

PHOTO OF THE DAY



March of the Living event in Budapest

MTI/Balázs Molnár

UPCOMING EVENTS

Serbian-Hungarian joint government session

Stats office report on construction in Feb 2019

Presser on Budapest to host Giro d'Italia kick off

TOP STORY

HUNGARY OFFERS TO BUY 25% OF KRK LNG TERMINAL

The Hungarian government has made an offer to buy 25% of a liquid natural gas terminal “possibly built” on Krk Island in Croatia, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told journalists in Dubrovnik following talks with Croatia’s environment and energy minister.

After meeting Tomislav Čorić on the sidelines of a China-Central and Eastern Europe summit, Szijjártó said it was crucial for central Europe to diversify its gas supplies. He said it was in Hungary’s strategic interest that the terminal should be built and should offer gas to Hungary at a competitive price. He added that the decision and the plans for the terminal have been in place, but “there has been no progress” in the physical implementation.

He added that Croatia had “not yet provided a clear answer” on the matter, as the country wants to take a decision on Hungary’s offer at the same time as it contracts gas volume. Investing in the terminal is “a strategic issue” but “we will certainly not buy gas at a higher price than at present,” he said, adding that the negotiations would continue.

Szijjártó had talks with his Romanian counterpart Teodor Meleșcanu, and said that despite recent, “worrying” developments impacting ethnic Hungarians in Romania, “neither country is interested in increasing tension in ties” and “it is better to discuss open issues face to face”.

Hungary Matters is an English-language newsletter produced and distributed by the Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund (MTVA) with content provided by Duna Media Service Provider exercises copyright over all content. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, redistributed or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher, with the exception of copies made by individuals for private use, educational purposes or scholarly research, provided that such transmissions do not exceed the extent justified by the purpose and are not aimed at financial gain, even indirectly, and the source name are indicated at all times.

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the English Help Desk at +361 441 9340
For MTI’s real time coverage please visit <http://english.mti.hu>, <http://econews.hu>



ORBÁN LEAVES FOR SERBIA

Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić on Sunday met Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for a working dinner on the eve of the fifth Serbian-Hungarian government summit, to be held in Subotica (Szabadka), the prime minister's press chief said. Orbán and Vucic had talks in the company of their respective foreign ministers Peter Szijjártó and Ivica Dačić in Palić (Palics), Bertalan Havasi said.

On Monday morning Orbán is scheduled to meet counterpart Ana Brnabić while ministers of the two governments will hold separate meetings. The subsequent plenary session will be attended by Hungarian and Serbian government members. Bilateral agreements will be signed on infrastructure development, the modernisation of the Szeged-Subotica railway link, cooperation in European integration, water management, defence and technical assistance to Serbian police. The programme will be concluded with the prime ministers' joint press conference and a lunch in Subotica, Havasi said.

TAKÁCS: TRAGEDY OF JEWISH COMPATRIOTS AMONG HEAVIEST BURDENS OF HUNGARIAN HISTORY

The tragedy of Hungarian compatriots killed solely because they were Jews is among the heaviest burdens of

Hungarian history which must never be forgotten, the state secretary for European Union policies said on Sunday at a March of the Living event in Budapest. One of the march's aims is to increase social awareness of the Holocaust, Szabolcs Takács told MTI.

"We have a shared responsibility to ensure that today's generations and our descendants learn from the mistakes of the past and sincerely face the problems and distortions left behind so that they can make conscious and responsible decisions for the future," Takács said. This requires more than joint commemorations, he said, stressing the need of an authentic approach to history.

Takács noted that April 16 had been declared the Memorial Day of the Hungarian Victims of the Holocaust by Viktor Orbán's first government in 2000, marking the anniversary of the establishment of the first ghettos in 1944. The cabinet has pursued zero tolerance against anti-Semitism ever since, he added.

The United Kingdom's Minister for Scotland David Mundell told the participants in the march that the whole world could rightly be proud of Scottish Christian martyr, Righteous Among the Nations, Jane Haining. Haining was a missionary for the Church of Scotland in Budapest and served as a role model for "decency, tolerance and equality" to her pupils, among them many Jewish orphans, Mundell said. She was driven by these values when she refused to return to the UK and leave her pupils behind

in World War Two, Mundell added, citing Haining as saying that "if these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness".

The march moved along the sounds of the shofar and Scottish bagpipes from March 15 Square along the Jane Haining Embankment and the id. Antall József Embankment to the "Shoes on the riverbank" memorial honouring the memory of Holocaust victims killed on the banks of the Danube.

Minister of Human Resources Miklós Kásler told a memorial event at the House of Terror Museum that the Holocaust had been one of the most senseless and brutal devastations of world history. He said two dictatorships developed during the twentieth century that crippled and destroyed millions of people: "internationalism and national nationalism". One should remember not only the victims but also those who "remained human during the time of inhumanity" and helped and rescued people, he said.

