

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Márton Mónus

Non-essential lights put out during Earth Hour in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plenary session of parliament

National Election Committee meets

ITU Telecom World 2019 conference presser

KSH releases foreign trade data (Jan), budget (Q4,2018)

TOP STORY

NOVÁK CALLS FOR CHANGING EUROPE 'FROM INSIDE'

Europe needs to be “changed from the inside” to save it from “committing a slow suicide by giving up Christian culture and supporting young people”, Katalin Novák, state secretary at the human resources ministry, told MTI from Italy.

Novák attended the World Congress of Families in Verona, where she noted similar approaches in Hungary and Italy to handle migration or support families. Both countries “believe in strong borders” rather than “supporting migration”, which she said many European leaders believe to be a remedy for demographic problems. Hungary controls its borders on land while Italy protects borders at sea; both countries are interested in keeping Europe safe, she added. Novák noted conference participants’ interest in the Hungarian government’s family support model, with special regard to a subsidy given to families before child birth or exempting mothers with four or more children from the personal income tax.

In his closing address at the conference, Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini said Hungary has shown that families should be the cornerstone of governments’ policy and economic decisions. Others try to solve Europe’s demographic problems “with twenty-year-olds fresh off the boats”; young people “without roots, identity and culture”, Salvini said.

STATE SECY: WEBER 'OFFENDS' HUNGARIAN VOTERS

EPP group leader Manfred Weber has "offended" Hungarian voters through saying that he would rather refuse the post of European Commission President than win it with votes by Hungary's ruling Fidesz, Prime Minister's Office state secretary Judit Varga wrote in a Facebook entry. Weber told Germany's public media on Friday night that he strived to win the election "from the middle" rather than through support from the right. "Such remarks are impermissible. Weber has offended Hungarian voters who, similarly to other European citizens, will send deputies to the European Parliament through a democratic vote," Varga wrote, adding that Weber has "fallen hostage to a pro-migrant Left".

DEFENCE MINISTER: HUNGARY TO INCREASE ROLE IN PEACEKEEPING

Hungary is committed to peacekeeping missions in conflict zones and fighting terrorism, and its government decided in January to raise the number of Hungarian troops in UN missions to 1,200 from 1,000, Defence Minister Tibor Benkő told a meeting of UN defence ministers in New York on Saturday.

The meeting, attended by representatives of 153 member states, focused on peacekeeping and development.

On the sidelines of the talks, Benkő met Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist, with whom he discussed experiences in operating Gripen aircraft and Hungary's air defence mission in the Baltic states, due to start in May.

Benkő also met Irish state secretary Paul Kehoe to discuss Hungarian troops joining a UN peacekeeping unit under Irish command in Lebanon.

During his four-day visit, Benkő held meetings with NATO General André Lanata, US Congressman Steve Stivers, General Joseph L. Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, and representatives of the Hungarian diaspora.

ORBÁN MEETS DEUTSCHE TELEKOM CEO IN BUDAPEST

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Deutsche Telekom CEO Timotheus Höttges in his office on Friday afternoon, his press chief said. They were joined by Deutsche Telekom board of management member Srinji Gopalan, who is responsible for the European segment of the company, Magyar Telekom CEO Tibor Rékasi, Innovation and Technology Minister László Palkovics and the head of the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office Antal

Rogán, Bertalan Havasi told MTI. The sides discussed opportunities and challenges related to digital development in Hungary and reviewed results achieved together, he added. Höttges said Magyar Telekom is further committed to the digital development of Hungary, and is taking on a significant role in building up modern mobile and fixed line infrastructure. Developments could be accelerated if market players could redirect part of the sectoral tax they pay to investments, he added.

Magyar Telekom's investments in its network in Hungary came close to 240 billion forints (EUR 748m) in 2014-2018. The sides agreed that the regulatory environment, investment incentives and spectrum management are all tools that can serve the accelerated rollout of the "gigabit society", and that their combined efforts could make Hungary a digital heavyweight in the region.

SZIJJÁRTÓ SLAMS 'GLOBAL LIBERAL FAKE NEWS PRODUCERS'

Any politician "deviating from the Liberal mainstream" could become the target of attacks by "globally operating liberal fake news factories", Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told public Kossuth Rádió on Sunday.

Szijjártó mentioned US President Donald Trump for example, whose remarks on NATO the

media “misinterpreted” and who was accused of benefitting from Russia’s alleged manipulating the US presidential election. That allegation “held out for two years” and “nobody has apologised for the fake news since it collapsed”, he said.

Those “patriots who dare to declare that their countries come first, for whom religious, national or cultural identities are important, who dare to protect the security of their citizens by building a wall, will face a campaign of defamation,” Szijjártó insisted.

The Hungarian government is facing a similar campaign, Szijjártó said, and added that “all attacks disguised by a veil of the rule of law” are “fake news” and added that all media outlets with the highest number of readers or viewers are “anti-government or critical of the government”.

