

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/György Varga

The 51st Blue Ribbon Round the Lake Balaton Race gets under way

UPCOMING EVENTS

EU justice ministers hold informal meeting in Helsinki

Audi Development Camp closing event

29th Valley of Arts festival opens

TOP STORY

GULYÁS: FIDESZ VOTES CRUCIAL IN EC CHIEF VOTE

Ursula von der Leyen “could not have been elected” European Commission president without the votes of Hungary’s ruling Fidesz MEPs, the head of the Prime Minister’s Office has said.

Fidesz’s 13 votes “had been mathematically needed” for Von der Leyen to win, Gergely Gulyás told a regular press briefing. He said Von der Leyen would not even have been nominated for the post without support from the Hungarian government and the Visegrad countries. He added that the EC had become “a lot more fragmented” than before and it was more difficult to obtain majority support. “We have trust in the president-elect but that trust has been vested in advance,” he said, adding that the new commission would have to “fix many mistakes left behind by outgoing EC chief Jean-Claude Juncker” such as the way the body handled the migration crisis. He also criticised the EC for delays in increasing the efficiency of border controls and its “failure to reimburse Hungary for its border control measures”.

Gulyás insisted that the EU’s Spitzenkandidat system has failed, as “none of the top candidates were supported by a majority of EU heads of state and government” and the council’s candidate won the post in the end.

GULYÁS: HUNGARIAN ELECTED OFFICIALS MUST REPRESENT HUNGARIAN INTERESTS

If a politician is given a mandate by Hungarian voters, they must represent the Hungarian interest, Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, told a regular press briefing, referring to the election of officials to commissions of the European Parliament. "National interests must be promoted in international organisations, too," he said, insisting that his Fidesz party would "observe the consensus" even if "we did not find a communist, liberal, or green candidate eligible".

Asked about remarks by Von der Leyen concerning her commitment to European values, Gulyás said that "we could fight together against those seeking to weaken Europe's values" such as ethnic minority rights.

Concerning a call by a United Nations rapporteur that the Hungarian government should reconsider its decision to extend a state of crisis with regard to a migration pressure, Gulyás said that it was up to the interior ministry to come up with a proposal once the current crisis state term was over, which the government would consider. He added that the UN report "should be taken with reservations" because "the UN position on migration has been well-known".

GULYÁS: HUNGARY GOVT 'NOT AGAINST' 2050 CLIMATE GOALS

The Hungarian government is "not against" the European Union's setting climate protection goals for 2050, Gergely Gulyás, the head of the Prime Minister's Office, told his weekly press conference. He added, however, that such plans required impact analyses, action plans and budget calculations at EU level. In terms of the bloc's climate protection goals for 2030, Gulyás said Hungary was "one of the best performing" EU members.

On another subject, Gulyás said that the government's budget for next year aimed "to serve security, the future and economic growth". He said the budget has the strictest deficit target since Hungary's transition to democracy in 1989-90. The budget assumes a stable growth rate, Gulyás said, adding that the target GDP growth rate of 4% was achievable. In response to a question, he said the social contribution tax could again fall by 2 percentage points next year if real wage growth exceeds 6%. Any unspent budget reserves will be used for economic stimulus, he added. The PM's Office chief said amendment proposals submitted by the leftist opposition parties would have raised personal income tax.

As regards the government's family protection action plan, Gulyás said that about 2,400 applications have been received for state-subsidised prenatal baby support loans since

the credit scheme was launched on July 1. Around 5,700 big families have submitted applications for subsidies to buy cars since and 703 applications have been filed for mortgage forgiveness, he added.

Meanwhile, he said authorities will prevent the entry of sewage sludge from abroad in the future. "The Hungarian government is on the side of environmental protection and doesn't want any of others' laundry," Gulyás said. "Therefore it has decided that Hungarian sewage sludge is more than enough for Hungarian soil and there's no need to import sewage sludge." In response to a question, he said the authorities are constantly checking to see if the sewage sludge that has already been brought in had been done so in line with regulations.

SZIJJÁRTÓ MEETS US SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's minister of foreign affairs and trade, said that he had met United States Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross for talks in Washington, DC. Hungary is interested in efforts to remove obstacles and make global commerce as free as possible, as the Hungarian economy is largely determined by the volume of its exports, Szijjártó told MTI by phone after the talks. Continuously increasing exports is a precondition for economic growth, Szijjártó said, adding that Hungary's record GDP growth in the first quarter of this year

had been supported by a 6.4% export growth.

The US administration acknowledges Hungary's economic performance, which is truly reflected by the US companies' scale of investment in the country, he said. The US is the biggest foreign investor in Hungary after Germany, US-owned companies employ more than 105,000 Hungarians and 14 big US companies have signed strategic cooperation agreements with the Hungarian government, he added.

Szijjártó told Ross that the freer world trade is, the easier it is for countries in central Europe to perform well. He said trade measures affecting car manufacturing would impact the performance of the automotive sector in central Europe, including Hungary. The automotive industry accounts for about 30% of the output of Hungary's manufacturing sector, he added.