OVER HALF MILLION SIGNATURES COLLECTED IN SUPPORT OF PM'S PROGRAMME

The ruling parties have collected more than half million signatures in support of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's programme announced last week, Fidesz group leader Máté Kocsis said. The signature drive will continue with the help of some 20,000 activists, he told public Kossuth radio.

In line with the programme's first proposal, the right to manage migration must be taken away from "Brussels bureaucrats" and returned to national governments, he said. Additionally, no country should be forced to take in migrants, no migrants should be allowed to enter Europe without valid documents, the scheme of issuing anonymous prepaid bank cards to migrants should be stopped and migrant visas should not be granted. Also, organisations linked to US financier George Soros supporting migration should not be granted European Union aid, nobody should suffer discrimination in Europe for claiming to be Christian and the EU should have anti-migration leaders, Kocsis said, listing further proposals in the programme.

The group leader said it was appalling that the current leaders in Brussels were handing out money to uncontrolled masses by way of "migrant cards". Fidesz believes a significant part of Europe was dissatisfied because people are aware of the serious terrorism risks of uncontrolled migration, he added.

Kocsis reiterated that the European parliamentary elections in May would have unprecedented historic significance. What's at stake is whether Europe will have pro-migration or anti-migration leaders, he added. "Voters will also have to decide if Europe should continue to belong to Europeans or they give up their place to people from other cultures and civilisations," Kocsis said.

DEUTSCH CALLS ON EC TO WITHDRAW PREPAID BANK CARDS TO MIGRANTS SCHEME

The European Commission "should stop without delay the scheme under which prepaid bank cards are granted to illegal migrants" arriving in Europe, MEP of ruling Fidesz Tamás Deutsch said.

Despite repeated calls for information, EC leaders still refuse to give sincere answers about the scheme involving prepaid bank cards, Deutsch said. A Syrian man suspected of being a terrorist leader and recently placed in pre-trial detention in Hungary had also received such a card from the EC, he said. The right to manage migration must be taken away from "pro-migration Brussels bureaucrats" and returned to national governments, he said.

After prolonged secrecy surrounding the scheme, Brussels admitted that the EC supported it with the equivalent of at least 50 billion forints (EUR 160m), Deutsch said. The anonymous bank cards charged with monthly 50-1,500 euros are issued to persons who apply for asylum status in the EU despite the fact that it is not at all certain they indeed get asylum, he added. The Brussels bureaucrats lied when they said the bank cards could only be used in Greece, he said. The cards are now "everywhere in Europe" and last month, a record many 69,000 such cards were granted to "mostly military-age" migrants, he said.

VARGA, EDB CHAIR DISCUSS INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Cooperation with the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) will boost Hungarian companies' investment opportunities in the region's water management, transport technology, IT, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, farming technology and the food industry, the finance ministry said, after Finance Minister Mihály Varga had met EDB chair Andrey Belyaninov in Budapest.

The EDB was established in 2006 by Russia and Kazakhstan to fund the financial integration and sustainable growth of the region's countries.

At the talks, Varga noted that tax costs in Hungary are steadily decreasing, the country has the lowest corporate tax in the EU, offers skilled work force and a growth rate three times the EU average. All this add up to a constantly improving investment environment. The EDB is aware of the potential of the central and eastern European region. Financial and trade relations can be boosted by Hungary's excellent economic performance, growing domestic consumption and an investment rate of some 25%, Varga said.

POLL - NÉZŐPONT: TARLÓS BACKED BY NEARLY HALF OF BUDAPEST VOTERS

Nearly half of Budapest voters would favour the re-election of incumbent mayor István Tarlós for a third term

if the municipal elections were held next Sunday, a poll by the Nézőpont Institute shows. According to the poll, 48% of the electorate would cast their votes on Tarlós, the candidate of the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democrat alliance, who has held the post since 2010. Gergely Karácsony, the joint candidate of the opposition Socialist and Párbeszéd parties, is supported by 29% of voters. Róbert Puzsér, an independent candidate backed by the opposition Jobbik and LMP parties, would garner 9% of the votes. Citing party preference data, Nézőpont said that Tarlós is more popular in Budapest than the ruling alliance, with a gap of 7 percentage points between the two.

The municipal elections will be held in autumn this year. The poll was conducted from March 28 to April 5 by phone, on a representative sample of 1,000 Budapest residents.

NÉMETH CALLS FOR RESTORING RIGHTS OF POST-WWII DEPORTEES

The head of the Hungarian parliament's foreign affairs committee has asked the Slovak and Hungarian presidents to lead efforts towards restoring the rights of ethnic Hungarians deported from Czechoslovakia after WWII. Zsolt Németh addressed a commemoration hosted by the Rákóczi Association in Budapest to mark the start of deportations in April 1947.

