

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Szilárd Koszticsák

Exhibition on the pilgrimages of the ethnic groups of the Carpathian Basin

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Menczer has talks in Transylvania**

**Commemoration of deported Slovakia Hungarians**

**V4, Romania capital markets conference in Budapest**

**KSH releases industry prices for Feb**

## TOP STORY

### FM: END MIGRATION THROUGH STABILISATION

Providing pathways to education to people in need and stabilising countries near warzones are key steps to eliminating the problem of mass illegal migration, Hungary's foreign minister said in New York.

Addressing the partnership forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Peter Szijjártó outlined four elements he said were crucial to handling illegal migration. Would-be migrants need to be given a competitive education, and in order to achieve this, the international community must launch scholarship programmes, Szijjártó told the forum. The world must also create the conditions for persecuted communities to remain in their homelands, he said. Troubled regions should receive technological assistance and the world must help stabilise countries around warzones, the minister added. Hungary is a leader in providing assistance in all these areas, Szijjártó said, noting that the Hungarian government has provided scholarships to 5,400 foreign university students. These students can then use the knowledge they acquire in Hungary to help modernise their own countries, he said.

There was also a need, he said, to support countries surrounding warzones so they can provide care for refugees. That is why Hungary provides such support to Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, he said.

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## **HUNGARY HELPING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS**

Addressing the partnership forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó noted that the Hungarian government has so far spent more than 25 million euros on helping Christians in the Middle East. Further, developing countries need access to the right technologies in order to create the conditions for a basic standard of living, he said. Hungary helps a number of these countries in the form of tied aid programmes to help with the development of their water management systems, agriculture and food industry, he added. If the world cannot carry out these tasks, "migration will rule everything", Szijjártó warned.

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## **GOVT OFFICIAL: WARNING WORLD OF PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS GOVT DUTY**

The Hungarian government and researchers have a joint responsibility to warn the global community of the ongoing persecution of Christians, "the largest and least talked-of humanitarian crisis today", a government official told a conference in Budapest. Tristan Azbej, state secretary at the Prime Minister's Office for persecuted Christians, spoke at a conference organised by the state secretariat, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

and Budapest's National Public Service University (NKE). Christianity is said to be the most persecuted religion in the world, with 215 million people suffering discrimination or genocide-like persecution for their religion worldwide, Azbej said. Some 4,150 Christians have been murdered in 2018, he said. Azbej noted that the government's Hungary Helps programme, aiming to help persecuted Christians in their homelands, was launched on the basis of data provided by the university. The programme is based on the thought that Hungary is a Christian country and that Europe can only be preserved if it returns to its Christian roots, Azbej said.

"Inviting people to come here" is no solution to the problem, he said, because it "endangers our own communities and harms those left behind by the young and active who could help rebuild territories ravaged by war". Help should instead be taken where the trouble is, he said.

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## **MENCZER: GOVT PARTNER IN PROMOTING RIGHTS OF HUNGARIANS ABROAD**

Starting a two-day visit to Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda), in central Romania, on Thursday, foreign ministry state secretary Tamás Menczer told journalists that Hungary's government would "always be a partner" in preserving and expanding the acquired rights of Hungarians abroad. During his visit, Menczer will hand over donations to a local foundation

for orphaned children and meet the mayors of Szekler Land. On Friday, the state secretary's programme will include an oath-taking ceremony by Hungarians granted Hungarian citizenship under the government's dual citizenship scheme, and talks with local organisers of a visit by Pope Francis scheduled for early June. Menczer will then deliver a lecture at the Sapientia Hungarian University and visit the Szekler Football Academy.

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## **NÉMETH: CDI CONDEMNS LEFT-EXTREME RIGHT COOPERATION**

The executive committee of the Centrist Democratic International (CDI) has condemned cooperation by several European left-liberal parties with the far right which challenges "fundamental rights and the rule of law", Zsolt Németh, the head of parliament's foreign affairs committee, said in Brussels. The Christian political international said this type of cooperation was emerging in Hungary and Serbia and was associated with "racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia", Németh said, mentioning Hungary's Jobbik and Serbia's Dveri parties as examples. "The party alliance condemned Jobbik for its leader's call to list Jewish members in the Hungarian parliament and government," Németh said. CDI has called on all political forces to declare zero tolerance for any manifestations of segregation, racism, anti-Semitism or any form of extremism, Németh said.

