

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Balogh

Antique Japanese children's kimono exhibition opens in Heritage House in Budapest

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**National Election Committee meets**

**Stats Office preliminary report on consumer prices in Aug 2019**

**Presser on tourism development in Siófok region**

## TOP STORY

### OPPOSITION 'HANDLED DATA UNLAWFULLY'

The opposition in the 8th district of Budapest has handled the personal data of voters unlawfully, ruling Fidesz group leader said.

Máté Kocsis called on the opposition's candidate for local mayor and opposition representatives to withdraw from running in the upcoming local elections. Kocsis cited a report in Monday's edition of daily Magyar Nemzet showing photographs that allegedly prove that candidates of the opposition alliance had prepared unlawful lists based on voter recommendation slips. Kocsis told a press conference that this was "shocking and alarming", adding that it raised the suspicion of the abuse of voter data and illegal acts in connection with the local election.

Asked whether Fidesz would take any legal steps, he said an objection would be raised at the local election committee and the local election office should also address the issue. Commenting on the Magyar Nemzet report, the campaign chief of the opposition mayoral candidate insisted that the campaign of András Pikó had been carried out in line with Hungarian and European data protection regulations. In a statement, Tessza Udvarhelyi denied that the unlawful collection of data had taken place.

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## **OPPOSITION: DATA HANDLED LAWFULLY**

The campaign chief of the opposition mayoral candidate Tessza Udvarhelyi denied that the unlawful collection of data had taken place. She said the data for the local election campaign was being handled by the civil society C8 Civilek Józsefvárosért in line with regulations published on the organisation's Facebook page and also on all online and offline contact forms. The data of supporters is recorded only if they give consent to this in writing and strictly for specific purposes, such as to subscribe for newsletters or to carry out volunteer work, she said. Personal data from the recommendation slips is not recorded or stored in any form, she added.

The photos published by Magyar Nemzet show "volunteers checking whether the many hundreds of recommendation slips distributed among candidates in 12 constituencies and the mayoral candidate had been returned so that the campaign chief could submit them to the local election office on the following day," she said. This is necessary because a fine is imposed if recommendation slips are lost, she added.

Earlier, asked about documents with photographic evidence obtained by Magyar Nemzet indicating the alleged preparation

of election fraud by the opposition in the Józsefváros district of Budapest, Karácsony strongly rejected the charge, saying that if anyone were to commit an illegal act, it was unlikely they would post incriminating photographs on Facebook. Karácsony said the citizens concerned had given their consent to handing over their data in accordance with the law. He added that the photo in question showed how all recommendation slips had been returned to the authorities.

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## **ORBÁN OPENS ITU TELECOM WORLD CONFERENCE IN BUDAPEST**

Hungary is set to become a success story of an increasingly digital world economy, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in his opening address at the ITU Telecom World 2019 conference in Budapest. The digital economy has stable roots in Hungary, Orbán said. "Hungary is already a digital economy in the heart of Europe. The future has already started here, and we hope Europe will also follow that road by concluding the related debates and acting in unity," he said. In the past few years, Hungary has demonstrated it not only plans its future but makes it a reality, too, Orbán said. In Europe, at 5%, Hungary has the lowest VAT on the internet, and a modern test centre for electric vehicles has recently been inaugurated in the southwest, he

noted. Orbán said the digital economy provides some 25% of Hungarian GDP, and employs some 400,000 people, about 10% of the total workforce.

ITU Telecom World 2019, a global platform for big ICT industry players, tech SMEs, countries and organisations, runs until Thursday. Houlin Zhao, the head of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), said at the opening at Budapest's Hungexpo fair grounds that the conference is an opportunity to reduce the digital divide.

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## **MATOLCSY DISPUTES VARGA'S NOTION THAT "GOLDEN AGE" OF HUNGARIAN ECONOMY IS OVER**

National Bank of Hungary (NBH) governor György Matolcsy took issue with a number of remarks Finance Minister Mihály Varga made at a meeting of economists at the weekend in a piece published on the business news website novekedes.hu. In a presentation at the 57th Itinerant Conference of Economists in Nyíregyháza, in north-eastern Hungary on Saturday, Varga said the Hungarian economy's "golden age" was coming to an end due to an external slowdown.

