

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Opening of 52nd Eucharistic Congress in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

52nd Eucharistic Congress events

Kövér addresses Parliamentary Security Forum

Coronavirus updates

TOP STORY

52ND INTL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS OPENS

“The Eucharist is the source for the life and mission of Christians,” Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, said addressing the opening mass of the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest on Sunday.

The cardinal prayed to God that participants, “especially during the week of the congress”, would feel “Christ is with us at the Eucharist, and he will not abandon the Church, peoples or mankind”. Erdő welcomed Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, the head of the Council of the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe, the first celebrant of the opening mass, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the head of the foreign affairs office of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as 1,200 children receiving first communion.

In a radio interview earlier in the day, the Cardinal said fully 1.2 billion Catholics from five continents “will be watching us over the next few days”. Not only is the Congress a big draw for Catholics, but other denominations in Hungary and surrounding countries are also showing interest in “the big Christian meeting” in Budapest, the cardinal said. “We agree with Eastern Christians on the Eucharist, so we have a common faith,” he said. “There’s a real basis for celebrating it together.” More than 200,000 people have registered to attend the Congress’s various programmes, he noted.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI’s real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



STATIO ORBIS SYMBOLISES CHURCH’S UNITY

The head of the Hungarian Catholic Church, Cardinal Péter Erdő, said that the “statio orbis”, or “Assembly of the World”, at the closing Mass to be held by Pope Francis next Sunday in Heroes’ Square palpably symbolised the church’s unity.

Hungary is hosting the event for the second time since 1938. Originally scheduled to be held in 2020, the event was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco told the gathering that “Christ’s light radiates through the Church despite all the weaknesses and sins of its members”. “You are not alone in the middle of a hostile universe ... wherever you are, God will look down on you with his love,” the cardinal said, adding that “the Eucharist will overcome any solitude, distance and indifference”.

The opening mass was concelebrated by 100 bishops and some 300 priests. The participants filled Heroes’ Square and a part of Andrassy Avenue. The event was attended by President János Áder and First Lady Anita Herczegh, Anikó Lévai, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s wife, Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén, András Zs. Varga, the president of the supreme court, Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler, Chief Prosecutor Péter Polt, and other dignitaries.

Between Monday and Friday, lectures on Christian subjects will be offered all day at the Hungexpo grounds, while concerts and other performances will be held in Széll Kálmán and Örs vezér squares in the afternoons. Concerts, folk dance performances and book shows will also be held in front of St. Stephen’s Basilica.

The Congress’s closing mass will be celebrated by Pope Francis at Heroes’ Square next Sunday. Hungary is hosting the event for the second time since 1938. Originally scheduled to be held in 2020, the event was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

SZIJJÁRTÓ SAYS EU MUST EMBRACE CHANGE TO REMAIN STRONG

A strong European Union is in Hungary’s interest, but for the bloc to be strong it must embrace change, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said ahead of an annual right-wing event held in Kötcse, in western Hungary, on Saturday.

Noting that 77-78% of Hungary’s exports end up in the EU, Péter Szijjártó said it was in Hungary’s interest to be an EU member, though this also applied the other way round. He added that he still backed Hungary’s EU membership.

Referring to a recent meeting of EU foreign ministers in Slovenia, the minister said it was a matter

of concern that the bloc’s largest countries “cannot grasp that giving migrants carte blanche to enter the EU in 2015 caused the bloc its biggest crisis”. He warned that the same mistake may well be repeated, “although there are more and more of us who dare to speak out,” he added. Szijjártó declared the Visegrad Group to be the strongest alliance within the EU “despite attempts to weaken” it.

Meanwhile, answering a question about the recent England-Hungary football match held in Budapest, Szijjártó condemned the racist abuse used by fans, though he said it was “offensive” to tar all Hungarian fans with the same brush. “There were racist expressions, but passing judgement over 60,000-70,000 people on that basis is absurd,” he said.

