

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/János Nemes

Children performing at the inauguration of a Hungarian-language kindergarten in Chop (Csap)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**EU interior and justice ministers meet in Brussels**

**Stats office releases preliminary industrial output data for January**

**Budapest mayor addresses European Best Destination 2019 award ceremony**

**National Election Committee meets**

## TOP STORY

# FIDESZ: ROW WITH EPP CENTRES ON MIGRATION

Hungary's ruling Fidesz party says its dispute with the European People's Party centres on the issue of migration and that it will listen to everyone's opinion.

Fidesz prioritises protecting European Christian values and stopping migration over party discipline, the party's spokesman said in response to EPP chief Manfred Weber's outlining three conditions that Fidesz must fulfil in order to remain within the grouping.

Weber has called on the Hungarian government to halt its campaign against Brussels and to apologise to EPP member parties. He also insists the Central European University (CEU) should remain in Budapest.

Balázs Hidvéghi, Fidesz's communications director, said that whereas Fidesz would "listen to everyone, including Manfred Weber ... protecting European Christian values and stopping migration is more important than party discipline..."

In respect of the CEU, the Fidesz spokesman said: "The Soros network is moving every stone in its own interests". He insisted that the CEU continued to operate in Budapest according to Hungarian law. Education, he added, is a national competence and criticism was therefore unfounded. In Hungary, all universities must abide by the same laws, including "the Soros university," he said.

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## **CITY COUNCIL, HUNGAROCNTRAL PROPOSE BAN ON NIGHT AIR TRAFFIC**

The Budapest municipal council has proposed banning all air traffic at Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport between midnight and 5am to curb noise pollution, a scheme backed by air traffic control service HungaroControl, Mayor István Tarlós told daily Magyar Nemzet.

Talks have started between the city council, HungaroControl and airport operator Budapest Airport to reduce noise pollution in areas near the airport, Tarlós said in an interview. "Budapest Airport is open to the idea, which I think can be implemented shortly," he said. A long-term proposal of the council, plans are to move cargo and military traffic to another airport, farther away from Budapest. This would not apply to passenger services, Tarlós said.

Meanwhile, addressing the contested issue of parking services in Budapest, Tarlós he disputed how the "opposition media" had interpreted his position, adding that both he and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán saw the issue as being politicised. "Budapest districts are staunchly protecting their right to decide on matters related to parking," he said, adding that the city council decided on fees and pay-for-parking areas but the districts entered into contracts on collecting

those fees independently. Tarlós said that unifying parking regulations in the city, and directing parking fees to fund public transport, is a "long-standing aim".

The leftist opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) earlier called for the collection of parking fees to be handed back to the city council instead of having "twenty-three districts operating as independent fiefdoms". Parking fees should be ploughed into improving city infrastructure and public transport, the party said.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ DISCUSSES INVESTMENTS WITH UZBEKISTAN MINISTER**

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó has discussed cooperation between Hungary and Uzbekistan on nuclear engineering training with the Uzbek minister of investment and foreign trade. Szijjártó had talks with Sardor Uktamovich Umurzakov in parallel with a meeting in Budapest of the Hungarian-Uzbek Economic Cooperation Intergovernmental Committee, the foreign ministry said. In connection with a nuclear power plant to be built in the near future in Uzbekistan, discussions focused on cooperation in the field of nuclear engineering training.

Meanwhile, with a view to boosting ties between companies of the two countries, the Hungarian

Eximbank has opened a 46.5 million US dollar credit line and signed a credit agreement with two Uzbek banks. The aim is to help Hungarian food, water and health-care companies expand their market share in Uzbekistan. In a bid to enrich bilateral social relations, scholarships are being offered to 30 Uzbek students, while Hungarian citizens will enjoy a visa waiver as part of a cooperation deal between Budapest and Tashkent, the statement said.

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## **POSITIVE ATTITUDES TO W EUROPE DECLINE AMONG HUNGARIANS, RISES FOR CEE COUNTRIES**

Hungarians have a dimmer view of western Europe than five years ago, a survey shows. Correspondingly, their attitude to eastern European countries brightened between 2013 and 2018, market research firm Psyma Hungary said.

Psyma gauged how sympathetic Hungarians are to various European countries at the end of 2013 and 2018, with a representative sample of 1,000 people.

While positive attitudes to western European countries declined significantly -- with nearly all western European countries losing popularity between the two surveys -- they still score highly, with Switzerland, Austria, the UK and Spain ranking the highest. The eastern European country that ranks highest on the

list is Croatia, which shares fifth place with Sweden.

Of eastern European countries, support has grown for Serbia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Psyma said. "The waning appeal of western European countries is connected with their handling of the migration crisis," Psyma said. "Support for Germany has plummeted, and France also ranks much lower than in 2013." Asked about their approach to the United States and Russia, Hungarians are still markedly pro-American, Psyma said.

### **LMP CALLS FOR REDUCTION IN TOTAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION**

The opposition LMP party has called for total energy consumption to be reduced alongside an improvement in energy efficiency, and it wants a state fund to handle the issue. The green party's deputy group leader Erzsébet Schmuck told a press conference held to mark World Energy Efficiency Day that in 2017 global energy consumption grew by 2.1% and carbon dioxide emissions peaked. Global energy consumption has doubled in twenty years. The situation in Hungary is even more dire, she said, with primary energy consumption increasing by 3.1% in 2017 year on year, while Hungarians use 10% more energy than the EU average.

Schmuck said energy household consumption exceeds that of transport and industry, with heating

and air conditioning accounting for 75% of the household total. Whereas the government vowed to upgrade 700,000 homes by 2020, only 5% of this goal has been reached, she said, calling for the establishment of a state fund to support investments with interest-free loans. In this way, the poorest could emerge from "energy poverty", she said.

### **ETHNIC HUNGARIAN LEADER AGAINST FIDESZ'S POSSIBLE EJECTION FROM EPP**

Romania's ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ party is against a possible exclusion of Hungary's ruling Fidesz from the European People's Party (EPP), RMDSZ leader Hunor Kelemen told MTI in an interview on Wednesday. Ejecting a member before the upcoming European parliamentary election would weaken the EPP, Kelemen said, adding that initiating the procedure against Fidesz was "ill-considered".

Concerning recent remarks by Manfred Weber, EPP's candidate for European Commission president, Kelemen said that Weber's suggestion that Fidesz could only stay an EPP member on certain conditions "should not be taken as a threat or blackmail". "We do not set conditions for each other; everybody acts on good faith and on good intentions," he insisted.

Kelemen will attend EPP's March 20 meeting where the issue is likely to be discussed.

### **REBUILT HQ OF TRANSCARPATHIAN TV STATION INAUGURATED**

The state secretary in charge of Hungarian communities abroad inaugurated on Wednesday the reconstructed headquarters of a Transcarpathian TV station in Uzhhorod (Ungvár), in western Ukraine. The headquarters of the Hungarian-Ukrainian language TV21 Ungvár television channel is located in the one-time building of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (KMKSZ), which was blown up early last year. It was reconstructed with the support of the Hungarian government. In his address at the inauguration ceremony, Árpád János Potápi said that by opening the new TV headquarters, the Transcarpathian Hungarian community was conveying the message that "it is not afraid and that it is on the side of peace rather than division and building rather than destruction".

KMKSZ leader László Brenzovics called it "remarkably symbolic" that the location of the KMKSZ HQ that was blown up last year would now be the home of a modern television studio and editorial office. TV21 Ungvár director Zoltán Kulin said in response to a question that the channel to be operated by KMKSZ will focus primarily on Transcarpathian public life, including events concerning the local Hungarian community.