

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Csaba Kirzán

Four-month white tiger pup after getting vaccines

UPCOMING EVENTS

Foreign minister meets Norwegian counterpart

Interior minister inaugurates prison in Kiskunhalas

Fitch releases Hungary rating review

Finance minister inaugurates school buses in E Hungary

Govt official gives talk at teacher expo in Budapest

TOP STORY

ORBÁN WARNS OF BRUSSELS MOVES

People have the right to information about “what Brussels is getting up to”, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio in an interview.

The issue of migration “is at stake in the European parliamentary election”, Orbán said. The government’s recent billboard campaign will bring it home to Hungarians what means Brussels plans to employ to promote migration, he said, vowing to “expose the plans of Brussels bureaucrats”.

The European Parliament’s current “pro-migration” majority seeks to boost migration, “which would be equal to Europe being taken away from Europeans”, the prime minister said.

He insisted that Brussels does not provide Europe’s nation states with any kind of aid to protect their external borders but “advocates schemes to import migrants into the EU within a legal framework”. EU leaders, including European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, “constantly talk about making legal migration to Europe possible,” Orbán said, adding that the EP has taken “several pro-migration decisions” aimed at “giving many billions of forints to civil organisations that promote migration”.

ORBÁN: EUROPE BORDER PROTECTION TASK OF MEMBER STATES

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview to public radio that plans to extend Frontex were fine in principle but the devil, he added, was in the detail. Under the related plans, the whole of Europe would be protected by 10,000 people, while control along Hungary's southern borders alone required 8,000 armed guards. Europe was not up to the task of establishing a border force able to protect the external borders along their entire length, Orbán said, insisting that the borders could not be protected without the participation of member states. He mentioned Hungary's request to the EU for reimbursement of "at least half" of the country's border control costs, noting that the EU "hasn't given a cent despite pledges".

In defence of the government's recent billboard campaign, Orbán said "all seven points are supported by facts". "Brussels has not contested actual facts". He welcomed a decision by the European People's Party to hold a special group meeting to discuss the government's billboard campaign. "Great, it's really good because we can at least discuss the seven points that we think are real, while they just argue ... Let's go for it; we are ready." Orbán said "Europe's elite is no longer accustomed to being criticised". Europe's institutions, he added, were responsible for Brexit and for allowing "millions of migrants"

to enter Europe. New leaders must be elected in the upcoming European elections "who won't make the same mistakes of the past five years". "We cannot sweep those mistakes under the carpet; there is no carpet big enough that would cover those two massive mistakes alone."

On the topic of the government's family protection action plan, Orbán said most Europeans lived their lives in a traditional way, putting a premium on the family. "But strange people who choose a strange lifestyle reject the current government proposals," he said, adding such people should "keep their opinions to themselves" rather than attacking the government. He said "the vast majority of people" backed measures to help families and added that this was a matter of a national consensus.

Commenting on government plans to help villagers, Orbán said the very existence of rural life was in danger, so in the 2,000 villages where the decline in population exceeds the national average, people will be given the chance to get subsidies to buy, expand and refurbish homes that are not new-builds. "The village does not belong to the past but to the future, and I believe it's possible to lead a quality life in the village," he said.

In connection with the family protection plan, the prime minister praised Mihály Varga, the finance minister, as "a calm man" who is not captive to his emotions. He said he always accepted Varga's opinion because finances must be in good

working order. The country's ratings upgrade is a great testament to Varga's work, he added. Varga has a large family and knows exactly what this involves. "And he's a Karcag man -- not from New York; not from the world's metropolis -- so he knows country life."

TRÓCSÁNYI: HUNGARIAN JUDICIARY INDEPENDENT

Hungary's justice minister, in an interview to Austrian newspaper Die Presse, underlined the independence of Hungary's justice system. László Trócsányi, who heads the Fidesz European Parliament elections list, criticised the European Commission for increasing its political role, saying the commission failed to keep to the spirit of the EU treaties and guard its political neutrality. Hopefully, after the European Parliament elections in 2019, "Brussels will be less ideologically biased," he said in the interview published on Thursday.

Commenting on the Article 7 procedure against Hungary, the minister said: "I always have reservations about politicians speaking about the rule of law. The rule of law should be judged by lawyers on the basis of facts."

Meanwhile, Trócsányi rejected the accusation that Chief Public Prosecutor Péter Polt's decisions were not impartial. The Austrian daily noted that objections had been raised that Polt had not ordered an investigation against Elios, a company linked to the prime minister's son-in-law, despite

evidence presented by the European Union's anti-fraud office (OLAF). "They may make political accusations, but if the prosecutor's office finds that there has been no crime, then the case is closed," he said.