Over a million ethnic Germans and more than 100,000 Hungarians

were forcibly removed from post-war Czechoslovakia and deprived of their citizenship and possessions on the basis of collective guilt.

Now that the concept of collective guilt has been removed from Serbian law, the same should be possible in Slovakia, too, Németh said. Slovakia's new president could play an important role "in addressing sensitive issues" of bilateral relations, such as collective guilt, he said. Németh cited Zuzana Čaputová as saying that her political creed was based on the principle and value of freedom, which should be granted to all communities, including Slovakia's ethnic Hungarians.

Csongor Csáky, head of the Rákóczi Association, said they had hailed Hungarian parliament's decision in December 2012 to unanimously declare April 12 a memorial day of deportations.

KARÁCSONY PROMISES GREEN CITY IN LOCAL ELECTION PROGRAMME

Joint candidate of the opposition Socialists and Párbeszéd parties for Budapest mayor Gergely Karácsony promised a free, green and liveable city if he wins the municipal elections in autumn. Karácsony said he would work for a city where residents have a better quality of life and can therefore live longer. Instead of being a strong-handed leader, the candidate said he wanted to lead a strong city. He added that he insisted on the pre-selection of opposition candidates because

he believed in the power of the community and wanted to develop his programme's priorities in cooperation with Budapest residents.

Karácsony cited the example of Vienna which he said had been run by progressive mayors for a hundred years. He called for a strong community-based home rental scheme and said that people who buy an annual card should not pay more than one hundred forints (30 euro cents) a day for using public transport.

He promised establishing a "green corridor" in Budapest from Margaret Island through Hajógyári Island to Római embankment in the north and pledged to prevent "unnecessary developments" such as a "sneaking Olympics project". Karácsony called for a clean, well-ordered and safe city and promised to pay "metropolitan bonuses" to police. Commenting on the financial resources needed for developments, he said at least a thousand billion forints could be gained from stopping projects that are not supported by the majority of Budapest residents, only by the ruling Fidesz party.

GYURCSÁNY CALLS DK PREDICTABLE, 'MOST EUROPEAN' PARTY

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) is a united and predictable party which has not taken any turns in politics ever since it was set up eight years ago, party leader Ferenc Gyurcsány said, launching his party's

EP election campaign. DK has never made any concession to ruling Fidesz, either in politics or in finances and never resorted to playing tactics, he said, adding that DK is also Hungary's "most European party". DK believes in a united states of Europe, Gyurcsány said. In a common Europe, Hungary will be an active partner and a beneficiary of common successes, he added.

Klára Dobrev, who heads the party list for the EP election, said that Europe must be able to protect its citizens not only from external dangers but also from any government within that is building a dictatorship. "Europe can protect us from [Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán," she said.

Dobrev called for the introduction of minimum pensions and minimum wages in the EU, European family benefits and minimum services guaranteed to all. The financial resources for these could be financed from taxes imposed on multinational corporations, she said. Dobrev said DK would not allow Hungary to remain a country from where hundreds of thousands leave. She promised to "chase away" Orbán and call back the hundreds of thousands who have emigrated from the country.

SOCIALISTS, PÁRBSZÉD LAUNCH PROGRAMME TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE

The opposition Socialist and Párbeszéd parties have announced a five-point programme to help young people. Politicians on the two parties' joint EP list told a press conference on Sunday that they would use European Union funding to develop a home rental scheme and offer student scholarships on means-tested basis. They promised to implement a scheme to convince young people who emigrated from Hungary to return home and pledged to spend EU resources on developing education. They also called for drafting a comprehensive action plan to assist children and young people till the time they start to work.

MEP István Ujhelyi of the Socialists said it was vital for young people that Hungary should remain an EU member. While the Hungarian government in office only supports the richest and the bravest, the Socialists promise help to those who are afraid of getting into a debt trap, he said.

Richárd Barabás of Párbeszéd stressed the need of an educational

reform which addresses global challenges and makes Hungarian youth competitive with their peers abroad.

ROGÁN: GOV'T AIMS TO MAKE HUNGARY TOP REGION OF CE TOURISM BY 2030

The government is dedicated to making Hungary a top tourism region in central Europe by the year 2030 and ready to provide all the available local and European Union resources to achieve this goal, head of the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office Antal Rogán said. The government plans to spend 828 billion forints (EUR 2.6bn) on tourism development outside Budapest in the upcoming decade, Rogán said at the opening of an amusement park in Zalasabar, in western Hungary, which was built from more than one billion forints. Tourism development in Hungary has been undiminished in the past three years, with the number of guest nights increasing by around 10% annually. Half of this was thanks to foreign visitors and half to domestic guests, he said.