

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/János Nemes

Fund-raising runners for Transcarpathia children's home at Verecke Pass

UPCOMING EVENTS

Victims of 1919 Hungary Soviet Republic commemorated

Hungary Polish national minority day

Reformed Church charity opens office in Romania

Night of Museum

TOP STORY

WEBER, TIMMERMANS 'HAVE FAILED'

Manfred Weber and Frans Timmermans, the lead candidates of the European People's Party and the European Socialists, "have failed" in their bids to become the next European Commission president, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has said.

Orbán said this was "good news" for Hungary because the Hungarian people did not want to see either of them in charge. Speaking to reporters in Brussels about the first day of the ongoing European Union summit, Orbán said: "We've taken important steps forward." The prime minister noted that his Fidesz party had won last month's European Parliament election with 53% of the vote. "This is unparalleled: hardly anyone in Europe has this [level of support]," he said, adding that the mandate given to his party would be used to prevent the EU from choosing leaders who support immigration. He noted that he had also vowed to make sure that the EU would not have a leader who "doesn't respect Hungary or the central European countries". Orbán said he had been successful in keeping these promises because "the Spitzenkandidaten, Mr. Weber and Mr. Timmermans, have fallen." "They didn't meet either of the criteria, so their departure is good news for Hungary," the prime minister added.

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ORBÁN: V4 STANDS A GOOD CHANCE FOR MAJOR EU POST

Asked about the possibility that the Visegrad Four (V4) countries may field an important EU post, Orbán said they stood “a good chance”. “For every EU position, the V4 has more than two or three candidates,” he said, adding the V4 would punch with its weight in negotiations. He said V4 has proposals with “specific names” that would be good for Hungary and central Europe as a whole. He added that names “must be handled with care” since the chances of prospective candidates could be compromised by revealing them publicly. Mid-week, V4 leaders will meet “to make the final negotiations”, Orbán said. On Sunday evening, the V4 will then make proposals in the interests of central Europe. “We have good candidates; I think they will run.”

Meanwhile, Orbán said Hungary was committed to addressing climate change alongside other countries. “We could [in principle] do this by 2030,” he said, adding that plans to realise climate goals without raising household utility bills existed. In principle, the money was also available, he said, adding that the two aims could be reconciled. But in order to commit to the 2050 target, there would have to be signs of the money being made available. “So let’s start talking about money,” he said. “If the money is there and if the EU opens up its resources

for this, we can upgrade Hungary’s energy network so that families will not have to pay more. We’re open to negotiation,” he said.

Orbán noted a debate on nuclear energy was taking place. The Hungarian position, he said, was clear: “If we want to reach our climate targets, we need nuclear power.” He added that one or two countries were arguing about this but they were in a minority. The prime minister said every country had the right to decide on its nuclear power needs. Referring to Hungary’s sole nuclear power plant, he said: “Without Paks, there are no low energy bills.” He said the aim of regulation was to make people better off, not the other way round.

SUSPECT IN BŐNY POLICE SLAYING SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON

István Györkös, the suspect in the killing of a police officer in Bőny, in north-west Hungary, was sentenced to life in prison for murder by a Szombathely court. The non-binding verdict also convicted the 78-year-old founder of the paramilitary group Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal (Hungarian National Front) of illegal use of a firearm.

On October 26, 2016, police tried to conduct a search of Györkös’s property because it was suspected that he had kept illegal firearms. Györkös fired shots at the policemen, killing veteran officer Péter Pálvölgyi.

HUNGARY TO SET UP PORT, LOGISTICS BASE IN TRIESTE

Hungary will set up a port and a logistics base in Trieste with a view to facilitating and speeding up the shipping of Hungarian goods overseas, the foreign affairs and trade minister said. The 60-100 million euro investment, to be carried out on a 32-hectare plot, will allow Hungarian companies to ship their goods out to sea within 24 hours, Péter Szijjártó said at the opening ceremony of the V4+ Logistics Forum in Mogyoród, near Budapest. The land purchase agreement is expected to be signed in early July, he said.