POTÁPI: DIASPORA HUNGARIANS SHOW DETERMINATION TO PRESERVE IDENTITY

Hungarian diaspora communities have shown an unquenchable desire to preserve their Hungarian identity, Árpád János Potápi, state secretary for Hungarian communities abroad, said at a meeting of Hungarian Weekend Schools in Budapest. Potápi said Hungary's history was such that the nation was scattered all over the world. This process began in the 1850s and then continued to occur in waves. But this also means that "wherever a person may be when travelling the world, they are able to meet Hungarian people and count on their help". He noted that since 2010, Hungarian politics has turned towards Hungarians of the diaspora with support. He said the number of diaspora Hungarians equals the number of Hungarians living in Hungary's neighbouring countries. Despite elements of these nations having shown hostility to Hungarians, they have always preserved their identity and proudly borne it as ambassadors of Hungary, he added.

Péter Szilágyi, the ministerial commissioner for Hungarian communities abroad, outlined the

programmes launched for diaspora Hungarians, noting that last year tenders for funding were opened. One was for the establishment of the Weekend Schools scheme, and this year 500 million forints (EUR 1.6m) is available for weekend schools and diaspora organisations, he said. The Kőrösi Csoma Sándor scholarship programme for young diaspora Hungarians will be under way in 2019 for the seventh time with six-month terms, he noted. He also mentioned the Mikes Kelemen programme as a part of which 300,000 books have been sent to Hungary in recent years while several exhibitions of repatriated items valuable to the nation have been mounted. Together with the Rákóczi Association, a camping programme is being run with the participation last year of 1,000 diaspora Hungarians, Szilágyi noted.

RUSSIAN INVESTORS VALUE HUNGARIAN ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Hungarian economy's sustainable and balanced growth is prized by Russian investors and bilateral business ties are expected to further intensify, Mihály Varga, Hungary's finance minister, said in Moscow after talks with his counterpart Anton Siluanov and Nikolay Kosov, head of the International Investment Bank.

The finance ministry cited Varga as saying that Russia is a leading economic and trade partner and it has a determining influence on

Hungarian energy security. Farming, the food industry, pharmaceuticals, water management and tourism are also the driving forces of bilateral ties, he added.

Varga noted that declining trade on the back of the EU embargo was followed by a 30% increase in two-way trade in 2017 and by a 20% increase in the first 11 months of 2018. The minister said the performance of Hungarian companies in Russia is encouraging, especially energy company MOL's investment of more than 1.3 billion euros and the rapid spread of Hungarian agricultural and health technology in Russia.

HUNGARY'S FAMILY POLICY 'MODEL FOR CANADIAN CONSERVATIVES'

Conservatives in Canada show a keen interest in Hungary's family policy and consider it a model, Hungary's state secretary for family and youth affairs has said. Katalin Novák is on a three-day visit in Canada for talks with senior Conservative Party leaders who inquired about the details of the government's planned family policy measures and whether tax incentives for young families may help bring about an increase in childbirths. Novák held talks with Michelle Rempel, the shadow minister of immigration, on migration.

"Although Canada is traditionally an immigrant country, it is also exposed to the threat of uncontrolled immigration,

which may generate difficulties in integration," the state secretary told MTI. Novák opened a Hungarian exhibition on the persecution of Christians in Toronto's Church of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. She also met representatives of the Hungarian diaspora.

BUDAPEST TO HAVE NO MORE UNPAVED ROADS

A total 225 kilometres of Budapest's unpaved roads, mainly on the outskirts of the city, will be covered with tarmac in the next four years, Mayor István Tarlós told a press conference. Tarlós said that the first phase of the programme will use a budget of 8.3 billion forints (EUR 26.1m) from municipal coffers to pave roads in 13 districts, equal to 20% of the targeted total length. The mayor also announced that the city would propose a flight ban at Budapest's international Liszt Ferenc Airport

between midnight and 5am to reduce noise in the area. A long-term proposal is to move cargo aircraft and low-cost airline flights to another airport, further away from Budapest, Tarlós added.

Proposals will also be made to change the way noise levels are evaluated and to transfer the task of measuring them from Liszt Ferenc operator Budapest Airport to the National Transport Authority, he said.

Commenting on the announcement, Socialist councillor Csaba Horváth said his party supports the idea of building a new airport 30-40 kilometres away from the city to help reduce noise and air pollution. He added, however, that Tarlós should be ashamed because he is making pledges ahead of the municipal elections as if he were interested in the voters' will. The mayor has proposed reducing air traffic at Liszt Ferenc airport knowing that if current rules were observed, much fewer flights would be allowed to land or take off at night, he added.

CONTINENTAL OPENS AI DEVELOPMENT CENTRE IN BUDAPEST

German-owned automotive industry supplier Continental AG opened its Deep Machine Learning Competence Center in Budapest. Key factors in selecting the location of the centre included the availability of AI experts, a sound environment for the automotive industry and a proper infrastructure, Jens Bruening, head of the centre, said. László Palkovics, Hungary's minister of innovation and technology, said the choice was also motivated by trust between Continental and the Hungarian government. The automotive industry is a key sector for Hungary as it has created many jobs and invested heavily in R+D+I here, the minister said, adding that the government would continue to provide every possible assistance to companies establishing similar centres in Hungary.