

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Attila Kovács

National Museum displays full, intact Roman military armour recovered from Danube 50 years ago

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**EU Justice Commissioner in Budapest**

**Regular weekly govt presser**

**Plenary session of parliament**

**Coronavirus updates**

## TOP STORY

# SZIJJÁRTÓ HOLDS TALKS IN RWANDA

Hungary will launch a 52 million US dollar tied aid loan in Rwanda, the largest such scheme undertaken by Hungary in Africa so far, Foreign Minister Péter Sziijártó said in Kigali.

Sziijártó, who is the first Hungarian foreign minister to make an official visit to Rwanda, told a joint press conference with Rwandan counterpart Vincent Biruta that the tied aid loan will be used to develop the country's water management facilities with the involvement of Hungarian businesses. The project will involve the renovation and expansion of Kigali's water purification plant, with Hungarian companies providing the technical supervision of the installation of Hungarian-made technologies, the minister said. The plant's daily capacity will be increased to 36,000 cubic metres from 15,000 cubic metres, together with a 6km pipeline network, Sziijártó said. The project represents a new opportunity for the use of Hungarian technologies in one of Africa's fastest growing markets, and will help improve local living conditions, he added.

Meanwhile, Sziijártó said that in response to a request from the Rwandan government, Hungary is donating 300,000 coronavirus vaccine doses to the country, 200,000 doses of which are the AstraZeneca jab and 100,000 China's Sinopharm.

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## **ORBÁN TO ATTEND TURKEY-HUNGARY GOVERNMENT SUMMIT, TURKIC COUNCIL MEETING IN ANKARA**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán travelled to Turkey for two days on Wednesday afternoon to attend events in Ankara and Istanbul, his press chief said. Bertalan Havasi said Orbán is scheduled to pay an official visit to Ankara on Thursday to attend the 5th meeting of the Turkish high-level strategic cooperation council in the company of several ministers, including Péter Szijjártó, Tibor Benkő, Miklós Kásler, Katalin Novák, Sándor Pintér and László Palkovics. On Friday, Orbán is scheduled to hold talks in Istanbul at the Turkic Council summit.

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## **OPPOSITION'S MÁRKI-ZAY TO MEET EU OFFICIALS IN BRUSSELS**

Péter Márki-Zay, the opposition's joint candidate for prime minister, is scheduled to meet representatives of European organisations, four European parliamentary group leaders, four European commissioners and Belgian politicians during a current visit to Brussels. Speaking to Hungarian reporters about his talks on Wednesday, Márki-Zay said the leaders of the Socialist and Green EP groups had been "open to a Hungary that is reinventing itself", saying that they, too had an interest in Hungary's

commitment to European values and western European Christian culture. The conservative mayor of Hódmezővásárhely underscored the importance of the eradication of corruption in Hungary. Márki-Zay said he was committed to having Hungary join the European public prosecutor's office (EPPO) and adopting the euro following four to five years of preparatory work.

As regards security policy, Márki-Zay vowed to expel from Hungary "criminal migrants imported by Fidesz" if he got elected next spring. He promised to devote close attention to making sure that the EU "is more careful in its disbursement of funds", which he said meant that EU funds should be used to improve the lives of Hungarians "rather than to enrich [Prime Minister Viktor] Orbán's family and criminals linked to [ruling] Fidesz". Márki-Zay added that as prime minister he would also ensure that Hungary meets the EU's rule of law criteria and that "European taxpayer money isn't stolen".

In response to a question about cuts in utility prices, Márki-Zay said that if Orbán "wouldn't be keeping Hungarians in poverty, they could afford to pay utility bills". He said his government would help the population by promoting solar energy, providing firewood, supporting wall insulation, the replacement of doors and windows and the installation of heat pump boilers.

Meanwhile, he said Orbán "did the right thing" by taking in refugees, adding, however, that the residency

bond scheme posed a "national security risk" to the EU. He said the bloc should follow the examples of the United States and Canada when it came to the use of border fences and controlling immigration.

"If necessary, the EU shouldn't just have a coast guard but also a fence," Márki-Zay said. "If it works in the US and Canada, it should also work in the European Union."

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## **OPPOSITION TO SUBMIT AMENDMENT PROPOSAL TO FIDESZ'S ANIMAL PROTECTION BILL**

The opposition parliamentary parties said they will submit an amendment proposal to an animal protection bill tabled by the ruling parties, arguing that the bill was "too little, too late". The bill submitted by Fidesz would introduce stricter punishments for the poisoning of animals, enable tougher action against illicit breeders, and criminalise participation in animal fighting.

