

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Noémi Bruzák

Skeleton at a recently discovered extensive Roman funeral site in Budapest

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Stats office reports on Jan-March wages, Q1 investment figures**

**Foreign minister holds talks with Kosovan deputy PM**

**National Election Committee meets**

**State secy for youth and family affairs at roundtable on manliness**

## TOP STORY

# GOVT NOT BACKING WEBER OR TIMMERMANS

Hungary's government is not backing either the EPP's Manfred Weber or the Socialists' Frans Timmermans for the role of European Commission president, the state secretary for international communications and relations said.

Addressing a news conference, Zoltán Kovács said Weber had "insulted the Hungarian people multiple times in recent months" and accused Timmermans of "constantly lying about Hungary" over the course of the European Parliament election campaign.

The state secretary cited Weber as saying during the campaign that he did not want to be elected EC president with supporting votes from Hungary's ruling parties. He also cited the European People's Party's Spitzenkandidat as having said last December that in the vote on the Sargentini report, he had voted not against Orbán or Fidesz, but against Hungary as a whole. Kovács said these quotes disqualified Weber from being backed by Hungary "in any candidate race".

Turning to Timmermans, Kovács said the Dutch candidate had told "several pages worth of lies" about Hungary on matters such as press freedom, the rule of law and anti-Semitism. The Hungarian government, he said, would only support EC presidential candidates who respect the bloc's member states, do not apply double standards, fight to stop migration and defend Europe's Christian roots.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY OBJECTS TO EU GREEN POLICIES HAMPERING CAR INDUSTRY**

Hungary objects to European Union environmental protection policies that would needlessly restrict the competitiveness of the car industry, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said at a Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA) event. The minister said environmental protection policymaking at EU level should take competitiveness aspects into consideration. A balance should be found between the two objectives without hampering meaningful investments by forcing needless developments on Europe's car industry which could, in turn, detrimentally affect millions of workers. Such measures would also have a damaging impact on Hungary's car industry, competitiveness and jobs, he said, adding that the government only backs proportionate and well-considered measures in this area.

The government's upcoming economy protection action plan aims to stimulate long-term economic growth at a high level that is at least 2 percentage points above the European Union average, Szijjártó said at the automotive conference. The economy protection action plan will involve further tax cuts, reducing bureaucracy, simplifying procedures, modernising the training of skilled workers and expanding dual education programmes, he added.

## **POLITICAL ANALYSTS ASSESS HUNGARIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE POST-EP ELECTION**

It is important for the European People's Party that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has the wherewithal to connect with the new right and underscore the EPP's right-wing identity, according to an analyst who was among participants of a conference organised by the Századvég Foundation.

Ágoston Sámuel Mráz, chief executive of the Nézőpont Group, said the reason why participation in the European Parliament election was so high in Hungary was that this was the first occasion since the migration crisis for Hungarian voters to have a direct say in European affairs.

Commenting on Hungary's opposition, he said internecine conflict would continue and Ferenc Gyurcsány, the former prime minister who leads the leftist Democratic Coalition (DK) party, would try to bring the ailing Socialists into his fold, though it was not clear that the Socialists would have to acquiesce.

Tamás Láncki, head of the 21st Century Institute, said that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's strategy of occupying the centre ground was now put in doubt by the ability of the opposition to forge an alliance. Matteo Salvini, Italy's deputy prime minister and who is also the interior minister, in a video message to the

conference thanked Hungarians for backing Fidesz in the EP election. He said common work to protect the border, Europe's culture and identity would continue in Brussels.

## **MENCZER: PROMISING SIGNS NEW UKRAINE PRESIDENT WILL HELP RESOLVE HUNGARIAN COMMUNITY ISSUES**

A Hungarian foreign ministry official expressed hope on Wednesday that Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's recently elected president, would help resolve the negative situation affecting ethnic Hungarian communities stemming from recent enactment of repressive laws. The first statements by the new president are reason for "cautious hope", Tamás Menczer, state secretary for communications and international relations, said at an event in Gárdony, in central Hungary, focusing on Hungarian summer camps for children from families affected by conflict in eastern Ukraine. Hungary has always pursued good neighbourly relations with Ukraine and it had, until recently, supported Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, as well as its visa liberalisation efforts. "The language law approved during the time of the previous president was a stab in the back because it aimed at suppressing minority languages in all areas of life," he said. "This is an international problem, not just a bilateral one," he added. Commenting on the camp, he

noted that 242 children are spending their holidays at Lake Velence and the ministry has contributed 25 million forints (EUR 76,000) towards their upkeep.

### **GYÖNGYÖSI TO BECOME JOBBIK MEP**

Márton Gyöngyösi, the Jobbik party's deputy leader, group leader and top candidate on its European parliamentary election list, will become the nationalist party's MEP, Jobbik's press office announced. Jobbik received 6.37% of the vote on Sunday, which translates into one seat in the EP. Jobbik had won three seats in the 2014 election.

### **JEWISH 'SECURITY SERVICE' TO FIGHT ANTI- SEMITISM IN BUDAPEST'S 'PARTY DISTRICT'**

The Jewish organisation Action and Protection Foundation has decided to set up a "self-organising security service" in Budapest's "party district" popular with tourists -- which is also the city's traditional Jewish district -- to fight anti-Semitism, the daily Népszava said. The foundation wants to prevent the "import of anti-Semitism from northern and western Europe" to Hungary, its secretary Kálmán Szalai told the paper. They will make every effort to ensure that, from the point of security, "Budapest does not become a place similar to some large western cities," he added.

