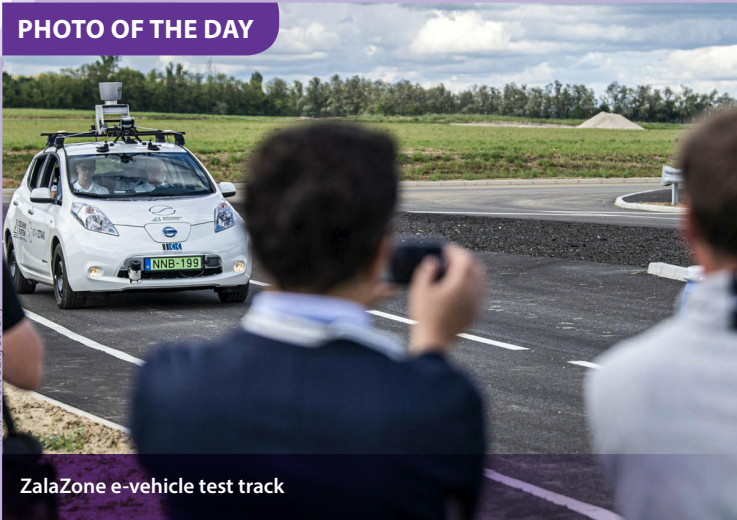


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zsolt Szigetváry

ZalaZone e-vehicle test track

UPCOMING EVENTS

President addresses National Defence Day celebration

National Election Cttee meets

EU affairs ministers meet in Brussels

Exim Bank award gala

TOP STORY

VEHICLE TEST TRACK INUGURATED

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has opened a 265 hectare test track for self-driving vehicles near Zalaegerszeg, in southwest Hungary.

Orbán said at the event on Monday that in the wake of a series on European crises, preserving the country's identity, protecting its security and boosting competitiveness were priorities. "These things are, in Hungarian minds, interconnected: protecting our identity and borders is of a piece with the European way of life, the European economic model and the protection of the world's largest single market," Orbán said.

Regarding the test track which the government has funded with a 45 billion forint (EUR 137.9m) grant, Orbán said "the future has started, it is called digital economy". The Zalaegerszeg investment is "one of the first tickets Hungary has bought into that future," he said. Orbán said he expected the Zalaegerszeg centre to grow into a regional hub "with maybe a European radius". It is a national interest that the 620 car manufacturing companies active in Hungary think of the country not simply as a production site but as a development hub, an opportunity to gain a competitive edge, he said.

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ORBÁN: HUNGARY 'MUCH MORE THAN A PRODUCTION LINE'

The 10,000 engineers working in development and a further 10,000 in telecommunications make Hungary "much more than just a production line", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said, inaugurating a 265 hectare test track for self-driving vehicles near Zalaegerszeg, in the southwest. Hungary has ploughed some 800 billion forints into vehicle development research centres in the current EU financial cycle, he said. The government has allocated 140 billion forints to R+D+I this year alone, and intends to raise that amount by some 30 to 40 billion next year, he said. That funding provided the backdrop to a controversy surrounding the reorganisation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, he said. The question was not the future of the Academy but the future of innovation. "If we want to spend more money on it... then it is clear we want to use those monies well and effectively," he said.

Orbán also touched on the political crisis in Austria, and said that "our Austrian friends could not come today, due to an extraordinary [political] shooting season started." He noted the importance of political stability.

MOL: TECHNICAL DISRUPTION OF UKRAINE OIL DELIVERIES 'NOT SIGNIFICANT'

Hungarian oil and gas company MOL said there was "no significant technical disruption" after reports that Ukraine has suspended its oil supply to the European Union due to technical problems on MOL's side. Ukraine's UkrTransNafta said on Facebook that on Monday it had resumed oil flows to the EU via the Druzhba pipeline after suspending them last month due to contamination. The company said it pumped some 4,000 tonnes of oil in the direction of Europe before MOL indicated it was experiencing technical problems. UkrTransNafta has said it would resume supplies once the Hungarian side confirmed that it was ready to receive the oil.

A number of refineries in Europe suspended oil imports via the Druzhba pipeline on April 19 after it was found to contain high levels of organic chloride, a material used to boost oil output which must be separated before shipment, as it can severely damage refining equipment. Ukraine suspended deliveries through the Druzhba pipeline on April 25.

MOL said in a statement on Monday that it had agreed to receive and store 100 kilotonnes of contaminated oil. The company said it has started receiving the oil and plans to be ready to start receiving clean oil later this week.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: CENTRAL ASIA KEY TO COUNTERING TERRORISM

Central Asia has an important role in efforts against extremist ideologies and terrorism, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Turkmenistan.

According to footage from the foreign ministry, Szijjártó said that any development in central Asia has a security impact on Europe, and insisted that countries of that region need to be assisted so that they can protect their borders. "Here, in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan, central Asian countries have a crucial role in controlling radical, extremist ideologies and terrorist organisations, and most importantly in preventing terrorists from illegally migrating to Europe," Szijjártó said.

