

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Máthé

Hungarian-made carriages to be delivered to Egypt

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Foreign ministers of V4, Japan hold talks in Warsaw**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ CALLS FOR EUROPEAN RESPONSE TO THREATS IN CYBERSPACE

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó in Tallinn called for a unified, “definitive” European answer to new types of threats emerging in the digital world, and for methods that will protect citizens against cybercrime and extremist ideologies.

Szjijártó said that with the increased role of the digital world during the coronavirus pandemic, people are increasingly vulnerable to the threats, criminals and extremist organisations there. At NATO’s cyber protection centre in Tallinn, Hungarian experts also work in the team developing NATO’s response to those challenges, he said. The issue will also be a priority of the Hungarian presidency of the Council of Europe slated to start later this month. Estonia, a country among the five most digitally advanced nations in the world, will be an important partner in that project, he said. Szijjártó also noted that Hungary had always seen ensuring the security of Baltic countries as a priority. At the end of 2022, the Hungarian Armed Forces will again join the forces protecting the airspace of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania with four Gripen aircraft and 95 troops, and has pledged to do the same in 2025, he said.

After the talks, Szijjártó held a joint press conference with Eva-Maria Liimets, his Estonian counterpart.

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## **JUSTICE MINISTER CALLS FOR STRENGTHENING COE**

Justice Minister Judit Varga called for strengthening the role of the Council of Europe (CoE), saying that the European Union “should not be allowed to overshadow” the organisation’s mandate.

Addressing a meeting of parliament’s foreign affairs committee, Varga noted that Hungary will take over the presidency of the CoE’s Committee of Ministers later in May. The minister said the principle that the council’s member states should be united in their values and ideas was just as valid today as it had been at the time of the founding of the organisation 70 years ago. However, diversity and national sovereignty are equally important, Varga said, arguing that the council’s member states differed in their legal, cultural and historical traditions. Varga said the priorities of Hungary’s CoE presidency running until mid-November are future-oriented, pragmatic and committed to the protection of national minorities. She also said it was “clear that there is a certain implicit rivalry between the EU and the CoE”, and urged strengthening the role of the latter.

Meanwhile, Hungary is evaluating the best way to organise this year’s Octopus conference on cybercrime, the minister said. “Hungary is a leader in sharing its experiences in the fight against cybercrime,” she added.

Foreign ministry state secretary Péter András Sztáray noted that

the priorities of Hungary’s CoE presidency will include, among others, the advancement of the protection of national minorities, a focus on future generations, youth policy, strengthening the dialogue between religions, and on meeting the challenges posed by artificial intelligence, cybercrime and climate change. In response to a question, he said Hungary will spend 2 billion forints (EUR 5.6m) on the CoE presidency, rather than 4 billion as originally planned. As regards Hungary’s upcoming takeover of the rotating presidency of the Visegrad Group, Sztáray said talks are still ongoing among the four countries on that presidency’s priorities.

Zsolt Németh, the (Fidesz) head of the committee, said the two presidencies would attract greater attention to Hungary, giving it more room for manoeuvre. Concerning an upcoming debate of the future of the EU, Németh said the Hungarian government believed that “Europe is not just the EU, but the entire continent”. The bloc should also pay attention to the European countries outside it, he said, adding that this made cooperation with the CoE all the more important. Németh said it was also important that the Christian Democratic vision was also represented in the debate on the future of the EU. He also said that Hungary would be pushing for the EU to make good on its commitment to join the European Convention on Human Rights.

## **ORBÁN MARKS POLAND CONSTITUTION DAY**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán greeted in a letter Mateusz Morawiecki, his Polish counterpart, on the occasion of Poland’s Constitution Day.

According to the prime minister’s press chief, Orbán commemorated May 3, 1791, as a day when Poland’s constitution “lent hope to all nations of the continent”. The constitution “showed the Polish nation a way out of the stifling grip of large European empires through confirming the rights of citizens, a Christian social order and the national idea”, Orbán said in his letter. The prime minister said the message, after 230 years, was still valid because “national sovereignty is still at war with imperial endeavours, while our goal remains to preserve Europe as based on strong and free nations”.