FIDESZ DEMANDS INFORMATION ON MIGRANT CARDS GIVEN TO POTENTIAL TERRORISTS

Hungary’s ruling Fidesz expects an “urgent answer” from Brussels as to “how many potential terrorists have been given migrant cards,” MEP Tamás Deutsch told a press conference, in connection with press reports that Hassan F., a Syrian arrested in Budapest and believed to have been an Islamic State terrorist, was in possession of one such card.

Deutsch said that the card found on the suspect was not suitable for identifying its holder, and insisted that “it is a lie that the 64,000 migrant cards issued so far are not anonymous, cannot be used to withdraw cash or that they can only be used in Greece”.

Citing secret service reports, Deutsch warned that “thousands” of IS migrants could have come to Europe among the migrant masses and “their number could multiply”. “Despite that fact, Brussels is enthusiastically distributing anonymous cards credited with hundreds of euros,” Deutsch said.

HOUSE SPEAKER HOLDS TALKS WITH KENYAN COUNTERPART

House Speaker László Kövér met Justin Muturi, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya, parliament’s press office said. This is the first time for the Kenyan house speaker to visit Hungary for what both sides qualified as a historic meeting, the office said. Hungary has already intensified political and economic ties with Kenya under its policy of opening to the South, it said. Kövér assured his partner of the Hungarian government’s commitment to further boosting bilateral economic ties and promoting direct investments by Hungarian businesses in Kenya and East Africa. He identified cooperation

possibilities in farming, water management, health care, education and alternative energy production. The Kenyan house speaker is scheduled to meet Deputy Prime Minister Zolt Semjén and Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó.

NAIH: HUNGARY SCIENTOLOGISTS’ HANDLING PERSONAL DATA UNLAWFUL

The Church of Scientology in Hungary has managed personal data unlawfully, the data protection authority (NAIH) said. NAIH quoted a ruling the municipal appeals court had passed on March 22, in which the court turned down an appeal by the scientologist organisation against an earlier NAIH decision. In October 2017, NAIH established that the church and its central organisation had failed to comply with their duty to disclose a privacy policy or uphold the principle of purposeful and honest management of data, including the requirement of data security. NAIH fined the two bodies a combined 40 million forints (EUR 130,000) at the time. The appeals court approved of NAIH’s findings and said that personal data protection rules of Hungary and of the European Union must be observed by any person or organisation, with no exception to religious bodies.

REVAMPED NORTHERN STRETCH OF METRO LINE 3 OPENED

The revamped northern section of Budapest's metro line 3 started operation on Saturday. The reconstruction of line 3 connecting the northern and southern districts on the Pest side of the city started in November 2017, and involved a stretch of six stations, from Újpest Központ to Dózsa György út. At the inauguration, Budapest Mayor István Tarlós said that the railways, the ventilation system, and the security surveillance system were fully revamped as well as passenger areas such as escalators and platforms. The whole section is now accessible by wheelchair, he said.

On a work day, over 500,000 commuters use the line, making it the busiest railway in the country, Tarlós noted. The line was built gradually between 1970 and 1990, and underwent "no considerable reconstruction" since, he said. Reconstruction will continue on April 6 with the southern section between Kőbánya Kispest and Népliget, he said. This part is expected to be finished by the third quarter of 2020, while the full line is expected to be renewed by end-2022, he said. The costs of the reconstruction are some 217 billion

forints (EUR 675.9m), including a 172 billion EU grant, he said.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE MEETING PROMOTES CROSS- BORDER, RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Representatives of the Central European Initiative's (CEI) General Committee on Cultural Affairs discussed prospects in boosting cultural cooperation and cross-border tourism in Budapest. Parliamentary deputies of the 17 member states of CEI, the region's biggest non-institutionalised framework for interstate relations, agreed on launching several new programmes in cultural tourism including the organisation of pilgrimages, the head of the Hungarian delegation told MTI.

Representatives of the Hungarian tourism agency told the meeting that 2018 was a record year for the country's tourism sector, Richárd Hörcsik said. Hungary is one of the safest destinations in central Europe, he added. The participants adopted a closing declaration on further boosting tourism which as a strategic sector contributes to increasing each member state's GDP. They also adopted recommendations building on Hungary's experiences which the

delegations will be submitted to their own respective governments, Hörcsik said.

Founded in Budapest in November 1989, CEI is marking its 30th anniversary this year. Its members are Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. The group's main aim is to promote regional cooperation, European integration and the accession of its non-EU member states to the bloc.

SKYTRAX NAMES LISZT FERENC BEST AIRPORT IN REGION SIXTH YEAR IN A ROW

Skytrax, which runs an airport review and ranking site, has named Liszt Ferenc International "Best Airport in Eastern Europe" for the sixth year in a row, operator Budapest Airport said. Skytrax based its global ranking of airports on 13 million questionnaires. The survey, which covered airports in 160 countries, evaluated traveller experiences across a range of airport services such as check-in, arrivals, transfers, shopping, security and immigration and departure at the gate. Liszt Ferenc airport finished in 89th place in the vote.