

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

Child athletes preparing to swim the length of Lake Balaton, 77 kms, in relay

UPCOMING EVENTS

OSCE foreign ministers meet in Slovakia

Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) meeting in Sarajevo

ELTE Carpathian Basin Hungarian Summer University starts

Stats office reports foreign trade 1st estimate for May, consumer prices for June

TOP STORY

HUNGARY DEMANDS FAIR TREATMENT

Hungary wants to ensure that no double standards are applied when the European Union assesses the functioning of its constitutional system, the state secretary in charge of EU affairs has said.

Hungary demands fair treatment when it comes to the Article 7 procedure against it and steps to be taken during Finland's EU presidency, Judit Varga said after talks in Helsinki. The Article 7 procedure is important to Finland and the steps planned were discussed during official meetings, Varga said. Finland indicated months ago that constitutionality would be a key issue during its presidency because it considers it important that everybody should respect European values, she added. Hungary shares the same view and believes that "respect for fundamental values is a cornerstone of all democracies." The EU presidency should guarantee the conditions for fair treatment and the procedure should not end up in "throwing around accusations and pointing fingers at each other." Hungary is ready to provide detailed responses to all concerns and "prove that the country's affairs are in order". During the procedure the presidency should ensure that there is a democratic majority of member states that back every step being taken, Varga added.

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MAJORITY OF BUDAPEST RESIDENTS BEHIND TARLÓS

Fully 51% of respondents said in a recent poll conducted in Budapest that they were satisfied with István Tarlós, the city's incumbent mayor, the Nézőpont Institute said. According to the poll, conducted with a sample of 500 voting-age adults last week, 46% of the votes would go to Tarlós while Gergely Karácsony, candidate of the opposition Socialists-Párbeszéd, would garner 38% if the municipal elections were held on the weekend. Altogether 40% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with Tarlós's achievements, the pollster said. They added that "it is nearly impossible" for an opposition candidate to win over voters happy with the incumbent mayor in the three months leading up to the elections.

ORBÁN MEETS ESTONIA DEPUTY PM

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met Mart Helme, Estonia's deputy PM and interior minister, for talks in Budapest. Estonia's Conservative People's Party, which Helme leads, sees the Visegrad Group as advocates of important European

values in debates on the bloc's future, Orbán's press chief cited Helme as saying. Orbán and Helme agreed on the importance of supporting national economies, culture, and education, as well as protecting Christian culture and effectively protecting the EU's external borders. They also called for stricter immigration rules and support for families as the key to resolving Europe's demographic problems.

Meanwhile, Katalin Novák, the state secretary for family and youth affairs, also had talks with Helme and they agreed that Hungary and Estonia aimed to create a strong Europe comprising strong member states. The issue of migration is a priority for both countries, Novák said, adding that Helme was being briefed on Hungarian border protection measures during his visit. Estonia, like Hungary, answers the demographic challenges facing Europe with a strong family policy, Novák noted.

Helme said another goal of his visit was to find ways to expand cooperation between Hungary and Estonia as well as between the Visegrad Group and the Baltic states, he said. The cornerstones of that cooperation will be "sovereignty within the European Union", as well as family policy and the protection of the national culture, language and Christian traditions, he said.

ORBÁN CONGRATULATES NEW GREEK PM

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has congratulated the new Prime Minister of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, on his election victory and his appointment as PM, Orbán's press chief said. "Allow me to congratulate you on your election win and the victory of New Democracy," Orbán's message said. "I trust that mutual cooperation and constructive dialogue will further strengthen cooperation between our countries in the future."

LMP TO TURN TO TOP COURT OVER IIB AGREEMENT

Opposition LMP is turning to the Constitutional Court over an agreement the government signed with the Russia-based International Investment Bank (IIB) on establishing the bank's headquarters in Budapest, saying that the pact was unconstitutional and posed a risk to national security and Hungary's sovereignty. Addressing a press conference in Budapest, lawmaker Márta Demeter said that under a law passed in March, the IIB's Budapest headquarters is "fully exempt from the supervision of the Hungarian authorities". "Neither the financial or other regulatory authorities nor the police are permitted to set foot in the institution," she said. Whereas Hungarian bank clients

can only access their accounts after complying with stricter rules on identifying account ownership, the IIB is exempt from complying with Hungarian laws, Demeter said. In return, she insisted, the bank would finance the business activities of certain economic players linked to the government.

WIZZ AIR ADDS KAZAN TO BUDAPEST TIMETABLE, EXPANDS TARGU MUREŞ SERVICE

Hungarian low-cost carrier Wizz Air has won a state tender to operate a direct flight between Budapest and the Russian city of Kazan, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, announced on Monday at a joint press conference with the airline's CEO József Váradi.

The flight will operate on Wednesdays and Sundays from the end of October, Szijjártó said. Hungary has been in talks with Russia on launching the service since 2015, he added. He noted that Tatarstan is an important export market for Hungarian farm products. Wizz Air also announced the expansion of its service between Budapest and Targu Mureş, Romania, from two flights a week to a flight every day. Szijjártó said the launch of daily service between the destinations from October would raise the number of seats on the flights from an annual 38,000 to 132,000. Váradi said flying more frequently to Targu Mureş would support tourism and business travel. He added that Kazan is Wizz Air's third destination in Russia.

NATIONAL LAND CENTRE TO HELP BOOST FARMING SECTOR'S COMPETITIVENESS, SAYS MINISTER

The newly established National Land Centre (NFK) will help improve the competitiveness of Hungary's agriculture sector as well as the transparency of the sector's development, István Nagy, the farm minister, said. The NFK, which started operating on July 1, replacing the National Land Fund Managing Organisation, is in charge of managerial tasks required for agricultural administration. It operates an asset registry system belonging to the National Land Fund and holds the ownership rights of lands belonging to the fund. The NFK will be tasked with overseeing the government's Land for Farmers scheme involving the sale of farmland to local farmers as well as resolving the issue of plots in collective ownership, Nagy said. The centre will also be in charge of creating a regulatory environment that will incentivise farmers to irrigate their lands. Further, the NFK take over certain managerial tasks related to forestry, Nagy said.

BUDGET DEFICIT 39.1% / FY TARGET AT END-JUNE

Hungary's cash-flow-based budget, excluding local councils,

ran a 390 billion forint (EUR 1.2bn) deficit at the end of June, the finance ministry said in a preliminary release. The deficit hit 39.1% of the 998.4 billion forint full-year target. In June alone, the shortfall came to 213.6 billion forints. The central budget deficit was 467.3 billion forints in the first half of 2019, while the separate state funds and the social insurance funds had surpluses of 61.0 billion and 16.3 billion forints, respectively. The full-year accrual-based deficit target of 1.8% of GDP is "realistic and achievable", while the public debt to GDP ratio continues to decline, the ministry said.

SZIJJÁRTÓ OPENS SERBIAN CULTURAL CENTRE IN S HUNGARY

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó opened a Serbian cultural centre in Mórahalom near the Serbian border. Szijjártó said the Hungarian and Serbian minorities formed a bond between Serbia and Hungary. The two countries see those minorities as assets and not as sources of tension, he added. Serbia's protection of its minorities can serve as an example to Europe, he said. It has managed to reconcile its national pride with granting autonomy to ethnic minorities, he added. The Kolo Centre of Serbian Culture was built with European Union funding.