

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Double rainbow in Salgótarján in northern Hungary

UPCOMING EVENTS

European Parliament elections

EP election campaign closing events

Presser on 3rd Vilmos Zsigmond

International Film Festival

Hungarian Olympic Committee

general assembly meeting

TOP STORY

ORBÁN VOWS TO STRIVE FOR EPP SUCCESS

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in an interview to Germany's Bild, said he would strive for the success of the European People's Party.

"I want the EPP to win the European Parliament election, but afterwards there will be a debate on the direction it takes," he told the paper. Orbán said he still considered the EPP his "political home". He added that whether Fidesz stayed in the EPP or joined a new alliance depended on the EPP. "[There's] a painful debate ahead of us," he said.

The prime minister cautioned the EPP against joining forces with the left wing, which he said planned "European socialism", the price of which would be paid by Germans and central Europeans. He said that in Italy, Matteo Salvini, the interior minister who leads the League party, "is doing a good job". After the election, all options for an alliance with him should be on the table, he added.

He blamed the Scandinavian and Benelux members of the EPP for strife in the grouping and the initiative to exclude Fidesz from the EPP, saying its leaders were too weak to rebuff it.

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ORBÁN: WEBER 'WEAK'

Manfred Weber, the EPP's lead candidate for the post of European Commission president, rejected the votes of Hungarians and therefore did not deserve to receive them, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in an interview to Germany's Bild. Weber, he added, was a weak leader who "is not ready to fight for his own values". The Fidesz leader preferred not to reveal for the time being who he would support instead. Commenting on the appearance of Weber on billboards promoting secure external borders, Orbán said Europe would be wise to support Hungarian border policy. He noted that Hungary had not received any European Union funding for its fence on the southern border. Hungary, he added, will not allow Frontex to police the Hungarian border, adding that Frontex was needed where the authorities were unable to protect their borders.

Commenting on the political turmoil in Austria, Orbán said: "We'd rather not interfere in Austrian domestic politics." As regards the case of Heinz-Christian Strache, who last weekend resigned his post of Austria's vice-chancellor, Orbán said the most important thing for a politician was having the trust of the people. But Strache, he said, had made "unacceptable" remarks, with which he lost that trust.

Meanwhile, he said Hungary's economy was growing by more than an annual 5%, had a competitive tax

system and was approaching full employment but further investment -- from Germany too -- was needed.

On the topic of press freedom, Orbán said that he was strongly criticised from all sides in the media. "It would be good if the Hungarian press put wind in my sails but now I'm ploughing into headwinds."

Turning to international affairs, Orbán said that whenever there was a conflict between Russia and the West, Hungary always suffered. "So a balance must be found." Strength must be shown when it comes to defence and security while economic cooperation should be the focus of negotiations, he added.

Noting his recent talks with Donald Trump at the White House, Orbán said the US president's administration faced "injustice", since none of their successes were recognised. Whereas their scale is different, Hungary and the US share similar traits, he said. The US economy is developing better than ever, there is a deep consensus on immigration, and both act in ways to ensure that Israel is treated fairly, he said.

Commenting on George Soros, the prime minister said his dispute with the US billionaire had nothing to do with anti-Semitism but rather with "casino capitalism, NGOs with opaque funding and political interests, and speculators". In Hungary, he added, there is zero tolerance of anti-Semitism. "The Jewish community [in Hungary] is probably the safest in Europe," Orbán said.

Regarding German Chancellor Angela Merkel's future departure:

Orbán said: "I'll only believe if I see it." He said Merkel would be leaving a vacuum in Europe, adding that this was a "problem". He said that since Merkel had made a partial withdrawal, Europe was bereft of any leadership. "Europe needs a strong German Chancellor with clear, bold ideas," Orbán said, adding that Merkel had not left yet but was already missed.

The prime minister insisted that the German-French axis was no longer. "France, Germany and the Visegrad states: this is what Europe's new geometry looks like," Orbán said. The Visegrad states have a lasting alliance politically, emotionally and economically, he said. One day, Germany will recognise that it also belongs to this central European grouping, Orbán declared. "This will change politics in Europe", he added.

GULYÁS: FIDESZ TO REMAIN 'PATRIOTIC, CONSERVATIVE PARTY'

Hungary's ruling Fidesz "has been a patriotic, centre-right conservative party for over two decades, and will remain just that", the head of the Prime Minister's Office said in an interview to Friday's edition of the daily Magyar Nemzet. Gergely Gulyás also said anyone who spoke openly about the vision of a "united states of Europe" supported immigration and envisioned a "mixed population without an identity". "They've coined new political stigmas like populism or undefined nationalism in order to

relativise the democratic will of the people so that they don't have to be accountable for their approach to the concept of the nation," he said. He said at stake in this Sunday's European Parliament election was whether the European Union would have an anti-migration or a pro-migration commission in the next cycle. "Europe can only be strong if its nations refuse to fall victim to immigration," he added.