Last year’s Kötcse Picnic, which would have been organised for the 20th time, was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

JUSTICE MIN CALLS FOR ‘SMARTER’ EUROPE

“More Europe” is not the answer to the European Union’s crises in recent years, Justice Minister Judit Varga said on Saturday, calling for a “better, smarter” community instead. Speaking ahead of an annual Civic Picnic in Kötcse, in western Hungary, Varga said vowed to launch a debate on the future of the EU aimed at finding ways to



avoid similar crises. "Integration should be strengthened where this results in added value," she said.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Tibor Benkő said refugees from Afghanistan would not be welcome unless they arrived with valid travel documents. "It is clear that unidentified persons will not be allowed to enter unless we know the purpose of their arrival," he said.

Katalin Novák, the minister in charge of family affairs, said the government was making efforts to provide greater support for infertile families, adding that the price of treatments had been considerably reduced. "I trust that more and more people have access to those procedures, and I am not aware that the number of patients seeking treatment abroad is growing," she said.

Human Resources Minister Miklós Kásler said: "Hungary's handling the pandemic is exemplary in Europe; the World Health Organisation and neighbouring countries are all in agreement on that."

Tamás Deutsch, MEP of ruling Fidesz, insisted that "the left wing has no chance" in next year's general election. "We have the chance, but it won't happen by itself; we have to work hard. The whole civic, national, Christian Democratic camp is ready to do that," he said. Deutsch said it was not impossible for the ruling parties to capture a two-thirds majority

once again, though this would be "icing on the cake". He suggested that "the difference will not be more than a hair's breadth and they will not be the winner".

Balázs Orbán, state secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, addressing the issue of Hungary's coronavirus vaccination drive, said "the vaccine works, Hungary works". He said that the government was not planning any pandemic-related restrictions. "Lockdown is not the solution; vaccinations are," he added. "Hungary is a solid point in today's uncertain world," he said.

PALKOVICS: VACCINES TO BE PRODUCED IN DEBRECEN AT END-2022

Hungary's new vaccine facility in Debrecen will start turning out doses at the end of next year, László Palkovics, the innovation and technology minister, said on Sunday, addressing the cornerstone ceremony of the plant.

More than 20 million vaccines will be produced at the plant located at the University of Debrecen's innovation park each year using various technologies, he said. The plant will ensure a stable and sustainable supply of vaccines for the home market for protection against any future pandemics or local epidemics, he said, adding that the development will also create jobs. If necessary, the plant can be expanded and adapted for

the production of various other vaccines, he added.

Vaccines for humans were produced in Hungary for almost a century until the 1990s, he noted, though this came to an end with the privatisation of the country's pharmaceutical industry. Palkovics said that the lesson drawn from last year's scramble to procure PPE was that "in this kind of a situation we can only rely on ourselves". The new facility will be a base for production as well as research and development, he noted, building on the university's scientific and research experience.

PALKOVICS: HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AT 'TURNING POINT'

Hungarian higher education has reached an "epochal turning point" thanks to the new foundational model covering a wider range of institutions, László Palkovics, the minister of innovation and technology, said on Saturday. Addressing a ceremonial senate meeting of the University of Szeged, in southern Hungary, Palkovics said universities that have opted in to the new foundational model would benefit in a multiplicity of ways thanks to their enhanced institutional autonomy and funding predictability. He noted that 21 universities have opted in to the new model and 65% of student applications have been made to a university operating under the new system. It is anticipated that seven

out of ten students will study at such institutions, he added. Palkovics said Hungary had never before spent as much on its universities as it did today. The government in 2022 will spend 1.7% of GDP on higher education as opposed to the EU average of 0.8%, he added. Bids totalling 2,700 billion forints (EUR 7.8bn) for developments submitted by the universities will be fully covered by the state's coffers, the minister said.

Palkovics noted that this year 11% more people applied for a place in higher education than last year, while by 2020 the number of foreign students had grown by 65% from 2013.