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## **SOCIALIST-PÁRBSZÉD URGES EURO INTRODUCTION**

The opposition Socialist and allied Párbeszéd parties have called for the euro to be introduced as soon as possible in Hungary. Adopting the euro would make it clear that Hungary “wants to belong to the core of Europe rather than to its periphery,” a Párbeszéd lawmaker told a press conference. Bence Tordai noted that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had once cautioned about the possibility of a new economic crisis which, Tordai said, could seriously hit Hungary’s small and vulnerable economy. As a safeguard, the two parties propose joining ERM II, the corridor to the euro, in 2020, he said. Balázs Bárány, a member of the Socialists’ national board, said the euro would guarantee Hungary a stable long-term position in the European community. The two parties have called a competition for a Hungarian design of the currency, he added.

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## **LMP CALLS ON GOVT TO WITHDRAW VETO ON EU CLIMATE PROTECTION TARGET**

The opposition LMP party has called on the government to withdraw the Hungarian veto of the European Union’s climate protection plan, party board member Szabolcs Turcsán said. The EU has identified carbon emission as the main cause of global warming and

set the goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45%, below 2010 levels, by 2030, and zero by 2050, Turcsán said. Under the influence of business lobbies, however, certain governments, including Hungary’s, have vetoed the plan, he added. LMP has launched a petition so that the veto can be finally withdrawn, Turcsán said.

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## **DK SIGNS COOPERATION PACT WITH OPPOSITION ADVISORY GROUP**

The leftist opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) on Thursday signed a cooperation agreement with the V21 grouping, a self-purported opposition advisory group made up of former ministers and government officials, on collaborating in the European Parliament election campaign. The V21 was originally set up early last year under the name Válasszunk! 2018 (Let’s vote! 2018 - V18) with the aim of encouraging voters to participate in Hungary’s general election and promoting cooperation among the opposition parties. The group suspended its activities after the April election, but has now returned to cooperate with the opposition in the EP election campaign. DK leader Ferenc Gyurcsány said at the signing ceremony that Europe’s political partition was no longer “left vs right” but rather the question of whether a given party wanted a stronger or weaker Europe.

Former European commissioner and foreign minister Péter Balázs, a co-leader

of V21, said the grouping had already signed an agreement with nationalist Jobbik and the liberal Momentum Movement. He added that the organisation was also preparing to partner with the Socialist-Párbeszéd alliance.

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## **MI HAZÁNK: GOVT SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME ‘PRO-MIGRATION’**

The non-parliamentary Mi Hazánk opposition party has demanded that the government should stop its Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship programme for foreign students, saying that the scheme “promotes migration and is aimed at changing the population”. The radical nationalist party’s leader László Toroczkai told a press conference that students granted scholarships in the programme are “exclusively from the same African and South-East Asian countries as where the migrants come from”. He added that the scheme “costs Hungarian taxpayers 10 billion forints (EUR 31m) each year”. Toroczkai said that while the scheme had taken in 68 students when it was launched in 2013, it now benefitted 9,000. “A large part of them take up jobs, too, replacing Hungarians that have emigrated to find a better life abroad,” he added. Further, Toroczkai said universities received state subsidies for foreign students two-and-a-half times higher than for Hungarian students. “Universities are forced to take African and South-East Asian students rather than Hungarians,” he said.

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## **JEWISH CONGREGATION HEAD CONGRATULATES NETANYAHU ON ELECTION WIN**

The chief rabbi of the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation (EMIH) has congratulated Benjamin Netanyahu on his re-election as Israel's prime minister in a letter, EMIH said. The outcome of the elections in Israel and the direction of politics in Jerusalem are decisive for Hungary's Jewish community, Slomó Köves said. He asked Netanyahu to continue building close relations between Israel and Hungary and offered his help in that endeavour.

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## **BME, KARLSRUHER INSTITUT FUR TECHNOLOGIE SIGN COOPERATION PACT**

The Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME) put the final signature to a cooperation agreement on Thursday with Germany's Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT) to issue dual degrees to electrical engineering students. The first such class started last autumn with 25 students. Minister of Innovation and Technology László Palkovics told the ceremonial event that the new cooperation scheme would serve as an example for the future. BME already maintained links with KIT's predecessor institution in the 1980s, with Hungarian students paying regular visits to Karlsruhe,

Palkovics, who was a BME student at the time, said.