The Socialist Party's Ágnes Kunhalmi told a joint opposition press conference that though her party will back the bill, she believed the ruling parties had only submitted it to attract votes in next spring's general election. Kunhalmi said the opposition will propose that the protection of animals be enshrined in Hungary's constitution and that the state set up a 15-20 billion forint (EUR 42-55m) animal protection fund.

Olivio Kocsis-Cake of Párbeszéd said the government should appoint an ombudsman for animal

protection whose duties would involve overseeing the national animal protection fund and proposing changes to the law.

Jobbik's Gergely Kalló called for tougher sanctions against unlicensed animal breeders and stricter punishments for the organisers of animal fights. Also, those who put out poisoned baits that cause the death of an animal should be held accountable, while animal traps that cause permanent injury should be banned, he said.

Gergely Arató of the Democratic Coalition (DK) called for the establishment of an "animal protection guard", saying that animal protection laws were "pointless if there's no one to enforce them".

**ÁDER CALLS FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN LARGE CITIES**

Sustainable cities require dedicated city leaders and good ideas, President János Áder said in an interview to public radio. Many of these ideas and initiatives will be presented to visitors during the Planet Budapest 2021 Sustainability Expo and Summit to be held from Nov. 30 to Dec. 5, Áder, who is the chief patron of the event, said. Three-quarters of the population are likely to live in large cities by 2050, Áder said, with around one million moving to cities each week. Whereas in 1960, there were few cities with more than 5 million residents, currently there are 31 with more than 10 million, he added.

This high level of concentration entails severe burdens when it comes to energy and water consumption, waste management, transport and pollution, he noted. Not only does this raise sustainability challenges; extreme weather conditions such as flash floods and heat waves are also associated with dense populations. It has been projected that the same amount of new infrastructure will need to be built by 2050 as the total infrastructure built in the past 2,000 years, he said. Old city districts will have to be revamped in terms of energy efficiency and new green surfaces will be needed to improve air quality and reduce growing heat, he added.

City leaders can play a key role in solving such sustainability problems, he said. Budapest and other big cities in Hungary belong to an international initiative which targets climate neutrality by 2050, the president noted. Some 260 cities, provinces and countries with 1.7 billion residents, representing half of global GDP, are part of it, he said, adding that its success depended on good planning.

**HUNGARY RECORDS 98 COVID DEATHS, 8,434 NEW INFECTIONS**

Altogether 98 patients died of a Covid-related illness over the past 24 hours, while 8,434 new coronavirus infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday. So far 5,981,915 people have received a first jab, while 5,760,912 have been fully vaccinated.

Fully 1,431,000 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections stands at 78,025, while hospitals are treating 4,830 Covid-19 patients, 463 of whom need respiratory assistance. Since the first outbreak, 923,020 infections have been registered, while the number of fatalities has risen to 31,619. Fully 813,376 people have made a recovery. There are 32,950 people in official quarantine, while the number of tests taken stands at 7,677,571.

**FIDESZ CALLS FOR PROBE INTO ALLEGED PLANS TO SELL BUDAPEST CITY HALL**

The Budapest chapter of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party has called on Gergely Karácsony, the city's mayor, to order an investigation into reports that Budapest's leadership was planning to sell the City Hall building.

Zsolt Láng, the group leader of ruling Fidesz in Budapest's municipal assembly, told a press conference on Wednesday that while "more and more audio recordings and documents are turning up" on the sale of the building, Karácsony was not "heard either denying the plan or contradicting himself".

Láng called on the city's leadership to launch an investigation into the matter and clarify whether a study has been carried out on the sale of the building and if anyone had known about it and reviewed it. He also called on Karácsony to clarify who had authorised the director of the

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Budapest asset management company to consult with market players on the study. Láng cited the head of the asset management company as saying that once the refurbishment of Budapest's City Hall Park was complete in 2024, the park would be demolished to make way for a new building. He added that if Karácsony "doesn't order an investigation, his behaviour will become very suspicious".

Láng cited Karácsony as saying that the study on the potential sale of the City Hall building had been discussed at a cabinet meeting but the city's leadership had not supported it. He said this made it hard for him to believe that Karácsony had not known of the plans to sell the building.

### **FORTY-TWO PERCENT OF ROMANIA HUNGARIANS WISHING TO VOTE IN HUNGARY ELECTIONS**

Fully 42% of dual citizens among Romania's ethnic Hungarian minority would cast their vote in Hungary's parliamentary election next year, mostly supporting ruling Fidesz, according to a poll released on Wednesday.

