

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamás Kovács

President János Áder visits the Maeslantkering mobile dam in The Netherlands

UPCOMING EVENTS

Áder continues visit to Netherlands

Commemorations of Hungarians deported to Soviet Union

Potápi marks centenary of Szekler Regiment

Baptist Charity gala attended by Chuck Norris

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: EU MIGRANT 'TRANSPORT AGENCY'

Referring to bank cards and visa for migrants, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said pro-migration forces consider European institutions as a "transport agency", believing that migration is in Europe's interest.

Orbán said in an interview to public radio that this was to Hungary's detriment. Only after the European parliamentary election would the situation change, he added. Whereas the European Union justified repressive measures against European citizens by citing the fight against money laundering, the European Commission "is giving anonymous bank cards to people we don't know ... and many of them become terrorists and criminals," he said. "The rightful question is, why is this happening and where does the money come from," he said. Fidesz MEPs are investigating the matter, he added. Referring to the "migrant visa", Orbán said: "This is the kind of slippery slope which could again lead to a broken Europe." He said the EP had already voted the measure down, but it is now on the agenda again and "they want to push it down our throats." The prime minister said European politicians who are about to lose their mandates are "panicking" about the issues close to their hearts and they are rushing to conclude the migration issue.

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ORBÁN: BREXIT DEAL 'SATISFACTORY'

In an interview to public radio, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said Brussels had failed to keep migrants out of Europe and had also failed to keep Britain inside. Brussels, he added, had made serious political mistakes in their handling of Brexit. At the same time, the document received in advance of the special EU summit on Sunday, "which is satisfactory from Hungary's point of view", protects the interests of Hungarians living and working in the United Kingdom, Orbán said, adding that the rights of Hungarian workers will not be compromised. Orbán noted that surveys have been carried out in Hungary and in the UK concerning EU matters. In Hungary's consultation and referendum, Hungarians said they wanted "more national sovereignty and less Brussels," while the British went even further, he said. He also noted that the Hungarian government put an newspaper advertisement urging the British to remain in the EU.

ORBÁN: CRITICS OF GRUEVSKI ASYLUM 'IDENTICAL' TO MIGRATION BACKERS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview to public radio that the people who attack Hungary for granting asylum to former Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski were "identical" to those people and organisations that support migration.

The organisations most critical of the Hungarian government regarding the case are all in the pocket of US billionaire George Soros, he said. Since Gruevski, as prime minister, took tough action against Soros networks in Macedonia, "they are keeping track of his life", he added. Gruevski headed a country that played a key role in combatting migration, and without him it would have been far harder to protect the Hungarian border, Orbán said. So he and his country have always been viewed as Hungary's allies, he added. He was the first politician in the Balkans who built a fence and stopped migrants, for which Hungary also granted help, Orbán said.

"Allies should be treated with decency, and when they turn to us, they deserve due process," he said, adding that he was "pleased" this was not the first time that a former leader had thought that in Hungary they would get fair treatment. The asylum procedure is not carried out by the government but the authorities and "the more distance the government keeps to such procedures the better," he said. The government's job is to ensure the framework for a fair procedure and then accept the decision made by the authorities, "which is what happened in this case, too", he added. Commenting on Gruevski's travel arrangements to Hungary, the PM said: "The whole thing had an exciting storyline ... and every crime story is exciting". "We are not influenced by the procedures in Macedonia," he said. "What we are

interested in is whether the request submitted to us is legally well-founded, whether the authorities carried out a fair procedure and acted lawfully. Once a decision is made, it must be respected," Orbán said. Commenting on the extradition request submitted by Macedonia, he said Macedonia must also follow a legal procedure. The Hungarian authorities will assess it and come to a decision, he added.

ORBÁN: 'HUNGARY'S 100 YEARS OF SOLITUDE THING OF THE PAST'

In connection with a meeting of the Diaspora Council and the Hungarian Permanent Conference (Máért) last weekend, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview to public radio that the "hundred years of Hungarian solitude" had come to an end and that Hungary's neighbours realised that "working with us is not unnatural; indeed, it is worthwhile." Serbia has a major role in this, he said, adding that Hungary had 800 years of friendship with the Croats and it had managed to build a relationship based on mutual trust with the Slovaks. Further, Hungary has taken steps forward with the Romanians, he said. "Those who work together with Hungary are doing well," the prime minister said. Joint economic development schemes are good not only for Hungarians outside the borders but also for non-Hungarian citizens of neighbouring states, he said.

