

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTVA/Marton Mónus

Commemoration of the martyrs of communist retaliation in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU affairs ministers meet in Luxembourg

Plenary session of parliament

Presser on V4 festival and theatre meeting

Parliament's justice, defence and law enforcement committees meet

TOP STORY

FIDESZ TO CALL FOR SCRAPPING 'MIGRANT CARDS'

Hungary's ruling Fidesz will initiate scrapping the scheme of anonymous debit cards issued to migrants, in the new European Parliament, the party's communications chief said.

In the May EP elections Hungarians voted "to stop migration, protect Europe's Christian culture and stand up for a Europe of nations," Balázs Hidvéghi told a press conference in Balatonfüred, adding that Fidesz will represent "the will of Hungarians in Brussels". The distribution of such cards is still ongoing, he said, adding that Brussels has issued over 70,000 of them this year alone. Over the past years, 500 billion forints (EUR 1.55m) have been deposited with about 2 million such prepaid bank cards without any security checks, Hidvéghi said.

"It is unacceptable that Brussels is spending European taxpayers' money on these anonymous cards that may allow even dangerous individuals to get access to support," he added. Citing the case of Hassan F, a Syrian terrorist suspect arrested in Budapest last year who had been given a prepaid bank card after arriving in the European Union, Hidvéghi said that by distributing the cards, Brussels was "not just financing migration, but potentially also terrorism or human smuggling".

SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU SUCCESS DEPENDENT ON MIGRATION POLICY U-TURN

The European Union will not be successful on the global stage unless it makes a U-turn on its migration policy, Hungary's foreign minister said in Luxembourg on Monday, arguing that stopping the inflow of migrants was crucial to ensuring Europe's security and competitiveness. Addressing a news conference after a meeting with his EU counterparts, Péter Szijjártó said the talks focused mainly on how to make the bloc's common foreign and security policy more effective as well as on the EU's global strategy. As regards the latter, Szijjártó said the EU should focus its efforts not on managing the process of migration but rather on stopping it. The EU must not give in to any kind of pressure that leads to the continent getting flooded with immigrants, he said.

The minister also said the bloc was taking too long to sign free trade deals with a number of important partners, adding that this was having a negative effect on its competitiveness. He said the approval of "socialist-type economic strategies" like proposals on tax harmonisation and the communitisation of taxation would also hamper the improvement of the EU's competitiveness. "These [proposals] would introduce socialism in the European Union, so we oppose them," he said. "We lived in a socialist dictatorship for a long time and we don't want to see it come back."

Szijjártó also warned against what he called the EU's tendency to "lecture" its partners and member states, saying that if the bloc kept up this practice, it would be neither competitive nor safe. "Sooner or later everyone will have enough of Brussels wanting to tell others how they ought to live in the far reaches of the world," he said. Szijjártó also talked about efforts to introduce a qualified majority-based decision-making mechanism for the EU's foreign policy matters. He said the Hungarian government will oppose these efforts at all existing forums. On the sidelines of the meeting, Szijjártó held bilateral talks with his Dutch and Austrian counterparts.

DK CALLS ON OPPOSITION TO FIND JOINT MAYORAL CANDIDATES

The leftist Democratic Coalition (DK) has called on Hungary's opposition parties and civil organisations to find joint mayoral candidates for the upcoming municipal elections in as many localities as possible by midsummer. "The EP elections of late May have put an end to political standstill, producing results that suggest that ruling Fidesz can be defeated not only in Budapest but in other cities, too," parliamentary spokesman Zsolt Gréczy told a press conference.

The Democratic Coalition is pleased to see that in several localities the opposition parties have agreed on fielding joint candidates for both

mayors and local councillors. The election of opposition mayors in Budapest, its districts and the major cities would not automatically bring about the fall of Viktor Orbán's government but it would change Hungary's political map and public mood, he said.

