

## HUNGARY PM BECOMES FIRST EU HEAD TO ENDORSE TRUMP

**BUDAPEST:** Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban yesterday became the first European leader to endorse US presidential candidate Donald Trump, calling him a "better option" for the bloc than his rival, Hillary Clinton. "I am not a Donald Trump campaigner. I never thought it would occur to me that of the available options, he would be the better one for Europe and for Hungary", Orban said in an annual speech at a summer school in Baile Tusnad in Romania.

The right-wing leader said he was

swayed by security proposals Trump had made in his acceptance speech as the Republican Party's presidential nominee on Thursday night.

Depicting America as a country mired in violence, Trump had vowed to increase intelligence efforts, suspend immigration from nations "compromised by terrorism", and stop a "failed policy of nation-building and regime change" in places like Syria and Iraq. Orban is also a fervent opponent of immigration-particularly from Muslim nations-and has blamed recent terror attacks in Europe

on the bloc's refugee crisis, which erupted last summer.

### 'Kindling insecurity'

"(Trump) has made some proposals about stopping terrorism, that I as a European couldn't have said better regarding what would be best for Europe", Orban said. Orban stressed Europe had to create a network of national intelligence agencies that matched "the world's best". He also supported Trump's push to "abandon the policy of exporting democracy". Orban

said the West's toppling of authoritarian "but stable" regimes in Libya, Syria and Iraq had sparked chaos and unleashed the influx of migrants from the Middle East and Africa.

"If we prioritize democracy-building rather than stability in those regions where stability is more important, then we are kindling insecurity," he said. Orban warned the same applied to current events in Turkey, which has declared a state of emergency and launched a mass crackdown after a failed coup on July 15. "If Turkey

becomes unstable, then many tens of millions of people could turn toward Europe," he said.

Around 400,000 migrants and refugees passed through Hungary in 2015 before the government sealed off its southern borders with razor-wire fences in autumn and brought in tough new anti-migrant laws. Earlier this month, the government announced it would hold a referendum on October 2 on the EU's troubled plan to share 160,000 migrants around the 28-nation bloc via mandatory quotas. — AFP



**MYRTOU:** In this photo taken on Monday July 18, 2016, a Turkish Cypriot worker works at the Agios Panteleimonas monastery, which is under restoration in Myrtou in the Turkish Cypriot northern part of the Mediterranean island. — AP

## CYPRUS RESTORES DERELICT CHURCHES AND MOSQUES

**MYRTOU:** Seyfi Tunelci long watched in sorrow as the derelict Orthodox Christian monastery at Myrtou in Cyprus' overwhelmingly Muslim north crumbled before his eyes. Now he's part of an island-wide team toiling to repair the medieval building and dozens of other Christian and Muslim sites that fell into ruin during decades of ethnic division. "Every stone that fell off the church hit a nerve inside me," Tunelci said beside the scaffolding-encased monastery of Agios Panteleimonas, where he and around 20 other Turkish Cypriot townsfolk have spent months working to shore up the chapel walls, roof and belfry, stone by stone.

Like many Turkish Cypriots, 62-year-old Tunelci fled north in 1974 when Cyprus was divided amid a Turkish invasion into a breakaway north and an ethnically Greek, internationally recognized south. The construction worker sees today's European Union-funded cultural reclamation efforts as important to rebuild a sense of cross-community tolerance, common heritage - perhaps even eventual reunification. Since 2008 a committee drawn jointly from both parts of Cyprus has identified monuments of cultural significance, mostly deserted centers of worship, to be resurrected. "It must be like this, because if they collapse, we would be angry at one another," Tunelci said. "But if we rebuild them, we will be friends again."

### Cultural heritage

The monastery, named after an early Christian saint renowned as a faith healer, traces its foundation to the 5th century. After its monks and parishioners joined thousands of Greek Cypriots fleeing south in 1974, a Turkish army garrison moved in, followed by legions of pigeons and snakes. Agios Panteleimonas became one of hundreds of Christian sites, including cemeteries, abandoned to vandals in the north, while scores of abandoned mosques and other Islamic sites in the south fell into a similar state of decay.

"These monuments should not be the monuments of the other ethnic group anymore," said Ali Tuncay, a Turkish Cypriot businessman on the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, as the project organizers are known. "They are our common heritage which should be protected and preserved for future generations." Tuncay says their crowning achievement so far has been an inter-faith agreement to restore the Apostolos Andreas Monastery on Cyprus' northeast Karpas Peninsula. The site honors St. Andrew, one of Jesus' disciples, who reputedly brought forth a miraculous spring on the spot for the salvation of passing sailors.