Orbán said Hungary is trying to help Ukraine understand the difficult

situation of Hungarians living there. Further, Hungary “not only accepts Ukraine’s territorial integrity, but also demands this from Russia.” The government does not want to differentiate between Hungarians and other national minorities in Transcarpathia, but wants to help everyone, he said. But for all our friendship towards Ukraine, “all we have got in return is an anti-Hungarian policy,” he said, adding that hopefully the next Ukrainian president would formulate a Hungary-friendly policy instead. Orbán said Ukraine’s NATO and EU accession depended on Hungary’s help, so it is “self-defeating” to pursue an anti-Hungarian policy.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY-DENMARK COOPERATION ON EU MIGRATION POLICY EXPECTED TO GROW CLOSER

Cooperation between Hungary and Denmark is expected to grow closer when it comes to the issue of migration and policies affecting the future of the European Union, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó has said.

Szjijártó met Inger Stojberg, Denmark’s minister for immigration and integration, and members of the Danish parliament’s foreign and European affairs committee.

Denmark pursues strict migration policies based on a rational approach and puts a premium on security, Szijjártó told MTI. Its migration policies are similar to Hungary’s, stressing the

importance of protecting external borders and believing that aid is needed where the problem lies in order to nip the reasons for migration in the bud, he said. Denmark, too, believes that eligibility for EU entry must be assessed outside EU territory, he added. “This is certainly the right position, seeing the lack of success of repatriation policies in recent years,” he said.

Denmark has attracted criticism from the international community for introducing several tough measures, such as banning the veil and expecting migrants to contribute to the cost of their upkeep. The state is authorised, for example, to seize their assets, he noted. In Denmark, a debate has also emerged about the global migration compact, Szijjártó said. The party that supports the minority government from the outside is against the compact, he noted. The UN compact goes completely against the interests of European security and its text clearly shows that European interests were not represented in the debate that preceded its approval, he added.

Europe must be able to protect its borders, and it is up to Europeans to decide whom they want to let in and whom they want to live with, he said, adding that they also had a similar position regarding the risks posed by Brexit regarding the EU’s future. Denmark and Britain are close allies, and Denmark expects Brexit will cause serious political and economic difficulties in the EU, but it will also provide a chance for countries

that pursue the rational approach represented by Britain to make their alliance even closer, Szijjártó said.

GULYÁS ADDRESSES DEBATE ON ARTICLE 7 PROCEDURE

The European community has been moving in the wrong direction in recent years, the head of the Prime Minister’s Office said on Thursday, addressing a conference on the Article 7 procedure against Hungary.

Gergely Gulyás said that the European Commission no longer acted as a guardian of the treaties, but now played a political role. G u l y á s insisted that in recent years countries that neglected Schengen rules were considered “good” Europeans while others enforcing those regulations were “bad”. In terms of handling migration Hungary was the only country “with an exemplary approach”, as the first EU member to “do its duty and protect the external borders”, Gulyás said.

Concerning the European Parliament’s Sargentini report, Gulyás said that the author “has Soviet-type leanings”. He argued that Dutch MEP Judith Sargentini “wants to influence the independent Hungarian judiciary” and insisted that her report was an “indictment”.

Máté Kocsis, head of the Fidesz parliamentary group, said that Sargentini herself had said at a press conference that she wanted to use the document to exert political pressure on

Hungary. He criticised authors of the document for consulting civil groups in Hungary while failing to contact the Prime Minister's Office for input.

Gergely Bányai, a lawyer and former opposition Socialist Party lawmaker, said that although the report contained errors, its substantive claims were true. He mentioned, for example, that the rule of law excluded retroactive legislation, and insisted that "once a member state violates such principles the community must react".

András Schiffer, a former co-leader of the opposition LMP party, said a system of checks and balances were no longer part of Hungary's constitutional order. He added, however, that the Sargentini report contained "obvious errors or lies".

PM'S OFFICE: HUNGARIANS CARE ABOUT NATIONAL IDENTITY, SECURITY CONCERNING EU'S FUTURE

Hungarians are clearly concerned about national identity and security issues related to migration when it comes to the future of the European Union, an official of the Prime Minister's Office said. At a series of consultations on the future of Europe organised by France, the Hungarian government gave a briefing concerning the views of ordinary Hungarians at forums held in eleven Hungarian cities sent to the European Council, Judit Varga, state secretary for EU relations, said. "Many people expressed concern about

the EU's past and future migration strategy," she said. There was also much criticism of the Sargentini report and the Article 7 proceedings against Hungary, "which condemns Hungary because of its anti-migration stance," she added.

