

PHOTO OF THE DAY



A composition under construction for the Debrecen Flower Carnival, to be held on August 20

MTI/Zsolt Czeglédi

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 20 celebrations

Events related to Hungary's EU presidency

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East

TOP STORY

HUNGARIAN CULTURE 'DETERMINED BY CHRISTIANITY'

Hungarian and European culture are determined by Christianity, Speaker of Parliament László Kövér said in an interview with the weekly Szabad Föld, adding that "people must return to normality".

Speaking ahead of the August 20 national holiday celebrating the founding of the Hungarian state, Kövér said Hungary had inherited from King St. Stephen "a stable state that is capable of reinventing itself and which has provided a framework for our lives and protected our national existence for over a millennium". He said Hungary was one of four European Union member states that have stood for over a thousand years with the same name and in the same territory where they were originally founded. Kövér said that over the course of its history, others had always attempted to push Hungary "into one camp or another". "It's clear that in Europe today they're trying to suck every sovereign state into a united states of Europe," he said. Kövér said the 21st century could be won by making up for the lives lost in the wars and dictatorships of the 20th century. Hungary, he said, had to stay on the path it had been on between 2012 and 2022 which had been "characterised by continuous economic growth, rising employment, a rising birth rate and cultural prosperity".

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LÁZÁR: GOVT LAUNCHES PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACTION PLAN

The government has launched an action plan aimed at developing the system and services of public transport, the minister of construction and transport told a press conference on Friday. János Lázár said the action plan was designed to create a “public transport constitution” to enforce passengers’ rights, as well as to facilitate railway developments and vehicle purchases and to increase passenger satisfaction. Under the programme, state railways MÁV will be reorganised as a new company to be headed by Zsolt Hegyi, replacing Zoltán Pafféri, MÁV’s incumbent CEO, Lázár said.

SIMICKÓ: ‘IMPORTANT TO STRENGTHEN CHRISTIAN VALUES’

“It is important for Hungary to strengthen Christian values and set an example to a decaying West,” István Simicskó, parliamentary group leader of the co-ruling Christian Democrats, said in connection with contested plans to add a cross to the pedestal of Budapest’s landmark second world war Liberation Monument on Gellért Hill, now being refurbished. Speaking on public television M1 on Friday, Simicskó said “all civilisations are built on a basis of religion and once that foundation is destroyed the structure will collapse”. “Christian symbols must be revered, still, in Western

Europe Christianity is waning and churches are being destroyed,” he added. Simicskó said the planned crucifix was “also a symbol of freedom and victory”, adding that Byzantine emperors “used to erect crucifixes after battles won”.

In another interview, to public broadcaster Kossuth Radio, Simicskó called for an early ceasefire and peace talks in the Russia-Ukraine war. He called for talks with Ukraine, Russia, the US and China, and insisted that “this is a proxy war in which players in the background are also important, not just the directly warring parties”. Concerning the recent incursion by Ukrainian troops into Russian territory, Simicskó said “Ukrainians are fighting heroically but the two countries are not in the same weight-class and this [incursion] will not be a problem for the Russian army.”

GOVT OFFICIAL: ‘STRENGTHENED NATIONAL COHESION OUR MOST IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENT’

“The strengthened feeling, awareness and experience of national cohesion is our most important achievement of the last 14 years,” the state secretary in charge of policies for Hungarian communities abroad said on Friday, marking the August 20 national holiday. Presenting the Kallós Zoltán Award for Hungarians Abroad to individuals and organisations recognised for their efforts in the interests of Hungarian communities beyond the border, Árpád János Potápi said that national cohesion “that is the keystone

of our national identity manifests itself primarily through cooperation: in carrying out the tasks and celebrating our successes”. “We Hungarians share in the difficulties by bearing the burdens together, and multiply our joy by celebrating together,” he said. “This is what the community builders and organisers, political, cultural and religious leaders recognised with the Kallós Zoltán Award set an example in,” he added.