Gréczy firmly denied rumours about his party's potential merger with the Socialists under DK's Klára Dobrev and the Socialist Bertalan Tóth as co-leaders.

JOBBIK ELECTS NEW PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADER

The parliamentary group of opposition Jobbik has elected Péter Jakab as its new leader. The group said the vote had been held to fill the post of Márton Gyöngyösi, who won the nationalist party's single mandate in last month's EP election. Jakab whom the group called its most popular member has been elected in a unanimous vote. The group pledged to step up its efforts "to dig the grave of [Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán's corrupt dictatorial rule" and "give way to building a liveable, just and free Hungary".

RETAILERS COULD TAKE COMMON DECISION TO CLOSE EARLIER SUNDAYS

Hungarian retailers could take a uniform decision to voluntarily close earlier on Sundays, if shoppers accept the move which would benefit businesses, daily

Magyar Nemzet said. The paper noted that the government “flatly refuses” to legally restrict shop hours on Sunday, but said retailers could adopt a common decision on Sunday hours as a matter of business strategy. Magyar Nemzet said industry insiders concede that keeping stores open from 6:00 in the morning till 10:00 in the evening on Sundays is problematic from a business perspective because of the labour shortage.

“Obviously, there isn’t any market player that would admit to supporting shorter opening times at their stores on Sundays, even though many companies don’t even open their shops on that day, and there are many as well for whom opening for the full day is loss making,” Csaba Bubenko, who heads retail unions association KDFSZ, told the paper.

“It was seen earlier that neither the government nor shoppers support closing all shops [on Sundays] ... But it could be worth retail chains’ effort to weigh closing earlier [on Sundays] on the basis of common self-regulation,” he added.

MORE THAN 100,000 PENSIONERS REJOIN LABOUR FORCE

Some 25,000 Hungarian pensioners have re-entered the labour market in the past several months, raising the

total number of employed pensioners over 100,000, the finance ministry’s state secretary told daily Magyar Nemzet.

András Tállai noted that pensioners who return to work are exempt from all taxes except for the 15% personal income tax.

The tax exemption, introduced this year, followed the establishment in 2017 of pensioners’ cooperatives which provide the legal foundation for retired Hungarians to work again, mitigating the impact of the labour shortage.

The standard retirement age in Hungary is being gradually raised: Hungarians born in 1955 are eligible for retirement at age 64. The number of employed Hungarians among 15- to 74-year-olds stands at 4,491,600, the latest data from the Central Statistical Office show.

DEBRECEN PARTNERS WITH WIZZ AIR TO ADD RUNWAY AT AIRPORT

The city of Debrecen in eastern Hungary will build a new runway at its international airport in the framework of an expanded strategic cooperation with Hungarian low-cost carrier Wizz Air, mayor László Papp said at a press conference with Wizz Air CEO József Váradi. The 45m-wide runway will be equipped with an instrument landing system that meets ILS III standards,

Papp said. Capacity at the terminal is also being increased, with bigger shop and cafe areas, more parking spaces and additional transfer services. Already, two security gates and two boarding gates have been added. This year, passenger numbers in Debrecen are expected to reach 600,000, Papp said. Last year, Wizz Air carried 353,000 passengers on Debrecen flights. Váradi said the new runway would allow Wizz Air to add flights and destinations to its Debrecen timetable.

CMC BUILDING HUF 32 BN SOLAR PARK IN SW HUNGARY

China National Machinery Import and Export (CMC) laid the cornerstone of a 32 billion forint (EUR 100m), 100MW solar park in Kaposvár, in south-western Hungary. Innovation and technology minister László Palkovics told the event that central Europe’s largest solar park would be built in Kaposvár. The project will support the country’s climate policy targets, including making Hungary a country that can produce energy in a carbon neutral way by 2050. “The solar park will contribute to developing a well-balanced and sustainable energy mix in Hungary and guaranteeing the country’s energy security,” he added. The park is expected to be completed by December.