In terms of US-Hungary bilateral trade, Szijjártó noted that its volume had dynamically increased to exceed 5.5 billion dollars. He said a further increase was expected this year.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS CRUCIAL FOR HUNGARY

Hungary sees transatlantic relations as a priority and welcomes improvement of those ties, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told a conference on the US and central Europe in Washington, DC.

Regarding US-central Europe relations, Szijjártó said "a couple of years back we understood our region was not really on the radar screen of US foreign policy... We are happy that central Europe is [now] considered a strategic location." Regarding the region's energy security, Szijjártó said current infrastructural realities dictate that Hungary can only buy gas from Russia. It is up to the US and European allies to make it possible for Hungary to import gas from a Romanian offshore field as Hungary has met all infrastructural requirements for such transports, he said. To a question on the rule of law in Hungary, the minister said the Hungarian government would not have been re-elected three times had it infringed on democratic norms. Regarding the recent European parliamentary elections, Szijjártó said the central European region had played a significant role in the election of Ursula von der Leyen as head of the European Commission. The region's growing economic strength and its internal cooperation have made central Europe a decision making factor in the EU, he said.

Philip T. Reeker, US acting assistant secretary of European and Eurasian affairs, said that the US and central Europe are connected by a set of shared basic values. Recent administrations have neglected those relations but now, the US returns to the region, he said. The two-day conference was organised by US think tank Atlantic Council and Globsec, a Bratislava-based research institute on sustainable development and defence.

ORBÁN HOLDS TALKS WITH IOC PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán discussed topical international sports matters and the 125th anniversary of the founding of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) with IOC President Thomas Bach, in his office in Budapest, the PM's press chief said. Bach is in Budapest for the opening ceremony of the World Fencing Championships. At the meeting, Orbán congratulated Bach on the IOC's anniversary and the related opening of the body's new modern headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Bach lauded the success of the international sporting events held in Hungary. Parties at the talks agreed that Budapest was now "undoubtedly one of the world's most significant sports capitals" thanks to Hungary's sporting successes, Hungarians' love of sports and that "Budapest is always a good host", while Hungary "is one of the safest countries in the world".

LMP CALLS ON NEW EC TO TREAT CLIMATE CHANGE AS TOP PRIORITY

The opposition LMP party expects the new European Commission to "pay increased attention to aspects of climate protection in all areas", LMP co-leader János Kenderney said. The party, which has failed to clear the European Parliament's threshold in the recent election, also expects the

EC to reduce the gap between core EU members and countries “on the quasi-outskirts” of the community, Kendernay said. Large international companies “abuse their weight” to the detriment of countries in the latter category, such as Hungary, while “centre” countries “siphon off the most valuable labour force” from the region, he insisted. LMP lawmaker Péter Ungár suggested that new members of the EC should “in no way be associated” with lobbyists of multinationals “unlike their predecessors”. Ungár also said that hopefully “Europe’s security policy will prevent Russia or other powers from breaking up [the bloc’s] unity in terms of energy or foreign policy”.

EP BUREAU ASSIGNS AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY TO HUNGARY VICE- PRESIDENTS

The Bureau of the European Parliament assigned areas to be supervised by the EP’s recently elected 14 new vice-presidents, including two Hungarian MEPs.

Elected for the second time for a two-and-a-half-year term, Lívía Járóka of ruling Fidesz will remain chair of the Audit Panel and will continue as

vice-president in charge of access to documents, she said in a statement. As an MEP in the European People’s Party (EPP), Járóka will be tasked with substituting for the EP president on western Balkan relations. She will also serve as member on the Working Group on Buildings, Transport and Green Parliament, and the Chancellery of the European Citizen’s Prize. Járóka, who is of Roma origin, will also serve as member on the High-level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity.

The other MEP, Klára Dobrev of leftist opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), will be in charge of relations with the EU’s Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee.

GOVT OFFICIAL MEETS HEADS OF SAUDI TAX AUTHORITY

A Saudi Arabian delegation of high-ranking tax officials has concluded a visit to Hungary where they studied local solutions aimed at whitening the economy, a state secretary of the finance ministry said. Despite constant tax cuts, Hungarian state revenues are on the rise thanks to an increasingly white economy, Norbert

Izer noted. Loss of VAT revenue fell to 13% in 2016 from 26% in 2012, and may fall below 10% next year, he said. Hungary’s “secret weapons” against the black market, the online cash registry system, the electronic control system for road haulage companies and online invoicing, have also raised the interest of Colombian and Greek authorities, next to Saudi Arabia, Izer said. Suhail Abanmi, the head of the Saudi tax authority, noted that the country only introduced the value-added tax in 2018. The authority’s goal, next to having economic players conform with the regulations and pay VAT, is to offer digital solutions that make that compliance easier for taxpayers, he said.

AUDI HUNGÁRIA GETS NEW CHAIRMAN

Germany’s Audi is replacing the head of its car and engine plant in Hungary, Audi Hungária said. Alfons Dintner, who earlier headed Audi’s business in Mexico, will take over as chairman of Audi Hungária from Achim Heinfing, who is being transferred to oversee the plant at Audi headquarters in Ingolstadt.