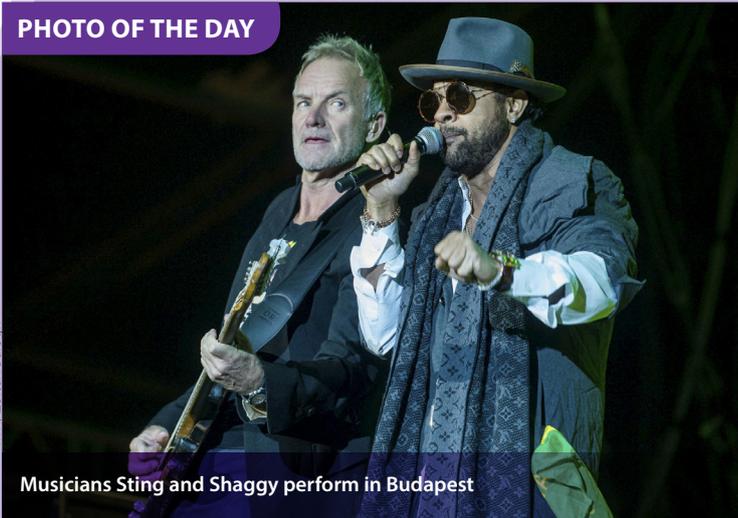


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Balogh

Musicians Sting and Shaggy perform in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plenary session of parliament

President greets Hungarian contestants of European vocational school competition

National Competitiveness Council meets

MTA, Dunhuang Academy sign cooperation agreement

TOP STORY

PM: BREXIT AGREEMENT SIGNING SAD DAY FOR EU

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán bemoaned the endorsement on Sunday by EU leaders in Brussels of the Brexit withdrawal agreement, calling the day “a real Black Sunday” and “a sad day for the European Union”.

Speaking in Brussels, Orbán told Hungarian public television that Hungary had tried to convince the UK to remain in the EU, even intervening in the Brits’ campaign, but to no avail. “Now we have no other choice but to acknowledge the decision that has been taken,” he said.

The UK’s divorce is a “great loss”, Orbán said. In addition to the political and economic loss for the EU, the UK, which is a rich country, will also take much money with it, he said. The EU’s current leadership bears responsibility for Brexit, electing a European Commission president to whom Brits were opposed and letting in migrants while failing to keep the UK in the bloc, he said. The responsibility of these leaders will be one of the most important issues weighed when the five-year mandate of the European Parliament ends in the spring, he added. Orbán said the Hungarian government’s goal of protecting the interests of Hungarians working in the UK had been achieved. “Those Hungarians who are in England today, they’re safe, their situation has not worsened,” he said.

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HOUSE SPEAKER EXPRESSES HOPE EU OF NATION STATES WILL PREVAIL IN EP ELECTION

The EP elections next May will hopefully be a victory for the Europe of nation states and not the federalist concept of the European Union, Hungarian House Speaker László Kövér said in an interview to Polish public television in Krasiczyn, southeast Poland. "The elections will decide the question of which direction we are headed in: the direction of a federalist state or that of stronger nation states," Kövér said. At issue is the preservation of national culture or "switching out populations in Europe" to establish "a mixed population, without a culture"; it is deciding whether to support families or "various gender theories", or to "erode the values of both Christian and pre-Christian civilisation", he added.

Kövév gave the interview together with his Polish counterpart, Marek Kuchciński, after addressing a free university organised by the Wacław Felczak Polish-Hungarian Cooperation Institute. Kuchciński said that Poland sees the EU as an alliance of sovereign states, while Brussels "is thinking about a two- or even three-speed EU, which is an endeavour to disintegrate the union." The parliamentary speakers both stood up for a strong and democratic EU, and dismissed reports in the Western media that suggest Poland or Hungary could be preparing to leave the EU.

FIDESZ SPOX: BRUSSELS POURING EU CITIZENS' MONEY INTO MIGRANT CARDS

Brussels is "pouring the money of EU citizens" into debit cards for migrants, thus directly financing migration, the deputy head of the parliamentary group of governing Fidesz told journalists in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary.