Matolcsy wrote in novekedes.hu that the "golden age isn't over, it's just beginning ... and will last for decades". "We are capable of continuing seven years of stable convergence ... Because we have found the recipe and

creatively renewed the Hungarian model. Because, for us, politics is a competitive advantage, not a competitive disadvantage. Because we have combined the tools of the state and of the market, the conventional and unconventional solutions," he said. Matolcsy disputed Varga's supposition that the slowdown in Germany would spill over into Hungary, and he challenged the minister to pick an exchange rate for a "stable" forint, noting that the central bank has no exchange rate target.

"Why shouldn't one doubt the words of a finance minister if they go against the desires of the nation and the plans of the government in office?" Matolcsy wrote.

### **SZIJJÁRTÓ MEETS FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF RUSSIAN PARLT UPPER HOUSE**

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó held talks with Nikolay Fyodorov, the first deputy chairman of the Federal Council, the upper house of Russian parliament, in Budapest, the Hungarian foreign ministry said. Szijjártó and Fyodorov reaffirmed their commitment to further developing Hungarian-Russian relations, the ministry said in a statement. They were pleased to establish that the quantity of gas to be purchased through Ukraine next year was almost entirely delivered to Hungarian storage facilities, thus guaranteeing the gas supply of Hungary next year.

Szijjártó and Fyodorov established that the direct flight to be launched

by Wizzair in late October between Budapest and the Russian city of Kazan would add another Russian region to bilateral economic cooperation. They also discussed the introduction of further products of Hungarian pharmaceutical Richter to the Russian market.

### **KARÁCSONY: BUILDING STADIUMS EQUALS THEFT**

The extensive construction of stadiums is equal to theft, Gergely Karácsony told a local election campaign event. Instead, taxpayers' money should be spent on health care, he said. Hundreds of billions of forints have been funnelled into sport construction projects in Budapest recently, the left-wing opposition parties' mayoral candidate told a press conference. "And there is no end to it," he said, referring to construction of an athletics hall in Csepel, as well as similar projects in other districts of the capital. Speaking in front of the Groupama football stadium, Karácsony added that the incumbent mayor, István Tarlós, felt more beholden to the interests of the central government that was intent of "building stadiums everywhere" than to those of Budapest residents. The opposition has started a petition to stop stadium construction and "other reckless investments", and turn the money towards improving health care.

Meanwhile, asked about documents with photographic evidence obtained by the daily Magyar Nemzet indicating the alleged preparation of election fraud by the opposition in the

Józsefváros district of Budapest, Karácsony strongly rejected the charge, saying that if anyone were to commit an illegal act, it was unlikely they would post incriminating photographs on Facebook. The question concerned voter data which, it is alleged, was collected illegally. Karácsony said the citizens concerned had given their consent to handing over their data in accordance with the law. He added that the photo in question showed how all recommendation slips had been returned to the authorities.

### **DK CALLS FOR DIRECT ACCESS TO EU FUNDING FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

The opposition Democratic Coalition party will work to make it possible for local authorities to apply for European Union funding directly so as to circumvent "the Orbán government's corrupt system", MEP of the leftist party Klára Dobrev told a press conference. Dobrev insisted that the Orbán government had "threatened" voters ahead of the October 13 local elections by saying that towns and villages that did not vote for Fidesz would lose funding.

Meanwhile, the report by the EU's anti-graft body OLAF has shown that the Hungarian government is among the "most corrupt", she said, adding that the EU "will carefully consider every cent they trust them with". Dobrev noted that the EU will raise the amount of funding local authorities

and NGOs can directly apply for in 2020. She said that if Hungary loses funding due to the Article 7 procedure against the country, she would work to have the funding channelled into supporting local authorities and NGOs.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ MEETS OUTGOING ISRAELI AMBASSADOR**

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó met Yossi Amrani, Israel's outgoing ambassador to Hungary, the foreign ministry said. Hungarian-Israeli relations have never been better, Szijjártó and Amrani agreed at the meeting. In recent years, Hungary has been consistent in its support for Israel in international forums, the statement said. Szijjártó said Hungarian foreign policy would continue to promote a "fair" approach to Israel in international politics so that the country "does not become a target of unfair attacks". The government continues to stand by the need to develop ties between the European Union and Israel, the ministry said. Amrani has worked as ambassador to Hungary since November 2016.