Szijjártó noted Turkmenistan's significance in terms of energy supplies for Europe, and said that the country "opens up new opportunities" in light of "failed attempts to diversify" those supplies. "If a 60 km pipeline could be built between Turkmenistan's gas fields and Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan's huge natural gas reserves could contribute to supplies for Europe, including central Europe," Szijjártó said. It would be extremely important for Hungary to receive gas through the Southern Corridor from Turkmenistan, an opportunity to receive supplies from sources other than Russia, the foreign minister said. The governments of Hungary and Turkmenistan have agreed on principles of the latter

country contributing to Europe's gas supplies with details to be discussed in the two countries' mixed committee in October, Szijjártó said.

ÁDER HAS BILATERAL TALKS WITH ZELENSKY

Hungarian President Janos Áder met his new Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky and discussed the problems facing Ukraine's ethnic Hungarian community. After Zelensky's inauguration in Kiev on Monday, Áder proposed in the talks setting up a joint committee to serve as a forum for discussing all disagreements between Hungary and Ukraine. Speaking to MTI afterwards, Áder said his counterpart supported the proposal. "Our interest lies in fostering equally stable and peaceful relations with Ukraine -- our most populous neighbour -- as with our other neighbours," Áder said. "We're open to this. At the same time, I also made it clear that the Hungarian community of Transcarpathia isn't asking for more than for Ukraine to honour the obligations it is bound to by its constitution and international treaties," he added.

THOUSANDS OF FARMERS SIGN PETITION AGAINST BRUSSELS

Nearly 200,000 people have signed a petition launched by the National Agricultural Chamber and farmers' alliance Magosz to protest against the European Union's "plan to use

farm subsidies to support migrants", Farm Minister István Nagy said on Monday. The government backed the petition right from the start and its success has gone beyond expectations, demonstrating widespread cooperation among farmers, the minister told a press conference. "We will do everything we can to protect Hungarian farmers and the agricultural sector from Brussels," Nagy said. "The most important step will be Sunday's European Parliament election," he added. Despite their denials, the current "pro-migration leaders in Brussels" want to reduce funds in farming "in order to give the money to migrants", he said. Some 25% less resources are expected to be allocated to support Hungary's farming sector and Hungarian farmers, threatening the livelihoods of many farmers and workers in the sector, he added. The results would affect all Hungarian citizens because the price of food would increase and imports of dubious quality would flood the market, Nagy said.

National Agricultural Chamber head Balázs Györfly said that, in line with Brussels' plans first announced last May, reduced Common Agricultural Policy funding likely meant that farmers would receive 15,000 forints (EUR 46) less in subsidies per hectare. Magosz leader István Jakab said direct CAP payments for Hungary in the next term were planned to be cut by 16.4% and rural development support by 26.6%.

EP ELECTIONS - JOBBIK FOR STRENGTHENING EU SOCIAL PILLAR

An MEP of opposition Jobbik said it was important to strengthen the EU's social pillar which would include introducing a wage union, increasing support for SMEs and eradicating corruption. Speaking at a press conference, Zoltán Balczó voiced hope that those goals could be achieved and said that the European Parliament passed a decree on setting up a European Labour Authority and adopted guidelines on standard working conditions at its last session before the EP elections. He said Hungary should join the EU's planned European Public Prosecutor's Office to prevent "the disappearance of EU monies through channels of corruption".

SOCIALISTS: STOPPING POPULISTS WHO 'BETRAY THEIR COUNTRY' AT STAKE

Socialist leader Bertalan Tóoth said on Monday that what's at stake in the upcoming European Parliament elections is whether pro-Europe politicians get to stop "populist politicians who simply betray their own country". Referring to the case of Heinz-Christian Strache, who has stepped down as Austria's vice-chancellor, he said: "What's just happened in Austria is that far-right populist politicians who have been working on ... destroying Europe have simply been exposed..." "What's been captured on the video in

Austria is everyday reality in Hungary," he told a press conference in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary. "The Hungarian prime minister strikes alliances with politicians like this and he wants European cooperation with politicians who work to destroy Europe," he added.

Tóth said the Socialists were working on creating European unity and securing the process of further unification, resulting in a social Europe involving a European minimum wage, minimum pension and minimum family benefits. He also called for a green turn, stating that the Socialists' election alliance with Párbeszéd represented a "red-green alliance, which is the only alliance that can prepare a joint list for the election". He said a united stand on migration was also important because migration was a common challenge for the EU which could only be handled with a joint solution.

TOP OPPOSITION MEP CANDIDATES HOLD DEBATE

The top candidates of six Hungarian opposition parties in the European parliamentary election held a debate on Sunday.