According to a publicly available EU report, some 58 million euros were distributed to migrants on topped up debit cards without cardholder names, said János Halász. Reports also suggest that US billionaire George Soros has contributed 500 million dollars, he added. "That is just the tip of the iceberg: we're probably only seeing a fraction of the money topping up these migrant cards," Halász said.

He noted that in recent years, terrorists had entered Europe through Hungary, calling themselves migrants, but then carrying out acts of terror. This danger is present now, too, he added, citing the 70,000 migrants on the Balkan route headed in the direction of Europe and Hungary. All of these migrants are arriving after passing through Greece, where, with the support of the UN and "certain Soros organisations", they are getting topped up debit cards as part of a so-called migrant card programme, he said. Halász warned of the "tremendous security risk" presented by terrorists among those migrants who could get their hands on the cards.

Hungary has not yet received any answers to enquiries it has made on the matter to the UN and the European Commission, Halász said. The types of migrant cards and the size of top-ups are not known, he added. "We continue to wait for answers from the president of the European Commission on how much of European taxpayers' money is being spent on such debit cards, how many have been distributed, and what controls are in place on how this money is spent," Halász said.

BILL WOULD 'DRASTICALLY' DEVALUE FARMLAND, SAY SOCIALISTS

Bills submitted to parliament recently that would amend laws on competitiveness in the agriculture sector and the sale of farmland would drastically devalue the assets of some 1.5 million landowners, a Socialist Party leader told a press conference over the weekend. The amendments would allow the National Agriculture Chamber, rather than the ministry, to decide on fundamental matters, Gábor Harangozó said. The government wants to give the right to determine who can purchase farmland, and under what conditions, to the chamber which is "controlled by Fidesz's people" everywhere, he said. The amendments would also eliminate the right of judicial appeal against decisions taken by the chamber, he added.

According to the bill, local chambers would take decisions based on criteria

that are so subjective they cannot even be inscribed in an itemised manner in the law, Harangozó said. If the bill is passed, the market price for farmland will no longer matter, he said. They want to make the land's yield potential the sole basis for its value, regardless if the parcel is near Budapest or in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, in underdeveloped eastern Hungary, he added. Harangozó said he had asked the bill's authors to withdraw the proposed legislation. If they fail to do so and the bills are approved, the Socialists will initiate a probe as they violate the constitution on a number of points, he added.

HUNGARY, SERBIA TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION, CULTURE COOPERATION

Hungary's human resources minister discussed the ways of strengthening cooperation in education, culture and sports with the Serbian minister in charge in Belgrade. The Hungarian government is committed to strengthening relations in the countries in the Balkans even in these three fields, Miklós Kásler said after talks with Vladan Vukosavljević. In Serbia, Hungary aims to enhance its cultural presence in the southern regions, too, with a variety of programmes, theatre and music performances, in line with Belgrade's request, he said. The two ministers discussed plans to erect a statue of János Hunyadi, the Hungarian general who won the battle of Nándorfehérvár

(now Belgrade) in 1456 against the Ottoman Empire, in Serbia's capital and of Serbian-born inventor Nikola Tesla in Budapest.

ESTONIAN EMBASSY IN BUDAPEST REOPENS

Estonia's embassy was officially reopened in Budapest's District 2 on Friday. The ceremony was attended by State Secretary Levente Magyar, who marked the centenary of Estonia's independence. Kristi Karelsohn, the Estonian ambassador, voiced satisfaction over the embassy's reopening after a four-year interval.

GOVT SPOX KOVÁCS TAPPED FOR INTL COMMUNICATIONS ROLE

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has asked government spokesman Zoltán Kovács to become state secretary for international communications, the PM's press chief said. István Hollik, the spokesman for the parliamentary group of the governing Fidesz-KDNP alliance, will take over the tasks of the government spokesman in future.