## ZIMBABWE GOVT THREATENS 'TRAITOROUS' WAR VETERANS

**HARARE:** Zimbabwe's government denounced leading independence war veterans as traitors yesterday for an unprecedented attack on ageing President Robert Mugabe and vowed to identify its unnamed authors and put them on trial. Veterans who fought against white minority rule in the former British colony turned on their long-time ally and commander on Thursday, calling him a dictator in a jolting rebuke highlighting political maneuvering over his succession and mounting anger over economic woes.

Mugabe abruptly cancelled a hastily arranged news conference on Friday evening meant to respond to the veterans. State-owned newspapers reflected the power struggle yesterday with a highly unusual 12-page supplement praising his wife Grace on her 51st birthday. War veterans have accused her of having too much influence over her 92-year-old husband.

"Government ... dismisses the said traitorous so-called communique, which is reasonable in the constitutional democracy that Zimbabwe is," Retired Brigadier-General Asher Tapfumaneyi, the most senior civil servant in the veterans ministry, said in a statement yesterday. "Multi-agency investigations are underway to establish its origins, authorship, ownership and purpose," he said, adding the government would "bring all associated with it to justice".

The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) issued its allegations of corruption and economic mismanagement by Mugabe in its own name, without individual signatures, after a seven-hour leadership meeting. Tapfumaneyi expressed dismay at the statement and said the government was working to address most of their grievances by April 2017, a year before the next presidential election. — Reuters

## MUNICH PULLS TOGETHER AFTER MALL SHOOTING INSTILLS ALARM

### CITIZENS OFFER SHELTER THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

**MUNICH:** In the chaos sparked by the Munich mall shooting, city residents spontaneously opened their doors to people unable to get home-a move hailed for its courage and solidarity. Almost as soon as police shut down Munich's entire public transport system on Friday evening in an effort to prevent suspects from slipping through their net, people took to social media to offer a roof to anyone stranded.

Under the hashtag #offenueer ('open door'), anyone who found themselves with no safe place to go to could seek refuge until the transport network was back up and running-an approach also seen in France after the Paris and Nice attacks. "We have beer and a place to sleep near Prinzregentenplatz/Max Weber Platz. DM me!" tweeted one user, @JoTaucher. Munich, Germany's third-largest city, was reeling yesterday after an 18-year-old German-Iranian student killed nine people and injured 19 others in a busy shopping mall, before committing suicide.

Initially there had been reports of three possible attackers, but by Friday night police had ruled that out and said the shooter acted alone. The generosity of people's response to the attack found immediate praise among the authorities. "How Munich's population reacted, the initiatives that were there to offer people protection and help, this solidarity impressed me deeply. It was a good sign of a civil society," Bavaria's finance minister Markus Soeder told a news conference. "Amongst all the shock and mourning, there is still hope." The local daily Abendzeitung was similarly moved.

### Descend into panic

"On an evening where the city descended into panic and Munich's population fled in sheer terror from public spaces, restaurants and beer gardens, a great many spontaneously offered them refuge," it wrote in a leader column. A young woman who gave her name as Tamara told AFP that she and her family were shopping in the OEZ mall when the shooting began. She and her Turkish husband, with their two children aged two and four, found themselves with nowhere to go because the nearby street where they lived had been cordoned off.



**MUNICH:** A little boy puts down flowers near a mall where a shooting took place leaving nine people dead the day before. — AP

"We'd been shopping at C&A. We didn't actually hear any of the shots fired," Tamara said. "It all happened so quickly. We only realised what was going on when we saw the TV reports. We were ordered to leave the mall as quickly as possible and we first thought it was a false alarm," she explained.

"But then we saw everyone else running, too." When the young family realised they could not go home, they took shelter in a nearby tower block. "We got into the lift and rode up to the 14th floor and rang on the doorbell. There was a pram in front of the door, so we thought, OK, if someone's going to open the door, it'll be another family. We've got children, too, as you see. But we didn't know them." The family invited them in and let them stay.

In the city centre, hotels also offered shelter to anyone stranded, allowing them to remain in the lobby if all the rooms were booked. The OEZ

mall was still heavily cordoned off yesterday as forensic experts continued to scour the site for clues. Crowds of onlookers mingled among a mass of television crews and journalists at the police line. But people were already laying flowers and lighting candles next to the mall for those killed or injured during the shooting. One hand-written placard asked simply "Why?".