The paper noted that György Szabó, head of the Jewish Heritage of Hungary Public Endowment board, recently told Népszava online that "verbal attacks" against Jews were regular in the city's 7th district. He said the attacks were committed by drunk tourists who hurled abuse in English and shouted Heil Hitler. The insults are usually suffered by Orthodox Jews who are easy to identify by their appearance, he added.

### **BUDAPEST GENERAL ASSEMBLY ALLOCATES FUNDS FOR DRUG PREVENTION**

The Budapest assembly decided at a meeting to establish a 20 million forint (EUR 60,000) allocation for drug prevention to support NGOs and other organisations working in the field. Funding will be available by application, to be assessed by a committee before a final decision is made by the mayor. A Budapest Drug Prevention Coordination Forum set up in line with an assembly decision this March is chaired by the mayor and co-chaired by the Budapest police chief. Additionally, the body has ruled that during smog alerts, restrictions will be expanded to the use of Euro-5 diesel engines in Budapest. The assembly has also decided to allow the city to raise a loan on 7.4 billion forints in order to acquire 100% ownership of the Rác thermal baths and hotel during its current liquidation procedure.

### **HUNGARY JOBLESS RATE 3.5% IN FEB-APR**

Hungary's three-month rolling average jobless rate was 3.5% in February-April, down from 3.6% in the previous three-month period, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The February-April figure, which covers unemployment among 15-74 year-olds, was down from 3.8% in the same period of the previous year. In absolute terms, there were 162,400 unemployed, 3,300 fewer than in the previous period and down 14,600 from a year earlier.

The unemployment rate in the 15-24 age group stood at 10.8%. The unemployed in this age group account for more than one-fifth of all jobless, KSH noted. Jobless Hungarians spent about 14 months on average looking for employment during the period. In the same period, the employment rate was 60.5%, up by 0.8 of a percentage point. The number of employed stood at 4,491,600 among 15-74 year-olds, 46,700 more than in the same period a year earlier.

The number of employed included 117,500 Hungarians in fostered work schemes and 115,400 working abroad. The number of those employed on the domestic primary labour market rose by 1.6% from a year earlier to 4,258,700, while the number of fostered workers dropped by 25.5%. The number of those working abroad was up 18.8%.

Finance Minister Mihály Varga, commenting on the data, said that in terms of its jobless data, Hungary,

alongside Poland, ranks fourth among the European Union's 28 member states. He told a press conference that Hungary's employment data is also robust, noting that the Feb-Apr data show that more than 47,000 jobs were added to the market year on year. The data also show "there are fewer and fewer job-seekers today in Hungary who have not found a job for themselves," he added.

### **TRANSNEFT: HUNGARY WILL RECEIVE CLEAN OIL BY WEDNESDAY EVENING**

Clean crude oil will reach Hungary through the Druzhba, or "Friendship", pipeline that passes through Ukraine, by Wednesday evening, a Transneft official has said. The transfer of oil started at the Fenyéslítke pump station and the scheduled time for the arrival of oil that complies with the relevant standards is 6pm. Igor Dyomin, an advisor to the head of the board of directors of the Russian oil pipeline operator said in Moscow.

A number of refineries in Europe suspended oil imports via the Druzhba pipeline on April 19 after it was found to contain high levels of organic chloride, a material used to boost oil output which must be separated

before shipment as it can destroy refining equipment. An agreement was reached early in May by representatives of Russia's energy ministry and energy companies MOL, Slovnaft, Transneft, Transpetrol and UkrTransNafta on resuming deliveries via the pipeline by the middle of May.

### **BUDAPEST TO STRENGTHEN LINKS WITH ST. PETERSBURG, NUR-SULTAN**

Budapest and St. Petersburg will further strengthen ties in line with a MoU to be signed by the Budapest general assembly and the Russian port city's legislative body. Representatives of the general assembly voted unanimously in support of the agreement. Chairman of the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg Vyacheslav Makarov will be in Budapest in the second half of this year to sign the document with Budapest Mayor István Tarlós. Budapest and St. Petersburg signed a cooperation agreement in December 2015. Tarlós met Makarov during a visit to St. Petersburg in September 2018, when the two confirmed their intent to create a memorandum of understanding between their cities' legislative bodies. The document

sets out to start cooperation in city management, sport, tourism, culture, youth policy, environmental protection and the use of modern technology.

The assembly meeting also approved an agreement between Budapest and the Kazakh capital Nur-sultan to become twin cities. The name of the city was changed from Astana to Nur-sultan in March 2019. The mayor of the Kazakh capital, Bakhyt Sultanov, visited Budapest in December 2018 and agreed with Tarlós to raise their already existing cooperation to a higher level.

### **TAX AUTHORITY OFFICIALS ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF ABUSE OF POWER**

Three officials of the national tax authority (NAV) have been arrested, charged with abuse of power and other crimes, news channel M1 reported on Tuesday. The national bureau of investigations is questioning several NAV employees as suspects, the news channel said. News portal index.hu earlier reported that one of the men arrested was a former NAV department head. The Budapest prosecutor's office is also investigating, index.hu said.