

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Hungarian soldiers return from airspace mission in Baltic states

MTV/Tiborlivics

UPCOMING EVENTS

President Áder meets Georgian counterpart in Tbilisi

3rd Budapest Demography Summit

Foreign minister Szijjártó in Warsaw

TOP STORY

NÉZŐPONT: FIDESZ-KDNP MAINTAIN 'MASSIVE LEAD'

The ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrats (KDNP) have maintained their "massive lead" according to a Nézőpont poll conducted in August, with 53% of decided voters stating they would support the party alliance if the elections were held now.

The number of opposition supporters stayed unchanged or dropped last month. The Democratic Coalition (DK) and Momentum would receive 11% each on the party list. Support for conservative Jobbik was 8% among "active voters", representing a 1 percentage point drop from the previous month. The voter base of the Socialists-Párbeszéd decreased by a similar extent to 6% among decided voters and the satirical Two-tailed Dog Party (4%), LMP (3%) and radical Mi Hazánk (3%) all stayed below the 5% threshold for gaining seats in parliament, Nézőpont said.

Among all voters, Fidesz-KDNP stood at 41%, similarly to the previous month. Since January 2018, the ruling parties have been supported by at least 38% each month, or around 3 million people. On the opposition side, none of the parties could attract two-digit support among all voters. DK and Momentum received 7% each, or slightly more than 500,000 supporters. Support for Jobbik dropped by 1 percentage point to 6% and the Socialist-Párbeszéd alliance received 5%, Nézőpont said.

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SEMJÉN: BRUSSELS'S TREATMENT OF HUNGARY 'UNFAIR, UNLAWFUL, ANTI-DEMOCRATIC'

The European bureaucracy's moves towards Hungary concerning migration have been "unfair, unlawful and anti-democratic", Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén told the Budapest Forum for Christian Communicators.

Semjén insisted that the EU had "invited" migrants to Europe "without asking us; now that they are here they seek to distribute them". He went on to say that unskilled migrants would be "forced onto" Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania. Semjén noted the dividing line between economic migrants and people persecuted because of their political stance or religious beliefs. Hungary will help "all true refugees" and meet all its international obligations, he said.

Concerning the persecution of Christians, Semjén said that it included relativisation and suppression of Christian values in Western Europe, not only the persecution of Christian communities in the East. He noted that Hungary's government has so far helped some 50,000 people in the latter category.

Migration is bad, because one cannot live their life in their homeland, Semjén said, adding that situations in which people are forced to emigrate are primarily caused by bad governments.

SZIJJÁRTÓ WARNS AGAINST 'SOCIALIST-TYPE' PROPOSALS

Several western European countries are seeking to break central Europe's competitiveness "through a socialist-type economic policy", the foreign minister told MTI on the sidelines of an economic forum in Poland's Krynica. Péter Szijjártó cited "demands" to harmonise taxes and debt communitisation. He warned that if such proposals were to be implemented "the competitiveness of the central European region as well as of the European Union as a whole would be killed". Harmonising taxes in the EU would mean hiking taxes in Hungary, therefore the Hungarian government "will fight this to its last breath", he said. Concerning the idea of debt communitisation, he said "this would mean nothing other than passing the debt of some countries with irresponsible economic policies onto other EU members". He added that Hungary's public debt has been continually decreasing in recent years.

Thanks to structural reforms and "brave reform steps taken", central Europe has some of the lowest taxes on the continent, and the investment environment is the most attractive. Central Europe has become the engine of economic growth for the entire continent, yet some western European countries plan to reduce central Europe's competitive advantage by trying to force through the EU's

socialist-type bureaucratic measures, he added.

Szijjártó said the EU could only be made competitive again if competition were allowed internally. Economic competition within the EU is clearly in the interest of Hungary and central Europe, he added. Szijjártó also mentioned competition within the EU at the plenary session that opened Wednesday's programme in the economic forum. He said it was one of seven preconditions that must be fulfilled in order to make Europe strong in the face of global competition.

The second precondition, he said, was to guarantee the security of Europeans, adding that Brussels' migration policy was dangerous and the protection of borders was paramount.

The third issue he cited was the protection of Christian culture and identity, saying the "we want EU leaders who are ready to handle Christian heritage as a priority."

The fourth precondition he cited was an "honest debate on EU funds in the budget after 2022". Central European countries have the right to these funds, not least because they allowed western companies to enter and profit from their markets, he added.

Szijjártó said the fifth precondition was that Europe must be based on strong nation states, adding that "we will never approve a united states of Europe" and "will never yield to pressure that aims at making us surrender our identity".

He cited EU expansion as the sixth precondition, stating that “we believe the more we are, the stronger we are”. He said Brexit was regrettable and urged the acceleration of Western Balkan integration.

