

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Chinese fencer Lin Sheng and Ukrainian Olana Krivicka at the semifinal of the women's epee championship in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU justice ministers hold informal meeting in Helsinki

Formula Student East race of engineering students opens

TOP STORY

FM: CHRISTIANITY MOST PERSECUTED RELIGION

Christians make up 80% of those persecuted because of their religion worldwide, with some 245 million having endured some form of persecution last year, Hungary's foreign minister said in Washington, DC.

Every day, 11 Christians are killed because of their faith, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom. Religious persecution has become one of the greatest security risks in the world, Szijjártó said. Christians are mostly persecuted for their faith in the Middle East and Africa, he added. In recent years, the Hungarian government has spent 36.5 million dollars on supporting those Christian communities so they can thrive in their homelands and in order to prevent another wave of migration towards Europe, he said. On the sidelines of the conference, Szijjártó had meetings with representatives of the US, the UK, Italy and Poland. He also held bilateral talks with Montenegrin Foreign Minister Srđjan Darmanović, Tariq Mahmood Ahmad, the UK prime minister's special representative on preventing sexual violence and conflict, and Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Abdul Momen, among others. The ministerial was organised by the US Department of State for the second time and hosted by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

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SZIJJÁRTÓ: 'REGRETTABLE' INTERNATIONAL ORGS DON'T SPEAK OPENLY ABOUT PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, at an international conference in Washington, said it was "regrettable" that international organisations hesitate to speak openly about the persecution of Christians. Addressing the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, Szijjártó insisted that mainstream European policies and the "political elite" often suggested that "the persecution of Christians is the last acceptable form of discrimination". The minister said that hopefully, the United States, as well as Hungary, Poland, Italy and the United Kingdom, would prompt those organisations to promote religious freedom and stand up against the persecution of Christians.

TAKÁCS APPOINTED BREXIT COMMISSIONER

Szabolcs Takács was appointed ministerial commissioner in charge of handling the foreign policy and economic effects of Brexit on Hungary, effective July 15, the Thursday edition of the official gazette Hivatalos Értesítő said. The commissioner will be responsible for shaping the Hungarian stance on relations with the United Kingdom after its departure from the European Union,

and for communicating Hungary's standpoint on Brexit-related matters to the EU and the UK, the gazette said. He will also work to ensure that the rights of Hungarians living in the UK and those of British citizens in Hungary will not be undermined, it said. Takács previously served as the state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office in charge of EU affairs.

GOVT OFFICIAL: OVER 12,000 APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FOR NEW FAMILY SUBSIDIES

More than 12,000 families have applied for some kind of subsidy provided via the government's family protection action plan since it was launched on July 1, the state secretary for youth and family affairs said. Some 3,000 applications have been received for state-subsidised prenatal baby support loans by Thursday, Katalin Novák told a press conference, adding that 1,300 couples had already received the loan. She said most couples had applied for the maximum, 10 million forint (EUR 30,600) loan, noting that those who apply for it after the 12th week of pregnancy can automatically have the repayments on it suspended for three years. The option for write-offs of outstanding mortgage credit has also drawn in around 3,000 applications and 6,400 large families have submitted applications for subsidies to buy cars, she said.

Concerning the mortgage write-offs, Novák noted from July 1, families

can apply to have the government 1 million forints when the second child is born, 4 million forints after the birth of the third child, and another 1 million forints after the birth of every subsequent child. The state secretary also said that next year's budget allocates 2.5 times the amount of funding for family subsidies as the 2010 budget did, insisting that next year's would again be "the budget of families".

Thanks to the family protection action plan, she said, families with children will get to save a total of 162 billion forints next year and the government will lend around 700 billion forints to them through the loan-based subsidies.

KSH: OVER 5% OF JOBS UNFILLED IN HEALTH- CARE SECTOR

Over 5% of jobs are unfilled in Hungary's health-care sector, business daily Világgazdaság said, citing data from the Central Statistical Office (KSH). The sector employs some 42,000 doctors and 104,000 nurses, with 3.8% of doctor and 3.4% of nurse positions vacant, the paper said. The biggest shortage is in the area of in-patient hospital care, with a 6.2% shortage of doctors and a 5% shortage of nurses and assistants.

A survey by the Hungarian Chamber of Health-care Workers (MESZK), however, found that worker shortage was actually 2-3 times higher. "The biggest worker shortages are in

central and western Hungary," MESZK chairman Zoltán Balogh said, commenting on KSH's data. In the 2018 survey, head nurses reported a 15-20% worker shortage, with most respondents saying the situation could become critical within five years. Balogh attributed the shortages to low wages, pointing out, however, a recent positive trend in wage growth within the sector.

KSH: NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES FALLS, WAGES GROW IN TOURISM SECTOR IN 2018

The number of people working in accommodation and hospitality fell by 4.9% in 2018 to 180,000, while employees' average wages in the sector grew by 13% to 212,000 forints (EUR 651.0), the Central Statistical Office's (KSH) annual sector report shows. The sector's performance has been improving continuously since 2013, KSH said. The value-added in 2018 is expected at 8.8%, the report shows. Altogether 4.0% of jobholders and 3.4% of employees worked in accommodation and hospitality in 2018, KSH said. Wages of employees in the sector are still lagging behind the national average with 212,000 forints on average, after a 13% rise in 2018, KSH said. Workers in Budapest earned the most, a gross 240,000 forints, and workers in southeast Hungarian Békés County the least, an average 177,296 forints, it said.

COMPETITION OFFICE URGES INCENTIVES FOR PAYING WITH PLASTIC

Hungary's Competition Office (GVH) has proposed the government use tax policy tools to incentivise the use of bank cards and reduce cash payments. GVH proposes in the document minimising or eliminating fees on the number of bank card transactions which, it said, hits small merchants especially hard. It also recommends expanding a state subsidy scheme for POS terminals to businesses with bigger turnover.

HELL ENERGY INAUGURATES HUF 2.1 BN EXPANSION

Hungarian soft drink maker Hell Energy inaugurated a 2.1 billion forint (EUR 6-5m) production line at its base in Szikszó (NE Hungary). The new line, the company's fourth, will raise daily production capacity from 4.5 million to 6 million cans a day. The investment was supported by a 1 billion forint government grant awarded to companies ineligible for EU funding.

Finance Minister Mihály Varga spoke at the inauguration ceremony.

Hell Energy sells its products in more than 50 countries around the world. In the energy drink segment it is a market leader in Hungary and nine other countries, including Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Croatia.

WORLD FENCING CHAMPIONSHIPS OFFICIALLY KICK OFF WITH OPENING CEREMONY

The 2019 FIE World Fencing Championships officially got under way in Budapest with the event's opening ceremony held at the Budapest Olympic Centre ahead of the first series of finals on Thursday evening. In her speech to the ceremony, the state secretary for sports said it was an honour for Budapest to have won the right to host the event. Hungary's government aims to bring major sporting events to the country and with them the world's greatest athletes, Tünde Szabó said. Szabó noted that Budapest has been named the European Capital of Sport for 2019, adding that "everything is in place" for this event to be one of the best world championships.

Alisher Usmanov, President of the International Fencing Federation (FIE), said this year's event would break the record for the number of participating nations and athletes.

The event was officially opened by Thomas Bach, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), who said the Budapest world championships would be a milestone in the history of the sport thanks to the record number of entrants. Bach, himself a former world champion sabre fencer, expressed hope that the athletes would give their all and compete adhering to the spirit of the Olympics.