DK PROTESTS MANDATORY SEAT RESERVATIONS ON COACHES

The leftist opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) has voiced protest against a recent move to introduce mandatory seat reservations on long-distance bus services. MP Erzsébet Gy. Németh told a press conference on Friday that the 300 forint (EUR 0.80) tickets were a strain on the finances of commuters, students, the elderly, and families with children. Rather than imposing such “extra tolls” the government should increase its spending on public transport, allowing for more services and higher pay to bus drivers, she insisted.

HUNGARY LABOUR MARKET RESERVE OVER 300,000

Hungary’s potential labour reserve stood at 314,000 people in the second quarter, data released by the Central Statistical Office (KSH) on Friday show. KSH defines the potential labour reserve as the

unemployed, the underemployed and the inactive who intend to but do not actively look for work or do not meet availability criteria. The data, for Hungarians between the ages of 15 and 74, show there were 4,745,100 employed and 215,300 jobless during the quarter. The number of Hungarians who were not economically active stood at 2,329,000.

Hungary's activity rate stood at 68%. The rate was highest, at 73%, in the capital and reached 68.8% in the west of the country. In the underdeveloped north, the rate was 64%.

BUDAPEST TECH UNIVERSITY MOVES UP IN SHANGHAI RANKING

The Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME) has been included in the 801-900 group of the world's 1,000 best universities by the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), advancing from the 901-1,000 group last year, the university said on Friday. BME is now in the same group with CVUT, its peer in Prague, just ahead of Warsaw's technical university. The university said its advance was owed to Nobel laureate Ferenc Krausz, a former student, increasing the university's points awarded in proportion with the number of alumni winning high scientific awards. In 2023, BME excelled especially in mathematics and engineering, their statement added.

SZENTENDRE OPEN-AIR MUSEUM VENUE OF INTL CONFERENCE

The Association of European Open-Air Museums (AEOM) is holding its bi-annual assembly and conference in the museum in Szentendre, near Budapest, between August 19 and 22. The conference is part of the cultural events organised within the framework of Hungary's presidency of the European Council, organisers said. The conference is expected to draw nearly 100 delegates from 40 institutions of 22 countries, including European countries, Australia, the US and Japan. The conference this year is focusing on open-air museums' ways to present and help work through historic and social trauma such as wars, the resettlement of ethnic groups, ethnic discrimination, migration and generational trauma, or the re-integration of groups on the periphery of society, organisers said. The conference is also working to draft a sustainability action plan and a Code of Conduct, they said.

HUNGARIAN FASHION AND DESIGN AGENCY TAKES OVER DESIGN COUNCIL

The Hungarian Fashion and Design Agency (HFDA) is taking over the tasks of the Hungarian Design Council (HDC) from August, the HFDA said on Friday. The HDC is an advisory body that monitors and evaluates the economic importance and development of Hungarian design and makes proposals

for government strategy. It organises Budapest Design Week and awards a number of professional prizes. The HFDA said it was taking over the HDC's operation with the aim of boosting the efficiency of the state infrastructure serving to develop Hungary's creative industries. HFDA aims to "rethink" the HDC, building on a solid professional foundation and make better use of creative industry synergies to boost economic performance, it added. The HDC will be chaired by the head of the HFDA who will also pick its members. HFDA said the organisation of its 360 Design Budapest event would be integrated with that of Budapest Design Week.

HEAT ALERT TO STAY IN FORCE UNTIL SUNDAY

A "code red" heat alert has been extended until midnight on Sunday, a state secretary of the interior ministry told a press conference on Friday. Under the measure, all welfare institutions are obliged to open up for the homeless, Attila Fülöp said. Under such extreme weather conditions "all welfare services must focus on saving lives", he said. He added, however, that only 77% of beds at homeless shelters were occupied, and noted the remaining capacity.

Cecília Müller, the chief medical officer, warned that infants, the elderly, people with cardiovascular or other chronic problems were also at risk in the heat wave. Daytime highs in Hungary are expected to peak in the 37-39°C range in the coming days.