The poll, conducted by the Bálványos Institute and Transylvania Inquiry on a representative sample of 1,218 adults, showed that about 60% of Romania Hungarians had Hungarian citizenship, and 83% of those wishing to participate in the election would vote for Fidesz. Four percent of respondents said they would support

conservative opposition Jobbik, while only 3% would vote for the allied opposition parties of Hungary.

Ninety-four percent of respondents said they were familiar with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and 89% had a positive opinion of him. Eighty-three percent said they knew who Democratic Coalition leader Ferenc Gyurcsány was, while 69% were familiar with Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó and 59% with Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony.

Seventy-seven percent indicated their rejection of Gyurcsány, while all government politicians had a positive (50% or more) popularity index.

### **IT MINISTER IN TEL AVIV FOR TALKS ON INNOVATIVE TRANSPORT, AI**

László Palkovics, the innovation and technology minister, has called AI and electric cars the key to success in innovation, after talks with ministers and researchers in Tel Aviv, where he also attended the Prime Minister's Smart Mobility Summit on Tuesday. Palkovics said he discussed transport development issues in connection with the Hungarian government's rail and aircraft development programme with Israel's transport minister, Merav Michaeli. They also discussed the future use of hydrogen-powered vehicles, he told MTI by phone on Tuesday evening. Palkovics said he met Orit Farkash-Hacohen, the minister of science and technology, and they signed a science cooperation agreement. They

discussed cooperation in the areas of electric vehicles and drones, as well as Israeli-Hungarian biotechnological development projects in Hungary. Topics also included potential areas for the application of artificial intelligence (AI) and their legal ramifications, as well as future possibilities in laser technology cooperation with the involvement of the ELI Laser Centre in Szeged, in southern Hungary. Palkovics also met Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Idan Roll, and they signed an agreement on exchange programmes in education.

### **MAYOR: DEBRECEN AIRPORT TO RAPIDLY DEVELOP**

The airport in Debrecen, Hungary's second largest city, is developing fast with the help of state, local government and private funding and is hoped to handle a larger number of passengers than before the coronavirus pandemic, Mayor László Papp said on Wednesday, at the topping out ceremony of a logistics facility. Scheduled flights at the airport were launched in 2012 with annual passenger numbers increasing year by year, Papp said, noting that their number would have totalled close to one million in 2020, had the coronavirus not broken out.

"Although the number of passengers and flights had dropped because of the pandemic, the airport's development has not come to a halt," the mayor said.

István Herdon, the CEO of the Xanga Group, said that the airport's multimodal centre will be developed with a 4 billion forint investment (HUF 11m) in partnership with MNB Invest Ltd. The 4400sqm incubator building is 16 metres high and suitable for accommodating a passenger plane as a hangar.

Companies moving to the incubator next year will create 50-100 jobs at the airport, he said.

**SURVEY: TURNOVER OF 43% OF HUNGARIAN WEBSHOPS INCREASED DURING PANDEMIC**

Fully 43% of the webstores operating in Hungary reported a turnover increase during the coronavirus pandemic and just 12% posted a decline, Shoprenter said, based on a survey covering 707 Hungarian webstores. One-fifth of the respondents said their sales revenue remained unchanged and 24% of the webshops were not yet operating at the time of the outbreak of the

pandemic. The survey shows online retailers who built on tourism suffered the biggest losses while areas that have been favoured by the pandemic such as computer technology and hobby products registered outstanding sales growth.

One of the founders of Shoprenter, István Róbert Kulcsár said 43% of the 707 webstores have an offline store, adding that there is a strong synergy between the two, which provides an opportunity for multichannel sales. Shoprenter provides e-commerce solutions to 6,000 businesses. In 2020, these webshops received 6.5 million orders worth 158 billion forints (EUR 4.3bn).

**HUNGARIAN CHILDREN START USING THE INTERNET AT A YOUNGER AGE - SURVEY**

Hungarian children start using the internet at an increasingly young age; almost twice as many 7-8-year-olds had a mobile phone last year as in 2017,

according to a representative survey commissioned by the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH). The share of children aged 7-8 who have a mobile phone rose to 24% last year from 14% in 2017, NMHH said on Wednesday. The survey is based on interviews with 2,000 children aged 7-16 and their parents.

Most ten-year-olds already have a mobile phone. This is increasingly a smartphone with a monthly fee and a mobile internet subscription. The ratio of ten-year-olds present on social media has tripled, rising to 10% from 3%, NMHH said. The number of cases when a stranger tried to contact a child between the ages of 11 and 16 doubled over three years. Children are becoming more cautious, with fewer sharing their photos on the internet or making their e-mail address or the name of their school publicly available online. Nevertheless, a quarter of 13-14-year-olds and almost a third of 15-16-year-olds keep contact online with "friends" they have never met.