On another subject, Gulyás said one of the biggest achievements of Hungarian foreign policy in recent years had been the forging of closer ties with the other Visegrad Group (V4) countries, hence the V4 today represented a "consistent, Europe-friendly anti-immigration stance" that favours a Europe of nations. "What makes the cooperation even more significant is that the leaders of the four Visegrad countries are able to agree on a common position while being members of different European political groups," Gulyás said. "This is the kind of cooperation that a well-functioning EU needs."

SZIJJÁRTÓ: ISSUE OF HUNGARIAN ANTHEM IN SLOVAKIA RESOLVED

The issue over the status of the Hungarian national anthem in Slovakia has been resolved, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister. The law that is in force from today makes clear that Hungarians and other nationals are free to sing their national anthem,

Szijjártó told MTI. "We are ready to develop bilateral relations on the basis of mutual respect," he added.

The Slovak law banning the singing of national anthems of foreign countries had been submitted by the Slovak National Party. Andrei Danko, the party's leader, reacted to a broad protest against measure by announcing in April an agreement within the ruling coalition to resolve the issue to everyone's satisfaction so that there should be no disruptions to Slovak-Hungarian ties.

SECURITY CTTEE MEETING CONVENED TO DISCUSS STRACHE AFFAIR LACKS QUORUM

A national security committee meeting convened to discuss potential Hungarian ties to the Strache affair on Friday lacked a quorum because of a no-show by ruling party representatives. Heinz-Christian Strache resigned his post of Austria's vice-chancellor last weekend after a video emerged of him offering state contracts to a woman claiming to be a rich Russian in exchange for support in the 2017 election campaign. The national security committee meeting had been convened by Ádám Mirkóczki, the committee's Jobbik head.

In a statement issued just before the meeting's scheduled start time, ruling Fidesz said it was the Socialist Party that had done business with Heinrich Pecina, an Austrian

businessman mentioned by Strache in the video, when the party sold him its shares in the leftist-leaning daily Népszabadság. "If the opposition wants something to be investigated, it should be this," Fidesz said, adding that "the ruling party representatives will not assist the opposition in its campaign event."

Speaking to reporters after the meeting's cancellation, Mirkóczki said it was not the first time that the ruling parties had boycotted a committee meeting, but a no-show by representatives of the intelligence community was unprecedented. He said this could constitute a violation of Hungary's national security law.

Mirkóczki said the committee will ask Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó and Interior Minister Sándor Pintér whether they had instructed the intelligence representatives to stay away from the meeting. If it turns out that it was not the ministers who had given the order, he said, they will turn to the agencies themselves to ask whether the instruction had come from Fidesz.

At the proposal of the Socialist Party's Zsolt Molnár, the committee will also ask Speaker of Parliament László Kövér whether he plans to recommend the committee's dissolution, Mirkóczki said. Friday's agenda would have covered threats to Hungary's independence and sovereignty, he added.

Péter Ungár of opposition LMP said business transactions similar to the one mentioned in the Strache video

had also been conducted in Hungary, insisting that the upgrade of Hungary's Paks nuclear power plant was one of the most lucrative of those deals.

Zsolt Molnár said Friday had seen "the end of Hungarian parliamentarism". He said the no-show by intelligence representatives was proof that Hungary was functioning like a single-party state and raised the question of how they had known that the meeting would lack quorum.

János Halász, the Fidesz group spokesman who is also deputy chairman of the committee, said the opposition had intended to use the meeting for political campaign purposes. The committee's opposition chairman wanted to exploit the committee for his party's own campaign goals, he insisted, adding that the National Security Committee and the security services could not be hijacked for campaign purposes. It is for this reason that the government parties stayed away from today's meeting, he said.

SOCIALISTS-PÁRBEZÉD GATHERS 75,000 SIGS SUPPORTING HUNGARY JOINING EU PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

The opposition Socialist-Párbeszéd alliance has gathered 75,000 signatures in support of its campaign to get Hungary to join the European Public Prosecutor's Office. Bertalan Tóth, the Socialist Party's leader, said it was no accident that the government were against joining the office as doing so would reveal the sources of funding for its media network and "its corruption network". He said the European Union should link EU payments to a country's membership of the prosecutor's office as the best way of preventing erosions to the rule of law and the siphoning of EU funds. Referring to a Hungarian business magnate close to the ruling Fidesz party, Tóth said Hungarian and EU taxpayers needed protection from "Lőrinc Mészáros and his mates" who "steal" EU money.

ORBÁN CAMPAIGNS IN SLOVENIA

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in Slovenia on Friday campaigning alongside the Democratic Party of Slovenia, released a video message on Facebook, saying Europe's future and its values were at stake in Sunday's European Parliament elections. Orbán said the main issue ahead of the election was whether or not a Europe of Christian values and Europe's identity and culture would be preserved. "Neither Slovenes nor Hungarians want illegal migration," he said. "What we want is strict border protection and security." The prime minister declared that he had been a long-standing friend of Slovenian conservative leader Milan Zver, who tops his party's EP list. He said that hopefully in Hungary, just as in Slovenia, people would "believe in the family, in Christian culture and in the strength of our nation." He urged them to protect these values on May 26.