## **VARGA MEETS ICBC EXEC IN BUDAPEST**

Finance Minister Mihály Varga has met the chief executive of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Gu Shu, in Budapest, the finance ministry said. The sides discussed the

ICBC's role in smoothing transactions between Hungary and China as well as weighing the possibility of opening an ICBC office in Hungary to support investments undertaken in the framework of the Belt and Road initiative. They also agreed that ICBC's presence in Hungary would further boost the country's role as a regional financial centre.

Varga said financial ties between Hungary and China were developing at an accelerated pace, noting the country's cooperation with Bank of China, its accession to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the opening of an office of Hungary's OTP Bank in Beijing, advanced talks on Chinese financing for an upgrade of the Budapest-Belgrade rail line, and the active participation of Hungary in various financial funds.

## **NÉZŐPONT: FIFTY- SIX PERCENT OF BUDAPESTERS SEE MAYOR TARLÓS FIT FOR POST**

Fully 56% of Budapest residents find incumbent mayor István Tarlós fit for the post whereas 32% say the same about Gergely Karácsony, the left-liberal opposition candidate, according to a fresh poll released by the Nézőpont research institute, just five weeks ahead of the local elections.

In the whole electorate, 60% expected that Tarlós, the candidate of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance, would win the ballot, as

against 18% tipping Karácsony a winner, the poll showed. Róbert Puzsér, an independent candidate, was seen winning the post by only one percent.

Among those identifying themselves as left-wing voters, 43% said Tarlós would win the October 13 ballot compared with 41% expecting Karácsony's victory, Nézőpont said. Among pro-government voters, 88% expected the re-election of Tarlós for a third term and only 3% expected Karácsony to defeat him. Among decided voters, Tarlós was backed by 52%, Karácsony by 42% and Puzsér by 6%. Nézőpont conducted the poll from August 29 to September 7 by phone, on a representative sample of 1,000 Budapest residents.

## **BUDGET DEFICIT 51.2 PC / FY TARGET IN AUGUST**

Hungary's cash flow-based budget, excluding local councils, ran a 510.8 billion forint (EUR 1.55bn) deficit at the end of August, the finance ministry said in a preliminary release. The deficit hit 51.2% of the 998.4 billion forint full-year target. The central budget ran a 589.3 billion forint deficit at the end of August, while separate state funds were 81.8 billion forints in the black and the social insurance funds were 3.3 billion forints in the red. The ministry said the full-year deficit target of 1.8% of GDP, calculated according to the EU's accrual-based accounting rules, continues to be achievable.

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## **BUDAPEST MAYOR: FOREIGN RECOGNITIONS CONTRADICT OPPOSITION CRITICISM**

The foreign plaudits received by Budapest this year contradict opposition criticism that the city had been destroyed by those in power, incumbent mayor István Tarlós told public news channel M1. In March, Budapest was awarded the title of 'European Best Destination'. Most recently, The Economist ranked it as the most livable capital city in eastern Europe, he said. Tarlós noted that according to the British weekly, Budapest has moved up twenty spots in the ranking since 2010, "taking a towering lead" not only ahead of other eastern European capital cities, but ahead of metropolises such as New York and London.

The ranking criteria speak for themselves, the mayor said, noting that they include factors such as stability, infrastructure, transport, culture and environment. "For this reason, talking about the destruction of the city is just nonsense," he said.

In response to the opposition signature drive to stop "the stadium construction craze", Tarlós said he was the one who had stopped the construction of a nine-level tennis stadium on Margaret Island and the reconstruction of a youth stadium. "As far as the Puskás Stadium is concerned, there is at least one stadium of this size in the capital city of every civilised

country," he said. The reconstructed stadium is scheduled to reopen later this year.

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## **BUDAPEST MUNI COUNCIL, HIPA AND IFK TO SHOW AT MUNICH EXPO REAL**

The Municipal Council of Budapest, the Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency (HIPA) and the Property Developers Roundtable Association (IFK) are showing at a joint stand at international property market fair Expo Real in Munich on October 7-9, IFK told MTI on Monday. Investments in Budapest, Debrecen, Kecskemét, Miskolc and Szeged will be in the spotlight at the stand, IFK said. More than 2,000 exhibitors from 75 countries will show at this year's Expo Real. The event is expected to draw almost 40,000 professionals.