At the forums, all topics in which Hungary had a dispute with the EU were raised, such as the right to determine energy prices and tax issues, she noted, adding that it was important for such strategic issues to remain within the scope of Hungarian decision-making. Hungarians, said Varga, envisage a Europe where nation states cooperate based on the respect of differing opinions and where no country is condemned for its immigration policy. The state secretary said the Hungarian government had gladly joined the French initiative, since consultation with citizens is a long-standing practice of the Hungarian government.

JOBBIK: PLANNED LABOUR CODE CHANGES 'ANTI- FAMILY'

A planned change to the labour code that would increase the overtime threshold from 250 hours a year to 400 hours is "anti-family and anti-life", an opposition Jobbik MP said. Tamás Pintér said Jobbik will initiate talks with trade unions with a view to thwarting the planned changes billed by two ruling Fidesz party MPs. Pintér insisted that the proposal, if passed into law, would leave employees one day off

each month rather than per week, and allow employers to pay overtime only once every three years, with employees potentially required to work 14 months in a single year. Pintér also criticised proponents of the changes for not consulting trade unions and employers.

DININGHOUR APP OFFERS CHEAP EATS DURING OFF-PEAK HOURS

The Hungarian application DiningHour, which offers diners discounts for ordering meals during off-peak hours, has launched. DiningHour, which touts itself as the world's first Real-Time Yield Management System for restaurants, has partnered with 70 top-tier catering establishments in the capital, but it aims to raise that number to several hundred within a year. It wants to add partners not only in Budapest, but in other cities in Hungary as well as other countries around the world. DiningHour is available in the Google Play store and the App Store.

ÁDER MEETS DUTCH KING, DISCUSSES CLIMATE CHANGE

President János Áder, in The Hague for a two-day working visit, met Dutch King Willem-Alexander for talks on climate change and measures to prevent a water crisis. The heads of state reviewed ways to make changes in energy production and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Flood

protection is crucial for the low-lying Netherlands, and the country is seeking effective measures to ensure its safety in the long run. The Dutch government is also paying attention to the connection between climate change and global security, especially when it comes to raising public awareness of these issues.

VARGA ISSUES ULTIMATUM ON MINIMUM WAGE DEAL

Finance Minister Mihály Varga said the government will decide on the minimum wage rise in 2019 at the end of the year if employers and unions fail to come to an agreement on the matter. The government is striving to help the sides reach an agreement, Varga said, adding that the negotiations are progressing "with difficulty". A six-year agreement reached between the government, employers and unions late in 2016 specified minimum wage increases -- paired with payroll tax cuts -- for 2017 and 2018, but not for the years following. Recent talks between employers and unions have not produced a deal on the minimum wage rise for next year. Currently, the minimum wages for skilled and

unskilled labourers are a monthly 180,500 forints and 138,000 forints, respectively.

BUDAPEST AIRPORT BREAKS GROUND FOR 2,500-SPACE CAR PARK

Budapest Airport, the operator of Liszt Ferenc International, ceremoniously broke ground for the construction of a 2,500-space, multi-storey car park. The car park, to be completed in Q2 2020, will bring the number of parking spots at the airport to around 7,000. The number of cars parked at the airport has doubled since 2013, said Budapest Airport CEO Jost Lammers.

He said the recoupable cost of the car park would come to 40 million euros.

HUNGARIANS SPEND DAILY 20 MINUTES ON SHOPPING, PERSONAL SERVICES

Hungarians spend an average 20 minutes per day on shopping and personal services, such as visiting the hairdresser, at the low end of the 17- to 35-minute range in other

European Union countries, survey data compiled by Eurostat show. The survey conducted in 15 EU member states between 2008 and 2015, shows Romanians spent just 17 minutes per day on shopping and personal services, while Germans spent 35 minutes.

VARGA ENCOURAGES BIG CITIES TO SET ASIDE RESERVES

Finance Minister Mihály Varga urged Hungary's county seats and cities with over 50,000 residents to set aside reserves to ensure investments can be completed if circumstances turn difficult, at an assembly of local council leaders.

He noted that the central government was supporting 250 municipal investment projects with 3,700 billion forints (EUR 11.9bn) of funding in the framework of the Modern Cities program, speaking to a meeting of the Association of Cities with County Seat Standing. He added that the government had earmarked 360 billion forints of reserves in the 2019 budget to manage the impact of a possible economic slowdown.