in December last year was nearly 7% higher than in the previous year but consumption declined later in the month. In order to secure supplies to private consumers, at least 60% of the highest winter gas consumption of the past ten years must be kept in storage, the energy office said.

RATE OF ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT CLOSE TO 14%, INSPECTIONS REVEAL

Workplace inspections by labour authorities showed the rate of illegal employment reached 13.62% in January-September last year, a

report by the finance ministry shows. The rate was about two percentage points higher than in the same period a year earlier. Fully 38% of the illegally employed worked in the construction industry. The rate of illegal employment was also high in the catering industry. Inspections were carried out at 13,316 employers with more than 54,000 people on payroll during the period.

PÁRBESZÉD MEP LAUNCHES MOVEMENT FOR JOINT OPPOSITION EP ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Párbeszéd MEP Benedek Jávor has launched a movement to promote a broad and strong joint campaign by Hungary's opposition parties for May's European parliamentary elections. Addressing a press conference on Friday, Jávor called on the opposition parties to discuss mounting a joint campaign and fielding a joint election list. He also called on civil groups and unions to join the cause. He insisted that a split opposition campaign would only help ruling Fidesz. Jávor said Hungary would have to decide at the election whether it wants to be an active contributor to building a successful Europe "or if its project is about sabotaging this".

HOUSE PRICES UP 7% IN Q3 2018 - EUROSTAT

House prices in Hungary rose by 7% year on year in the third quarter of 2018, a rate well over the 4.3% average for the European Union as a whole, a quarterly release by Eurostat shows. Although the pace of house price increases in Hungary was high, it was below the 10.6% and 11.4% increase in Q2 2018 and Q1 2018, respectively.

In Q3 home prices in the Czech Republic grew by 8.7% during the period. They were up 6.5% in Poland, 4.4% in Slovakia and 15.1% in Slovenia, putting Hungary closer to the median rate of price increases in the EU.

BUDAPEST GHETTO LIBERATION ANNIVERSARY MARKED IN DOHÁNY STREET SYNAGOGUE

A commemoration was held in Budapest's Dohány Street Synagogue on Friday to mark the 74th anniversary of the liberation of the city's ghetto. Addressing the ceremony, Szabolcs Takács, state secretary at the PM's Office, called the Holocaust "one of the heaviest burdens in the history of our nation, which we can never forget". Remembering the Holocaust is a "joint responsibility for us", the state secretary said. The Hungarian government will not tolerate hatred or any threat

that would jeopardise "the unity and peace of the nation or Europe's Jewish-Christian culture", Takács said, noting that the government has declared "zero tolerance" for anti-Semitism. He said Hungary's Jewish community was Europe's largest, and noted that the synagogue hosting the commemoration is the world's second largest. "Jewish life is flourishing in Hungary," he said, adding that Jewish festivals are organised on a regular basis and the government has contributed large funds to the renovation of synagogues and old Jewish cemeteries.

Tamás Ács, the head of Budapest's Jewish community (BZSH), said that remembrance was an obligation for the descendants of survivors as well as to remind others of the inhumanity of the Holocaust and of the responsibility of perpetrators. "All well-wishing Hungarians are expected to do the same, including historians, some of whom are likely to re-write or change documented facts," he added.

The central ghetto of Budapest was established in an area between Dohány and Király Streets based on a decree by the interior minister on November 29, 1944. Between 70,000-80,000 Jews were crammed into 4,500 flats, which had been inhabited by 12,000 tenants before. The ghetto was liberated by the Soviet Red Army on January 18, 1945.