Another bystander, a 78-year-old Hungarian man who gave his name as Meszaros, said he had lived in the area for more than 40 years. "What goes through the mind of someone like that," he asked. "What are his friends and family feeling and thinking?" He had heard reports that the 18-year-old gunman had dual German and Iranian nationality. "That means he grew up here. Did he just flip or were there political reasons?" Meszaros asked. "Nothing like that has ever happened here before. It's inconceivable." — AFP



**INDJIJA:** Migrants march by the side of a road in the town of Indjija, some 40 kilometers northwest of Belgrade, Serbia. — AP

## MIGRANTS BRAVE HEAT AT SERBIA-HUNGARY BORDER

**INDJIJA:** Around a hundred migrants and asylum seekers braved scorching heat yesterday to continue a march toward Serbia's border with Hungary meant to draw attention to the plight of thousands of people facing closed borders after fleeing war and poverty. Some wore towels on their heads to ward off the sun as they slowly moved, stopping occasionally to rest in the shade along the road leading north toward the European Union. Their feet bruised from walking, dozens have given up and stayed behind.

Some 300 young men and boys set off Friday from Belgrade toward the Hungarian border 200 kilometers away, to protest its decision to keep the border closed for most of the asylum seekers, which has left a few thousand stranded in Serbia. Hungary has recently strengthened anti-migrant controls on its southern border with Serbia, admitting about 30 people a day, mostly families with small children, and pushing back those caught trying to cross illegally. Hundreds of migrants have been staying in make-shift camps along the border with

almost no facilities. Some of those marching to Hungary wore T-shirts reading: "Stop the war if you want to stop refugees," or "Open borders." Most said they were from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and stand little chance of crossing the Hungarian border into the European Union. Some said they will stage a hunger strike once they arrive at the border. "We want to be in the limelight so we could deliver the messages to the global leaders what is happening with the refugees," said Roohul Amin Afridi, 33, from Afghanistan.

Faced with a pileup of refugees, Serbian authorities also have announced stricter joint army and police border controls with Bulgaria and Macedonia, where migrants mostly enter Serbia. Most of the people stranded in Serbia have refused to apply for asylum there, fearing it would ruin their chances of one day reaching any EU nation. International medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders on Friday warned of a "sharp increase" in violence against migrants and refugees since the Balkan borders were closed in March. — AP

## UN DELIVERS FOOD TO THOSE DISPLACED BY BOKO HARAM

**KANO, Nigeria:** The United Nations has made the first food aid delivery to thousands of people displaced by Boko Haram Islamists in the Nigerian town of Banki, where hundreds have starved to death since March, the UN said on Friday. Officials from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) delivered 30 tons of "various lifesaving food items" transported from neighboring Cameroon, the OCHA said in a statement.

The convoy reached Banki on Thursday and distributed food to the more than 25,000 people in the town, it said. "An additional 700 kilograms of supplementary food for malnourished children was airlifted from the state capital Maiduguri to Banki on the same day". It was the first aid delivery to the thousands of internally displaced in the northeast region in the last four months following deadly Boko Haram raids. They have been without food and basic supplies and relied on paltry food handouts from soldiers who have been sharing their rations.

Last month a soldier and a vigilante assisting the military in fighting Boko Haram told AFP at least 10 people were dying from hunger every day, highlighting warnings about a food crisis in the Sahel region. The vigilante said the cemetery in Banki, some 130 kilometers southeast of the Borno state capital Maiduguri, was dotted with 376 graves of displaced people who died of starvation. The soldier said people had been reduced to "walking corpses" facing imminent death without food aid. When Boko Haram intensified attacks on villages in the area, residents fled to Banki where a military detachment has been based since they retook it in September.

### Millions in need of food

The United Nations said in May that 9.2 million people living around Lake Chad, which forms the border of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger, were in desperate need of food. According to the OCHA aid distribution in Banki and other areas recently liberated by the Nigerian military was "scaling up" but more funds were needed to meet the "lifesaving needs" of people affected by Boko Haram violence in northeast Nigeria.

Only 28 percent of the \$279 million required by the UN to help those affected by the violence has been realized, leaving a \$200 million shortfall. The Borno state government and aid agencies have warned about acute food shortages in the Lake Chad region as a result of seven years of violence. Boko Haram's insurgency has left at least 20,000 dead in Nigeria and devastated infrastructure in the impoverished northeast. The unrest has also displaced more than 2.6 million. Nigeria's government has been encouraging people to return home since the recapture of swathes of territory lost to the Islamist militants in 2014 but most are still largely reliant on food handouts. — AFP