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## **KÖVÉR MEETS SENIOR RUSSIAN POLITICIAN**

House Speaker László Kövér met Nikolay Fyodorov, First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council, Russia's upper house, in Parliament on Monday. Hungary attributes a special role to parliamentary cooperation between the two countries and it is interested in finding new areas of potential cooperation, Kövér said at the meeting. In many cases, good personal relations between members of the legislature help this process, he added. Despite an increase in trade turnover last year,

there are still untapped potentials in the economy and agriculture, he said. Kövér expressed thanks for Fyodorov for continually supporting Hungarian issues in his position as chairman of the Russian-Hungarian friendly division in the Federation Council, and for his openness to steady dialogue and cooperation, a statement by parliament's press office said. "Our country aims to maintain and develop bilateral relations on the grounds of mutual respect and pragmatic cooperation," he added.

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## **V4: EU FUNDING CUTS 'UNACCEPTABLE'**

The planned 20% cut of European Union funding in the 2021-2027 financial cycle is "unacceptable", officials of the Visegrad Group countries said at a meeting in Sárospatak, in north-east Hungary. At the meeting attended by parliamentary European affairs committee members of the Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak parliaments, Richard Horcsik, the (Fidesz) head of parliament's European Affairs Committee, noted the participants had agreed to call on their governments to take a stand against cohesion and agricultural funding cuts at the upcoming EU summit, Horcsik said, noting the Visegrad Group countries had already spent "substantial funds" on the development of poor regions, and curbing those resources would not make sense. The group also opposes

making the funding conditional on “various requirements”, he said, adding that such measures were not a part of the Lisbon Treaty. Meanwhile, the Fidesz official said the election of European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen had shown that the Visegrad Group could lobby successfully for its interests on important issues.

**TURKIC COUNCIL FOREIGN MINISTERS ARRIVE IN HUNGARY FOR A MEETING**

Turkic Council foreign ministers will arrive in Hungary for a meeting before the opening of their European representation in Budapest, the foreign ministry said on Monday. This is the first time that the council’s foreign ministers will be meeting in a country besides one of their own. In 2018, Hungary secured observer status at the 6th summit of the Cooperation Council of the Turkish-Speaking States, whose Secretary-General, Baghdad Amreyev, was welcomed on Monday by Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó. The council comprising Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, will open its European representation in Budapest on Sept. 19 in the presence of the foreign ministers of all four member states.

**FIDESZ-KDNP GROUP IN EP WELCOMES TRÓCSÁNYI CANDIDACY FOR COMMISSIONER**

The Fidesz-KDNP group in the European Parliament welcomed a Monday decision by President-elect of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen to officially announce the candidacy of László Trócsányi as Hungary’s EU commissioner. Von der Leyen’s decision is a significant achievement because “pro-migration forces have made every effort to thwart Trócsányi’s candidacy, but their attempts have failed,” a statement issued by the group on Monday said. The Fidesz-KDNP group expects that the Socialist, Liberal, Green and Communist groups will attack the candidate “by every possible means”. The MEPs of Hungary’s opposition parties will most likely “lead the way in these unprincipled attacks”, the statement added. “Despite this, we trust that instead of the petty party-political intrigues by pro-migration forces, the notion of sensible European cooperation will gain the upper hand during the formation of the European Commission,” the

statement said. The group said that Trócsányi’s diplomatic and academic career made him a most suitable candidate.

**MODERN PREMIERE OF BAROQUE OPERA TO BE STAGED IN S HUNGARY**

The modern-age premiere of the Baroque opera *Les Voyages de l’Amour* (Amor’s travels), composed by Joseph Bodin de Boismortier in 1736, will be held in Pécs, in southern Hungary, on Sept. 21, the organisers told MTI. The opera was last performed in the 18th century, the statement said. In Pécs, renowned sopranos Katherine Watson, Judith Van Wanroij, Chantal Santon-Jeffery and Katia Velletaz will perform with the early music Orfeo ensemble and the Purcell Choir under the baton of György Vashegyi.

Boismortier (1689–1755) was a composer popular mainly for his instrumental works of which he composed over 100. *Les Voyages*, however, was also among his most esteemed. The opera consists of a prologue and three acts. In the prologue, Amor embarks on a journey to find true love. The three acts tell three independent stories, playing in a village, in the city and in a royal court.

