

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Religious festival in Balassagyarmat, in northern Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

President Áder visits Serbia

Commemorations of 1456 Battle of Belgrade

Debrecen Summer University opens

Finance ministry releases budget figures for June

TOP STORY

HIDVÉGHI: VON DER LEYEN'S REMARKS 'PROMISING'

Ursula von der Leyen, president-elect of the European Commission, has made remarks that "give rise to hope", ruling Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi told public Kossuth Rádió.

Hidvéghi quoted the incoming official as saying that "though she used to be a supporter of a united states of Europe, now she thinks that the community must be strong in its diversity". Von der Leyen "clearly stated" that the EU could be made strong if the same standards are applied to all members, Hidvéghi said. Von der Leyen "correctly thinks that gestures must be made towards those (members) that have been unjustly accused in recent years", he insisted. Hidvéghi pointed to "serious divisions" within the community, arguing that in recent years central and eastern European members have been the "targets of attacks by a Left-Liberal coalition". Such a situation, if continued, would "pose a lethal threat" to the current structure of the EU, he said.

Concerning Hungarian opposition MEPs refusing to support Fidesz's candidates for European Parliament committee posts, Hidvéghi said that those posts are "due" to party groups based on their election results. Opposition MEPs "have transgressed fundamental norms", he insisted.

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GULYÁS SIGNS EUROPEAN CIVIL INITIATIVE ON ETHNIC REGIONS

Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, has signed a European civil initiative aimed at increased focus on aspects of ethnic regions when distributing cohesion funding. Speaking at a press conference, Gulyás said that "it is extremely important that the EU has causes on its agenda in which citizens can express their wish".

Organisers of the signature drive, initiated by the Szekler National Council of Romania, have until May 7 next year to collect one million signatures, a prerequisite for the subject to be put on the European Parliament's agenda.

MINISTRY OFFICIAL CALLS ON UKRAINIAN AUTHORITIES TO REGARD ETHNIC HUNGARIANS PARTNERS, NOT ENEMY

Ukrainian authorities should consider their country's ethnic Hungarian community as a partner, rather than an enemy, the Hungarian foreign ministry's state secretary said on Friday, two days before Ukraine's snap elections.

Levente Magyar held a press conference after a meeting of the ambassadors of EU and NATO countries convened by the foreign ministry to brief them about recent developments

affecting the neighbouring country's Hungarian minority.

Ukrainian authorities have taken "unprecedentedly hostile moves" in an attempt to discourage Transcarpathia Hungarians from going to the polls on July 21, he said. On one instance "a combat squad raided the homes of Hungarian families while they were asleep," Magyar said, adding that these families were known to support KMKSZ, the major political organisation representing Transcarpathia's ethnic Hungarians.

Magyar said that in another move, the Ukrainian foreign ministry had pledged to ban Hungarian ministers from entering Transcarpathia. This is an indication that the ministry continues to pursue the policy of former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, he said. Such rhetoric and moves against minorities have long been rejected either within the EU or NATO, alliances Ukraine is striving to join, Magyar said.

Hungary does not seek to interfere with the Ukrainian elections in any way, he said, adding however that the Hungarian community would hopefully be represented in the new parliament.

HUNGARIAN PHILOSOPHER ÁGNES HELLER DIES

Hungarian philosopher Ágnes Heller died on Friday, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) said. Heller, 90, was a member of MTA, Professor Emerita of

the New School for Social Research of New York and a winner of Hungary's prestigious Széchenyi National Prize, it said.

Born in 1929, Heller was raised in a middle-class Jewish family. During the Holocaust she managed to escape deportation. She graduated from Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University in 1951. From 1947 to 1949 and from 1953 to 1958 she was member of the Communist Party but she was expelled both times. Due to her involvement in the 1956 revolution, she was dismissed from the university.

As a student of Marxist philosopher György Lukács, Heller was a core member of the Budapest School philosophical forum that sought to promote Marxist criticism in the 1960s. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Treaty forces in 1968, she signed the "Korčula Letter" condemning the invasion. After Lukács's death in 1971, she was subjected to official surveillance and general harassment in Hungary. In 1973 the Communist Party's Political Committee declared her philosophical views anti-Marxist and dismissed her from her job. Rather than remain as dissidents, Heller and her husband, philosopher Ferenc Fehér, chose to go to exile in Australia in 1977.

Heller returned to Hungary in 1989 to become a university lecturer in Budapest and Szeged. In the meantime, she served as a guest professor in New York.

She has written over 40 ethics, philosophy and political theory books.

She received the Hannah Arendt Prize in 1996, the Sonning Prize in 2006 and the Goethe Medal in 2010.

News portals reported on Friday afternoon that Heller was seen going to swim in Lake Balaton at MTA's Balatonalmádi holiday home, but she did not return. Local police told MTI that a body was recovered in the lake. They ruled out the possibility of crime.

HUNGARIANS TRAVEL MORE INSIDE HUNGARY, ABROAD

The number of trips Hungarians made inside Hungary and to other countries further increased last year, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) reported on Saturday, also noting an increase in incoming tourism.

According to the report, the average length of 14.4 million inland trips in 2018 increased by 4.1%, and their total length added up to 60.3 million nights at commercial accommodations. Over one half of the population made at least one multi-night trip inside the country last year, which exceeds all previous records, the report said.

Hungarians made 23 million foreign trips last year, up by 12% from 2017. The time spent abroad increased by 8.7% to 62 million nights. Hungarians would typically visit neighbouring countries,

Germany, the Czech Republic, as well as countries of the Mediterranean.

Incoming tourism grew by 4.9% in 2018, with foreigners visiting Hungary 58 million times. They spent 4.5% more time in the country than in the previous year, staying an average 2.3 days.

Hungarians spent a combined 347 billion forints (EUR 1.07bn) during their trips inside the country last year, up by 5.7% from 2017. They spent 888 billion forints visiting foreign destinations, up by 8.7%.

Tourists coming to Hungary spent 13% more than in 2017, totalling 2,067 billion forints, KSH said. The report added that Austrians spent the largest amount (234 billion forints), on goods and services, including dental and other medical treatments. Germans were the second largest spenders with a total 223 billion forints.

CATERING INDUSTRY TURNOVER CLIMBS ALMOST 10% IN 2018

Revenue of catering businesses in Hungary rose by 9.6% to 1,287 billion forints (EUR 3.95m) last year, an annual report by the Central Statistics Office (KSH) shows. Revenue of commercial catering establishments rose by 12.0% to 1,170 billion forints, while revenue of

canteens and cafeterias fell by 6.1% to 118 billion forints.

Food accounted for 73% of total catering industry revenue. Drinks made up 22% of the total, with alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages accounting for equal shares of that amount. Sales of coffee generated 4.3% of total revenue.

There were a total of 51,000 catering establishments in Hungary at the end of last year, close to 500 fewer than twelve months earlier. There were about 45,000 commercial catering establishments and 6,000 canteens and cafeterias.

KSH noted that the number of restaurants and confectionaries has stagnated in the past five years, but the number of pubs has fallen and the number of canteens and cafeterias has grown. At the end of last year, there were 29,000 restaurants and confectionaries in Hungary, and 16,000 pubs.

BUDAPEST TO HOST WORLD AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIPS IN 2027

Budapest will host the World Aquatics Championships in 2027, ten years after previously holding the event. The international swimming federation (FINA) announced its decision in Gwangju, the venue of the ongoing world championships, on Sunday.