## **NÉZŐPONT: FIDESZ-KDNP WIDENS LEAD**

The Fidesz-Christian Democrats (KDNP) coalition widened its lead over the opposition in April, with 40% of voters supporting the ruling parties, daily Magyar Nemzet said. According to a representative survey conducted by the Nézőpont Institute last week, 34% of Hungarian voters support the opposition parties, the paper said. Since March, the ruling parties gained two percentage points, while the opposition lost three, their lowest rating yet since they announced to

run together in the 2022 elections, Nézőpont said. The pollster attributed the popularity of the ruling parties to the successful national coronavirus vaccination campaign. It is also reflected in the popularity of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, with 58% of respondents saying they were satisfied with his work. Only 35% were critical of the prime minister's performance, Nézőpont said. Fully 51% of decided voters would vote for the ruling parties if the elections were held this Sunday, Nézőpont said. The support of opposition parties stands at 43%. Nézőpont conducted the survey between April 27-28 on a sample of 1,000 respondents aged above 18.

**HUNGARY RECORDS 106 CORONAVIRUS FATALITIES, 1,219 NEW INFECTIONS**

Fully 106 patients, generally elderly with co-morbidities, died over the past 24 hours, while 1,219 new infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said. So far 4,073,149 people have received a first jab, while 2,077,160 have been fully vaccinated. The number of active infections has declined to 228,002, while hospitals are treating 4,872 Covid patients, 572 of whom need respiratory assistance. There are 27,386 people in official quarantine, while 5,429,737 tests have been officially carried out. Since the first outbreak, 784,111 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 27,908. Fully 528,201 people have made a recovery. So far, most infections have

been registered in Budapest and Pest County, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Hajdú-Bihar.

**CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER: INOCULATION OF TEENAGERS TO GET UNDERWAY**

The inoculation of registered 16-18 year olds will get under way after May 10, while foreigners living in Hungary will be eligible to register from Tuesday, the chief medical officer has said. Meanwhile, Pfizer-BioNTech has applied to the European Medicines Agency for its vaccine to be accredited for 12-15 year olds, Cecília Müller told a press conference of the operative board responsible for handling the epidemic. As soon as the procedure is completed, Hungary will also expand the scope of the eligible demographics, she said. Foreigners without social security numbers will also be able to register for the vaccine from Tuesday, Müller said.

Nearly 340,000 doses of Pfizer's vaccine are due to arrive in Hungary on Tuesday, Müller said, adding that they will be used to reschedule the second jab for teachers supervising the school-leaving exams in high schools, which started on Monday morning. The one-dose Janssen vaccines will be used on vaccination buses bound for remote localities, she said. Those wishing to receive their second AstraZeneca jab earlier than the originally designated three-month deadline can request it where they received the first dose, she said.

Thanks to the protection efforts and vaccination, Hungarian pandemic numbers are improving steadily, Müller said. Meanwhile, the trace amounts of the virus in waste water, an indicator of the pandemic's course over the next period, has slightly grown in the cities of Budapest, Debrecen and Szolnok and edged down in Eger, Pécs, Székesfehérvár, Tatabánya and other cities, she said.

**SZLÁVIK PROJECTS FIVE MILLION VACCINATED WITHIN WEEKS**

The number of people vaccinated against the coronavirus could reach five million within a few weeks, the leading infectologist of Budapest's South Pest Central Hospital said. János Szlávik told news channel M1 that six or seven million vaccinated will be necessary to achieve herd immunity in the country. "The aim is to have as many people vaccinated as possible," he said. "I believe Hungary is making good progress and I trust that the demand for vaccination will not slow down in the next few weeks," he added. Despite the favourable vaccination figures, there are still many elderly people who have not signed up for a shot, he said. Commenting on the Indian variant of the virus, he said the variant was dangerous because it was spreading faster than others, adding, however, that vaccines offer protection against it "to a certain extent".

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## **GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY SAVED MANY LIVES THANKS TO EASTERN VACCINES**

Hungary saved many lives and “gained a month and a half” in vaccinations thanks to the Russian and Chinese Covid-19 jabs, a foreign ministry official said. Tamás Menczer, the state secretary for communications and international representation, said in a Facebook video that without the Eastern vaccines, the number of vaccinated Hungarians would not have reached four million by last Friday, only in mid-June. Restrictions would have remained in force for a month and a half longer and the gradual relaunch of the economy, including the reopening of pubs and restaurants, cinemas, theatres and gyms, would have been delayed accordingly, he added. “Had we listened to the anti-vaxxer voices on the left, there would be much fewer vaccinated, protected people and we would have lost a month and a half,” he added. Menczer said vaccines save lives and “lead us back to our normal lives”. He called on everyone not to believe the anti-vaxxers.