GOVT EXTENDS 'STATE OF CRISIS' DUE TO MASS MIGRATION

The government has decided to extend by six months the "state of crisis" in connection with mass migration due to the growing migration pressure on the Hungarian border and an anticipated new wave of migrants triggered by the developments in Afghanistan, the Government Information Centre (KTK) said on Friday. The KTK said that migration in the direction of Europe was picking up both on land and sea, with the number of illegal border crossing attempts increasing on the Hungarian border as well. The Hungarian authorities have apprehended more than 60,000 illegal migrants at the border so far this year,

more than triple the number caught in the first eight months of 2020. Police have been apprehending 300 migrants a day on average in the recent period, the KTK said, adding that migrants stranded on the Balkan migration route were making more and more attempts to enter the country forcefully and "regularly attack the police officers protecting the border". More than a dozen tunnels have been discovered on the southern border this year alone, they said, adding that the number of people smugglers caught by the authorities had also tripled compared with last year. The KTK said that "economic problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the developments in Afghanistan would trigger a new migration wave, giving an opportunity for Islamic extremists to make their way into the heart of Europe". The Hungarian government, it added, was sticking to its "open and unambiguous" migration policy. Hungary will maintain its fence along its southern border and continue to provide border protection, the statement said. Also, the government will stand firm in its opposition to the resettlement of migrants and will continue to represent the position that Europe and Hungary must be protected against mass migration, it added. The government decree on the extended state of crisis will soon be published in the official gazette Magyar Közlöny.

The state of crisis was first introduced in March 2016 and has been extended several times.

FIDESZ: KARÁCSONY HAS DESERTED BUDAPEST

Budapest's mayor has neglected his duties in the capital in preference for the campaign trail, Zsolt Láng, who heads the Fidesz-KDNP group in the city's assembly, said in an interview to the daily Magyar Nemzet. This neglect is evident on the streets of Budapest, with traffic in a state of chaos and public spaces full of rubbish, he told the paper's Saturday edition. Láng accused Gergely Karácsony of abusing his emergency powers during the period of coronavirus-related restrictions. A day before the emergency powers expired, the assembly passed a number of important decisions, such as the 7 billion forint purchase of used trams from Frankfurt that lack air conditioning, he said. Láng said Karácsony, who is campaigning to become the opposition alliance's joint prime ministerial candidate ahead of the 2022 general election, was only interested in his own political ambitions. The Fidesz politician said the mayor should instead be dealing with traffic jams and the maintenance of public spaces. He said Fidesz wanted to engage in professional discussions, but the left wing was too busy with their own political fights. "They're cynical and arrogant," he added. Láng also made reference to "suspicious public

procurements” such as a tender for buses and Danube river boats. He also mentioned the renovation of Chain Bridge which, he said, was of reduced scope compared with the original plans under Karácsony’s Fidesz predecessor, yet would cost 5 billion forints (EUR 14.4m) more. Also the reconstruction of Blaha Lujza Square is costing 1.1 billion forints more than the original plans and has produced traffic chaos, he said.

PÁRBSZÉD SUBMITS ANTI-GRAFT PROPOSALS TO PARLT

The opposition Párbeszéd party has submitted three proposals to parliament related to setting up an anti-corruption agency and protecting whistleblowers. Párbeszéd’s bills include a constitutional amendment proposal on setting up an anti-corruption agency and one on the proposed agency’s regulations, Bence Tordai, the party’s deputy group leader, told on online press conference. The third proposal concerns the protection of whistleblowers exposing corruption, he said. Passing these bills would allow Hungary to “rid itself of the oligarchs ... [who are] sucking the life out of the Hungarian economy”, Tordai said.

The leader of the opposition Momentum Movement, András Fekete-Győr, told the same press conference that some 1,000 billion forints’ (EUR 2.87bn) worth of public funds were lost to corruption in

Hungary each year. If the opposition wins next year’s general election it will set up an anti-corruption agency and agree to Hungary joining the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO), Fekete-Győr said.