The last precondition he said was getting rid of double standards that he insisted were being applied against Poland and Hungary.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: BUDAPEST TO BECOME LOT’S 2ND MAJOR BASE

Budapest is set to serve as the second major base of Polish airline company LOT, the Hungarian foreign minister said on the sidelines of an international economic forum in south Poland’s Krynica. This will facilitate further developing transport connections between central Europe and other parts of the world, Péter Szijjártó said at a roundtable discussion held during a Three Seas Initiative summit. Under a new strategic cooperation agreement LOT will launch daily direct flights from Budapest to New York next summer, he said. The minister noted that LOT will launch new flights from Budapest to Seoul on September 22 and plans further flights from Budapest to Belgrade, Prague, Sofia and Stuttgart.

The Three Seas Initiative, a forum of 12 EU member states in central and eastern Europe, must focus on projects that fill in a north-south transport corridor and energy network link and a regional high-speed railway, Szijjártó said. He said Hungary had earmarked

5 million euros for the preparation of a feasibility study for the planned high-speed railway to connect Warsaw and Budapest via the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

DEUTSCH BLAMES PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS FOR OLAF FINDINGS

Graft under the previous, Socialist and Liberal governments, has “largely contributed” to findings in the latest annual report of the European Union’s anti-corruption office (OLAF), ruling Fidesz MEP Tamás Deutsch told Hungarian journalists in Brussels. Deutsch insisted that graft around the construction of Budapest’s fourth metro line was “the greatest such case” before 2010, and said that members of the then Socialist government and Liberal municipality “spent the money on themselves leaving the consequences to the (Fidesz) government formed in 2010”. The government has taken steps to ensure that companies named in the OLAF report as involved in the metro graft should make refunds rather than the central budget “if there are actual, financial consequences of OLAF’s recommendations”, the MEP said.

Concerning the fact that OLAF received 33 complaints from Hungary last year concerning alleged fraud, Deutsch said that a vast majority of those complaints had come from the opposition. “Those speak about corruption that are up to the eyes

in the Altus or Szeviép scandals,” he insisted.

Deutsch also said that Hungary has improved “almost all crucial indicators” in the OLAF report compared to last year. He argued that in 2016 OLAF had found fault with utilisation of 4.16% of all community funding for Hungary, whereas that ratio declined to 3.92% in 2017 and was further reduced to 3.84% last year.

In its 2018 report published on Tuesday, OLAF said that it had conducted nearly 170 probes across the community and made recommendations under which the EU should reclaim over 370 million euros which the office thought had been used in fraudulent or irregular ways by subsidised members.

GOVT OFFICIAL: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY ‘IS THE FUTURE’

Christian values and Christian democracy are not things of the past but of the future, Tamás Menczer, the foreign ministry’s state secretary for information and international relations, said at a conference in Budapest. On the opening day of the Budapest Forum for Christian Communicators, Menczer said that an argument is being made in Europe today and worldwide that there is no need for Christian values, culture, or Christian democracy, because it is outdated. “But this claim is wrong”. “If something is valuable, it cannot be outdated.”

"Christianity, Christian values and Christian democracy are not things of the past but of the future," Menczer said. He said important issues such as interpersonal relationships, the family and the nation must be addressed. Christian values, which give life a framework and direction, must be nurtured, he argued.

DATA PROTECTION CHIEF CITES PRIVACY CONCERNS AROUND KARÁCSONY'S CAMPAIGN

Citing reports that opposition mayoral candidate Gergely Karácsony's campaign had gathered "a disproportionately large number of recommendation signatures", the head of Hungary's data protection authority, Attila Péterfalvi, said in an interview to Wednesday's Magyar Hírlap newspaper, that the bulk collection of signatures went against both "reason and the spirit of the law". The head of the National Data Protection and Freedom of Information Authority (NAIH) said the collection of recommendation signatures from

potential voters, along with their personal data, was an important part of the electoral process, but it was unnecessary to gather more than 10,000-12,000 signatures to ensure the candidate could run in the election. Therefore, he said, no more voter data should be collected once the candidate already has the required number of recommendations. He said that whereas the Karácsony campaign's behaviour was not illegal, it was "unreasonable", and "brings up bad memories" in light of data abuses of previous years.

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE COLLECTS HUF 40 M FOR SRI LANKA

Donations totalling some 40 million forints (EUR 120,000) have been collected with the aim of helping the families of victims who died in a terrorist attack in Sri Lanka last Easter and for revamping churches, the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference said. The donations have been forwarded to the recipients through the Diocese of Colombo,

the statement showed. It included 11 million forints in aid offered by foreign ministry, it added. Malcolm Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo, has sent a letter of thanks and assured Hungary that the donations would be used to help those most in need.

RETAIL SALES GROWTH ACCELERATES TO 6.9% IN JULY

Retail sales in Hungary grew by 6.9% in July from the same month a year earlier, accelerating from a 4.3% increase in June, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) show. Calendar-adjusted data show retail sales were up 6.4% year on year in July. Adjusted food sales were up 4.5%, non-food sales climbed by 9% and vehicle fuel sales by 5.3%. In absolute terms, retail sales came to 1,066 billion forints in July. In January-July retail sales rose by 5.8%, according to both unadjusted and calendar year-adjusted data. Adjusted food sales grew by 3.1%, non-food sales by 8.6% and fuel sales increased by 7.5%.