Socialist leader and top candidate Bertalan Tóth said voters will decide at the upcoming ballot whether a cooperative Europe could be sustained and their programme including a European minimum wage and pension, a European family

allowance and "a social Europe" could be made reality. Klára Dobrev of leftist Democratic Coalition (DK) said that the election will decide whether Europe continues on the path of becoming a "common home to 500 million citizens in an increasingly close alliance" and whether the bloc could have a hands-on impact on its citizens' quality of life, wages and pensions. Momentum's Katalin Cseh said Hungary can only preserve its competitiveness in a strong and united Europe. Europe, however, will have to change to remain so, she said. Gábor Vágó of Green LMP called for the EU to become the standard-bearer of climate protection, with a strong green party family. Nationalist Jobbik's Márton Gyöngyösi said one of the party's primary aims is wage harmonisation. "It will have to be decided" whether the EU can take a decisive stand against migration, he said, by assigning the task to Frontex and a revived border patrol agency. The candidate of the satirical Two-tail Dog party, Zsuzsanna Döme, said that at stake at the elections is "preserving the country's old opposition". Should the party be elected to the EP, it would have a way to Hungarian parliament and public institutions, she said.

SOCIALISTS TO APPROACH AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES CONCERNING STRACHE AFFAIR

The opposition Socialists will turn to Austrian authorities to find out about possible "Hungarian aspects of the

Strache affair", Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi told a press conference. Referring to recently published video footage, Ujhelyi quoted Heinz-Christian Strache, who resigned his post of Austria's vice-chancellor at the weekend, as saying that he would "build a media environment similar to that of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán". In the footage, Strache mentioned Austrian businessman Heinrich Pecina as an "investor who bought and prepared every Hungarian paper for Orbán in the past 15 years", Ujhelyi said. The Hungarian public has the right to know about "the relationship between Orbán and Pecina" and about possible "deals" under which Pecina had been able to purchase and shut down national daily Népszabadság and "a large part of the (Hungarian) media market".

Ujhelyi said he did not trust the Hungarian authorities and would approach their Austrian counterparts. He insisted that neither the "two-thirds Fidesz machinery" of parliament nor public prosecutor Péter Polt would be willing to launch an investigation. He added that his party was planning joint action with Austria's Social Democrats.

Concerning remarks by the Austrian interior minister that the timing of the publication of the video suggested "an attempt to weaken (Austria's) anti-migration policy", Ujhelyi said that it was rather an indication of "Europe supporters' efforts against anti-European political movements, applying mafia-like methods and increasingly promoting the interests of Russia".



TOROCZKAI RELINQUISHES IMMUNITY DUE TO LOCAL POLICE CASE

The leader of the radical nationalist Mi Hazánk party, László Toroczkai, has voluntarily given up his immunity as a European Parliament (EP) election campaign candidate after police in Törökszentmiklós, in central Hungary, charged him for abusing the right to assembly. At a press conference in Budapest, Toroczkai slammed the authorities for launching proceedings against him for, as he phrased it, helping to “put a Gypsy criminal behind bars”. He insisted that it was likely the ground for the procedure was his public announcement of a demonstration march in Törökszentmiklós before the 48-hour police review of the requested action was over. This oversight was due to the fact that the rules have changed since the last amendment of the law on assembly was enacted, he added. Toroczkai said his party will organise a “static demonstration” on Tuesday in Törökszentmiklós, which the authorities are allowing.

BOOKLET ON HUNGARY ARMED FORCES PRESENTED

A booklet informing the public about Hungary’s armed forces and military reform was presented in Budapest on Monday, ahead of National Defence Day. The publication presents modernisation projects carried out over the past years and further development plans under the country’s Zrínyi 2026 defence and military programme, the prime minister’s commissioner for priority social affairs told a press conference. It also covers the topics of a military career model, domestic arms manufacturing, the army’s role in protecting the border and the system of voluntary reserves, Zsolt Nyitrai said. Hungary had 8,300 voluntary reserves last year, up from only 17 in 2010, he added. Hungary’s aim is to have central Europe’s most modern and competent army with equipment that meets 21st century challenges, the defence ministry’s state secretary told the same press conference.

Hungary has a record 513 billion forint (EUR 1.57bn) defence budget this

year, of which 150 billion will be spent on further development projects, Szilárd Németh said.

TICKET PRICES FOR BUDAPEST UEFA EURO 2020 MATCHES SET AT EUR 30-125

Ticket prices for 2020 UEFA European Football Championship matches to be played in Budapest have been set at EUR 30-125, UEFA said on Sunday. UEFA EURO 2020 will be staged between June 12 and July 12, 2020 in Amsterdam, Baku, Bilbao, Bucharest, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Glasgow, London, Munich, Rome and Saint Petersburg. Budapest will host Group F matches on June 16, 20 and 24. It will host a Round of 16 match on June 28. All matches will take place in the 67,000-seat Puskás Ferenc Stadium, of which construction is in the finishing stages. During a visit to the stadium on Sunday, UEFA chairman Aleksander Ceferin said the venue is “quite impressive”. “It’s new, it’s modern, it has some tradition,” he said. Some 2.5 million tickets are expected to be sold for UEFA EURO 2020.