On another subject, Szijjártó said that in light of the ever stronger economic cooperation between Hungary and Poland, Polish state carrier LOT has chosen Budapest as its second base of operations. The two countries are in the middle of finalising a deal that will see LOT launch a direct flight between Budapest and Seoul, he added.

Meanwhile, the minister said Hungary would have to reduce the gap in infrastructure with western Europe in order to improve its logistical competitiveness. To do this, he said, Hungary must develop its north-south infrastructure corridor, increase its number of border crossing roads and railways, address the absence of a high-speed rail line in central Europe and make use

of China's goals with the Eurasian trade area. Concerning the necessary infrastructure developments, Szijjártó noted that the Hungarian government will carry out an upgrade of Hungary's entire public road and railway network by 2024. The state will spend 3,200 billion forints (EUR 9.9bn) on the road upgrades and 1,500 billion on the railway upgrades between now and 2022, he added. As regards the north-south infrastructural developments, he said Hungary will complete its own 229-kilometre section of the planned Via Carpathia transnational highway network stretching from Lithuania to Greece by 2022.

On the topic of border crossings, Szijjártó said construction of a new bridge over the River Danube connecting Komárom and Komarno and a motorway connecting Budapest and Bratislava will be completed by the end of next year. Construction on a new bridge across the River Ipoly between Drágelypalánk in Hungary and Ipelske Predmostie (Ipolyhídvég) in Slovakia will begin later this year added.

Turning to the economic opportunities before Eurasia, Szijjártó said the region must take advantage of China's trade plan involving Europe and Asia and guarantee the fastest possible shipping routes from the Greek ports to western Europe. The Hungarian government, therefore, places great emphasis on the upgrade of the Budapest-Belgrade railway line, he said.

LMP ACCUSES ORBÁN OF HAMPERING IMPLEMENTATION OF EU CLIMATE GOALS

The opposition LMP party has accused Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of thwarting European Union climate protection targets. Lawmaker of the green party Péter Ungár said Orbán had put up a veto at a meeting of EU heads of government and state in Brussels, adding that the Hungarian veto had likely contributed to the lack of an agreement on the 2050 target date for climate neutrality. Ungár told a press conference that Orbán had not been "authorised to compromise the future of Hungarian children for the sake of Poland's coal industry". He called on Orbán to explain to parliament why he had hampered the realisation of EU climate protection goals. The European Greens, he added, regard 2030 as a more appropriate target date for eliminating carbon emissions in Europe, since "climate change is already here".

According to reports, the Hungarian, Polish and Czech leaders vetoed the target date, while Estonia abstained. Ungár said he was interested to know what Hungarian President János Áder thought about the Hungarian veto, given his green credentials.

BUDGET DEFICIT 17.7%/ FY TARGET IN JAN-MAY

Hungary's cash flow-based budget, excluding local councils, ran a 176.4 billion forint deficit at the end of May, or 17.7% of the full-year target, the finance ministry said in a second reading of the data. In May alone, the budget deficit came to 137.4 billion forints (EUR 425m). The 2019 deficit target of 1.8% of GDP, calculated using the EU's accrual-based methodology, is "achievable", it added. The central budget deficit was 253.4 billion forints, while the separate state funds and the social insurance funds had surpluses of 51.5 billion and 25.5 billion, respectively.

POLICE LAUNCH CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OF LISZT FERENC RUNWAY DEFECT

The police have launched a criminal investigation of a runway defect that shut down Liszt Ferenc International Airport Budapest for about one-and-a-half hours late on Wednesday, daily Magyar Nemzet said.

A piece of the concrete runway came loose and punctured the tyre of a Wizz Air flight arriving from Stockholm at 6:20 in the evening. Arriving flights were put in holding patterns or diverted to nearby airports while the defect was repaired. Magyar Nemzet said it learnt that the loose piece of concrete damaged the Wizz Air aircraft's brakes as well as puncturing a tyre.