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## **ORBÁN MEETS HEAD OF INTERNATIONAL JUDO FEDERATION**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Monday met Marius Vizer, the chairman of the International Judo Federation (IJF), to discuss the role of sports

after the coronavirus pandemic and upcoming events. Former President Pál Schmidt, the honorary chairman of the Hungarian Olympic Committee, also attended the meeting. Orbán and Vizer discussed the judo world championship scheduled to be held in Budapest between June 6 and 13. They agreed that sports contributed to a healthy lifestyle, which is also an essential part of the fight against the pandemic. Vizer said health and security were the IJF’s top priorities. The federation “will not make compromises” on those issues, and all delegations will have to adhere to the relevant regulations, he said. The safety of all athletes, coaches and other colleagues will be ensured during the games, he added.

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## **KARÁCSONY: BUDAPEST METRO LINE 1 UPGRADE PLANS TO BE COMPLETED SOON**

The plans for the upgrade of Budapest’s metro line 1 are nearing completion, Gergely Karácsony, the city’s mayor, said, adding that the project would require cooperation between the metropolitan council and the government. Addressing an event marking the 125th anniversary of the metro line’s inauguration, Karácsony said that an extension to the line could link it with tram lines 1 and 2. This, he said, would also be a way to integrate the “rust-belt” zone of Rákosrendező into Budapest’s public transport network. The mayor

said that at the time of the metro line’s completion, Budapest had been the one “setting the pace” among major cities when it came to underground transportation, noting that this line had been the world’s first electrified metro line. Karácsony said his administration’s vision of green transportation, affordable housing and the construction of parks was both a vision of a 21st century city and one that follows national traditions going back to the era of the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary.

Budapest public transport company BKV chief Tibor Bolla said the project would involve a reconstruction of the metro line itself, an upgrade of the metro trains and an extension of the line.

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## **PUBLIC TRUST IN HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES REMAINS UNCHANGED, SAYS CHAIRMAN**

Surveys show that public trust in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) remains unchanged but the prestigious institution’s situation has thoroughly changed since it lost its network of research institutions, the academy’s chairman has said. Tamás Freund told the 194th general meeting, held online, that “we must work in this new field of force on developing the most suitable role for the academy, demonstrating our indispensableness”. Freund said MTA must fulfil the role of “advisor to the nation” and promote a

science-friendly approach in society, which he said required stronger participation as a public body. Katalin Karikó, a biochemist who patented the technology for mRNA-based vaccines, and is a vice president at BioNTech and an associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania, addressed the meeting after Freund's welcome address. The celebratory meeting continued with the granting of awards recognising scientific achievements.

### **ÁDER DISCUSSES SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION IN PODCAST**

President János Áder discussed climate and consumer-friendly energy production with Attila Chikán Jr, the CEO of energy services company Alteo and head of the Business Council for Sustainable Development in Hungary.

In his podcast dubbed Blue Planet (Kék Bolygó) Áder noted the European Union's pledge to become climate neutral by 2050. Hungary emitted 68 million tonnes of carbon dioxide on 2018, and aims to reduce that to 7 million tonnes, he said. Chikán said those goals must be achieved in the interest of future generations. If large emitters don't change course, quality of life will deteriorate in desert and equatorial areas so much that the people there "will have to flee their countries", he warned. Other countries could be swallowed by rising seas, he added. Another goal Hungary has pledged to achieve is to raise the ratio of wooded areas to 30% from 21%, Áder noted. Chikán said expanding forests and increasing biodiversity were the primary tools to influence the planet's climate. He said "we had to be extremely

careful" with geoengineering, an emerging scientific trend currently in experimental stage which looks at dispersing particles in the atmosphere to influence climate. Regarding energy production, Chikán said the industry has to satisfy requirements in climate protection while ensuring reliable supplies and being cost-effective. Chikán also noted that long-term storage of electric energy was difficult or needed very costly technology. Natural gas will have a role in Hungarian electric energy production in the foreseeable future, partly due to the country's environmental setup, Chikán said. At the same time, power plants using natural gas can easily adapt to demand and curb production accordingly, he said. Nuclear plants are essential in preventing the increase of carbon emissions, Chikán added.