LMP: DROP IN WAGES ‘SIGN OF FIDESZ GOVT’S FAILED CRISIS MANAGEMENT’

Real wages have started to decline in Hungary for the first time in 12 months which “goes to show that the Fidesz-led government has failed in its pandemic-related crisis management efforts”, according to the co-leader of opposition LMP. “While gross average wages have increased by an annual 3.5%, inflation has risen to 5% over the past 12 months,” Máté Kanász-Nagy told an online press conference. He noted that the gross wage increase also included a one-off payment of 500,000 forints (EUR 1,435) to health-care workers. In 2020, an average Hungarian household had a monthly net income of 197,000 forints, the politician said, adding that more than one million people were making minimum wage. LMP’s programme includes guaranteeing everyone a steady income increase instead of distributing one-off payments as “a donation”, Kanász-Nagy said, adding that the wages of teachers and employees in the culture and

social sectors had stagnated over a long period of time.

The party promises to introduce a fairer tax policy including scrapping any tax on the minimum wage and reducing the tax on incomes up to 500,000 forints to 12%, the politician said.

ÁDER MARKS ETHNIC SLOVENIAN ASSOCIATION ANNIVERSARY

President János Áder and his Slovenian counterpart Borut Pahor attended a celebration marking the 30th anniversary of the federation of Hungary’s Slovenian minority in Szentgotthárd, in western Hungary, on Saturday. “Those belonging to two homelands and nations will not halve their commitment but double it,” Áder said at the ceremony. All Hungary’s minorities are “constituents of the nation”, Áder said, adding that “the minorities living with us are part of us, they are our compatriots, neighbours, with whom we share our lives, fate, and homeland”.

Pahor said that the two countries shared a responsibility to help their minorities survive and prosper.

Áder said that the “centuries-old” peaceful coexistence of the Hungarian and Slovenian nations was “exemplary in a central and eastern Europe divided by inherited conflicts”. The two countries mutually appreciate their ethnic minorities and consider them as assets, he added. He also praised Slovenia for considering ethnic

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.



Hungarians as an indigenous minority and granting broad cultural rights and self-governance. "The least we can do is to provide the same to Hungary's Slovenes," he said.

GULYÁS INAUGURATES LÓNYAI-HATVANY VILLA FOR FOUNDATION

Gergely Gulyás, the prime minister's chief of staff, has inaugurated the refurbished headquarters of the Batthyány Lajos Foundation, the Lónyai-Hatvany Villa in the Buda Castle. "It is important to have a conservative Christian base with a vision for the future that can define the national strategic objectives without which governing would lose meaning," Gulyás said in his address.

The Batthyány Foundation was set up in 1991 at the initiative of then-prime minister József Antal,

Hungary's first democratically elected prime minister after the 1989/90 change of regime. Gulyás praised the foundation, saying that it had always served as a base supporting a variety of organisations of public life and their programmes, while it had also served as "an intellectual basis supporting the civic political wing" and had been instrumental in strengthening that side. "This refurbished building stands as a due appreciation of the foundation's work in public life," he said.

The villa was built at the initiative of Menyhért Lónyai, finance minister in 1870 and prime minister in 1871-72, according to the design of eminent architect Miklós Ybl. It was purchased by painter and art collector Ferenc Hatvany in 1915, but was destroyed in a bombing in 1944. The renovation began in 2000.

SUMMER 2021 IN HUNGARY 1.2 C. WARMER THAN AVERAGE

This summer was 1.2 C. warmer than on average and the fifth hottest since 1901, the national meteorological service has said. Also, the summer was also especially dry, with rainfall well below average. The seasonal average temperature was 22 C. nationwide. June and July were 2.1 C. and 2.2 C. warmer than usual, making June the third hottest and July the hottest since 1901, as the two months approached 23 C. However, the average temperature in August was 1 C. below average. There was less rainfall than usual in all three months. June was the driest of the last 121 years, with only 22% of average monthly precipitation. July and August were 13% and 8% below, respectively.