V4 FARM CHAMBERS MEET IN POLAND

Agriculture chambers of the Visegrad Group - Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia - held their 70th combined meeting in Czerwiene, southern Poland, on November 22-23. The chambers believe that

the continuity of European Union financing for farmers needs to be guaranteed and a level playing field ensured, which means balancing out direct payments, the National Agriculture Chamber said. More ambitious common agricultural policy (CAP) in environmental and climate change policy requires that funding is kept at least at present levels, it added.

VARGA HONOURS THOSE DEPORTED TO SOVIET UNION FOR FORCED LABOUR

Finance Minister Mihály Varga on Saturday laid a wreath at a memorial in Budapest for Hungarians deported to forced labour camps in the Soviet Union. Varga noted that more than 100,000 people had been deported from the Carpathian Basin to do forced labour in the Soviet Union, and perhaps one-third never returned. Under a declaration by parliament made in 2012, November 25 is the Memorial Day of Hungarian Political Prisoners and Forced Labourers Transported to the Soviet Union.

MOODY'S AFFIRMS HUNGARY BAA3 RATINGS, MAINTAINS STABLE OUTLOOK

Moody's Investors Service affirmed Hungary's Baa3 ratings with a stable outlook in a scheduled review on Friday. Moody's said robust growth, Hungarian authorities'

continued commitment to gradual fiscal consolidation, and “overall supportive institutional capacity” were the key drivers behind the rating action. Moody’s projected Hungary’s GDP growth would reach 4.3% in 2018 and 3.4% in 2019. The ratings agency acknowledged the effect of government policies aimed at stimulating domestic demand and noted the positive impact recently announced investments in the automotive sector would have on growth. However, it said that the tight labour market poses a restraint for continued strong growth.

PRESIDENT VISITS DUTCH SITE WITH HUNGARIAN BIOLOGICAL WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT

The Hungarian president observed the operation of a Hungarian developed biological waste water treatment plant at the abbey in Koningshoeven on Friday, wrapping up his visit to the Netherlands. Using plants and algae in an alternative technology, the facility has capacity to filter the waste water of a community of 20,000 residents, János Áder told journalists at the site. It can also be used for filtering out residues of drugs and chemicals in industrial waste water in a process faster and

more effective than conventional ones, he said. Áder hailed that Biopolus, the Hungarian project company, has entered with its innovation the market of a country that had amassed hundreds of years of experience in water purifying technologies.

HUNGARY-KAZAKH COUNCIL SETS UP NUCLEAR, TOURISM WORKING GROUPS

The Hungarian-Kazakh inter-governmental business council concluded its sixth session by signing cooperation agreements on setting up two working groups, in Budapest on Friday, the Hungarian finance minister said. One working group will focus on nuclear energy tasked with exploring its peaceful uses and launching joint innovation, research and development projects in the area, Mihály Varga said. The other will focus on tourism including cooperation in information exchange, vocational training and boosting investments, he said. The council also explored further cooperation possibilities in water management, and in the health, pharmaceutical and advanced digital solution sectors, Varga added. Hungary further offered to increase the number of scholarships available

for Kazakh youth by 50 to 250 under the Stipendium Hungaricum programme. Kazakh Economy Minister Timur Suleimenov called Hungary an important strategic partner, and praised bilateral cooperation highlighting the scholarship programme.

MESTERHÁZY ELECTED HEAD OF SOCIALIST GROUP IN NATO PARLT ASSEMBLY

Socialist lawmaker Attila Mesterházy has been elected head of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly’s Socialist group, the Socialist Party said. Mesterházy is the first Hungarian MP to lead a party group in the assembly since Hungary joined NATO, the party said in a statement. He will also head the Subcommittee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation, it added.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly met in Halifax, Canada, during the week to elect the assembly president and heads of committees. The Assembly is a specialised forum for members of parliament from across the Atlantic Alliance to discuss and influence decisions on alliance security. The assembly is institutionally separate from NATO, but serves as a link between NATO and the parliaments of the NATO nations.