German ambassador in Hungary Volkmar Wenzel said trade links between the two countries had evolved and had become partnerships and friendships, with the BME and KIT playing important roles in the process. "Technology must be supported because it holds the key to the future," the ambassador said. KIT deputy chairman for innovation and international relations Thomas Hirth said cooperation between the two universities goes back to 50 years ago and the newly introduced dual degree programme perfectly fits the German university's international strategy.

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## **CBANKER: HUNGARIAN BANKS SHOULD IMPROVE EFFICIENCY, BOOST LENDING**

Márton Nagy, deputy governor of the National Bank of Hungary, urged Hungarian banks to improve their efficiency and embrace innovation while boosting lending. Speaking at a conference organised by portfolio.hu, Nagy said the banking market in Hungary is oversaturated and it would be sufficient to have five large universal banks. Bank products continue to be very expensive, he said. He called on the bank sector to support sustainable economic growth, which would require a 12 to 14% increase a year in long-term lending volume. He said Hungarian banks would need fewer but more modern branches, and they

should also progress in digitalisation in order to be able to adapt to new fintech solutions.

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## **DAY OF ARAB CULTURE HELD AT EÖTVÖS UNIVERSITY**

The third Day of Arab Culture, featuring an exhibition on 14 Arab countries, lectures and shows of traditional Arab cuisine, was held at Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) on Thursday. In his opening speech, Speaker of Parliament László Kövér called the event an important chapter in increasingly stable Hungarian-Arab relations. Hungary's relations with the Arab countries were improving "at times when Europe's southern and south-eastern neighbours were hit by worse crises than ever before ... which in turn pose serious challenges to the European continent itself," Kövér said. Mutual respect for the other country's culture, religion and traditions is the basis for Hungary in its relations with other nations, Kövér said, adding that Hungary has had Arab ties for decades, but added that the intensity of those links has been "fluctuating". He also noted turning points after 2010 and 2014, when "Hungary became strong enough both politically and economically to build intensive ties with Arab countries".

Kövé said that the migration crisis of 2015 has not only impacted ties between countries of origin and transit states, "a different approach to handling the situation has also led

to serious tensions within Europe". Hungary has had the position from the beginning that "the problem should be resolved locally, assistance should be delivered to the needy where they are so they can again prosper in their homeland," Kövér said. He added that Hungary has helped the residents of crisis zones in Arab countries with millions of euros, and is helping several countries in Africa with developing border control capabilities.

Kövé also highlighted Hungary's Stipendium Hungaricum programme, under which 1,500 Arab students are granted scholarships at Hungarian universities.

### **GOVT, INDUSTRY PLAYERS MEET TO REDUCE AIRPORT NOISE POLLUTION**

A body of government official and aviation industry insiders met for the first time on Thursday to discuss ways to reduce noise pollution caused by aircraft in the capital. The body was led by Innovation and Technology Minister László Palkovics, who was joined by the head of the Prime Minister's Office Gergely Gulyás, Budapest

mayor István Tarlós and Róbert Esik, who heads the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA). Executives of air traffic control company HungaroControl, Liszt Ferenc International operator Budapest Airport and low-cost airline Wizz Air Hungary as well as experts from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics also took part. Tarlós floated a number of proposals earlier in the year on ways to reduce noise pollution from aircraft in Budapest.

### **NEW PENSION BOND TO BE LAUNCHED IN AUTUMN**

An inflation-linked bond designed for Hungarians who want to make pension savings could be launched in the autumn, Finance Ministry deputy state secretary László Balogh said at a conference organised by news portal Napi.hu. Balogh said details of the bond would be made public in the coming months. Plans to launch the bond were initially announced last autumn. Balogh said demand for the pension bond was expected to ramp up gradually, over a period of

years, while another bond slated for launch in June would become popular immediately.

The other bond targeted at retail investors will pay a graduated rate of 3.5%-6% over five years. The coupon on the five-year bond will be 3.5% at the end of six months and 4% at the end of twelve months. Half a percentage point will be added to the coupon each year after that, meaning the bond pays 6% in the final year of its term. The yield on the bond will be tax exempt.

Balogh said a number of existing retail government securities could be phased out after the new products are introduced, but the inflation-linked Premium Hungarian Government Securities (PMAP) would remain in the mix. The PMAP pays 1.7% over the rate of inflation, or 4.5% at present.

Balogh said the government expects the National Bank of Hungary (NBH) to achieve its 3% +/- 1pp inflation target in the coming five years.

He said the introduction of the new securities was expected to boost the financial savvy of Hungarians and increase their propensity to save for the future. Currently more than half of household savings are in investments maturing in below one year, he added.