

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Zoltán Máthé

Lion cubs from Romanian circus find home in Veresegyház

UPCOMING EVENTS

President Áder opens Maccabi Games

Fidesz campaign chief for local council elections gives presser

National Elections Committee meets

Stats Office preliminary report on Jan-May 2019 wages

TOP STORY

ORBÁN MEETS MACCABI GAMES REPRESENTATIVES

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán met in his office representatives of the 15th European Maccabi Games starting in Budapest on Monday, Orbán's press chief said.

The prime minister met Motti Tichauer, chairman of the European Maccabi Confederation, and Jack Terpins, vice president of the Maccabi World Union, Bertalan Havasi said in a statement. Orbán welcomed that the event has returned to its central European roots after 90 years, noting that the Games had been hosted only once in the region: the first one, held in Prague in 1929. As one of the world's safest countries, Hungary is capable and prepared to host events of such dimensions, Orbán said. The prime minister said the government provides protection and support to Hungary's Jewish community to help them preserve their identity. Supporting Jewish athletes is an important aspect of this effort, he said. The Maccabi Games is expected to bring together a record 3,000 participants including 2,300 athletes from 42 countries. It will be the biggest multi-sports event Hungary has ever held. The event will be formally opened by President János Áder on Tuesday and run until Aug. 7. The Hungarian government has supported the games with 5 billion forints (EUR 15.3m).

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CRUISE SHIP CAPTAIN BACK IN CUSTODY ON SUSPICION OF ABANDONING VICTIMS

The captain of a cruise ship which collided with a sightseeing boat in central Budapest in May is back in police custody on suspicion of failing to provide assistance after the collision, the website of the Budapest police headquarters said.

On May 29, the Viking Sigyn cruise ship collided with a sightseeing boat that had 33 South Korean tourists on board and a crew of two Hungarians. Seven tourists were rescued from the water after the collision and the rest died. Last month, the 64-year-old Ukrainian captain of the Viking Sigyn was taken into custody on suspicion of criminal misconduct but later released on a bail of 15 million forints (EUR 45,800). The municipal court ruling granting the captain's release also obliged him to remain in Budapest.

On Monday, police said the captain has been taken into custody again and was being interrogated on suspicion of abandoning the passengers and crew of the Hableány sightseeing boat after the crash. The captain's return to custody comes after a resolution by the Kúria, Hungary's supreme court, saying that the decision by lower courts to release him on bail had been unlawful.

In the justification of its non-binding resolution, the Kúria explained that even the lower courts had acknowledged that the grounds for placing the

captain under criminal supervision were not met. It noted that such an arrangement would only be possible if the suspect posed a flight risk, but not if there is a risk of evidence tampering. A suspect can only be released on bail if they are being placed under criminal supervision, the court said. However, it argued, if the lower courts decided not to place the captain under criminal supervision, then they had no grounds to release him on bail, either.

The case went to the top court after the prosecutor asked the Kúria to declare the captain's bail release unlawful, arguing that he posed a flight risk and the Hungarian authorities had no information on his place of residence in Hungary. The prosecutor also underlined the risk of evidence tampering, pointing out that the captain deleted data from his mobile phone after the collision.

The defence countered saying that the captain's place of residence was in fact known to the authorities and that he had not deleted any data from his phone. The captain's attorney said at Monday's hearing that his client had been "made a public enemy" despite his right to enjoy the presumption of innocence.

POLITICAL SCIENTIST: ORBÁN'S INTERNATIONAL ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE HAS GROWN

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's room for manoeuvre on the international stage has grown significantly in

recent years, political scientist Tamás Láncki said in an interview. Any mention of illiberal democracy today generates far less international opposition than its first outing in 2014, the head of the 21st Century Institute said on public radio.

Orbán's big speeches in Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő) do not only generate enormous interest, but more and more people agree with him, Láncki said. Italy's backing, he said, was especially significant, being the third most powerful post-Brexit state in the EU alongside the Visegrad countries.

Láncki said Orbán's political credo was to reject harmful compromises on the part of liberals protecting their prerogatives. Liberals reject the values Orbán set forth in his Băile Tuşnad speeches, he said, adding that liberals believed that they alone understood the direction of history. The liberal elite, he added, excluded from public view anyone who disagreed with them, thereby evoking the dictatorships of the 20th century. But the political language and tastes of the "aging" '68 generation were becoming increasingly irrelevant, Láncki insisted.

DK WANTS INCREASED CENTRAL FUNDING FOR EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE

The opposition Democratic Coalition (DK) has called for amending Hungary's 2020 budget to increase spending on education, health care

and pensions. The Fidesz government has “boasted” about increasing spending on these areas since it came to power in 2010, the deputy group leader of the leftist party said. “But facts speak for themselves,” Gergely Arató said, noting that allocations in the central budget for welfare have dropped to 25% from 31% over the past nine years.

Ruling Fidesz said in response that under the governments of current DK leader Ferenc Gyurcsány Hungary had been pushed into debt and money “had been continually withdrawn from families, health care, education and old people in order to fill holes in the budget--and their own pockets”. The current government has increased support to families with children by 2.5-fold since 2010.

LMP: HOME-CARE SUBSIDIES SHOULD BE DIAGNOSIS-BASED

Parents of children diagnosed with chronic illness or disability should be automatically eligible for home-care subsidies, the opposition LMP party said. From this year on, home caregivers of severely disabled children or children suffering from a debilitating illness are eligible to receive 100,000 forints per month, irrespective of the child’s age. LMP lawmaker Péter Ungár said that a review of those eligible for the subsidy is underway. The point-based system used for the review, however, is “not going to

give answers for individual life situations”, he said. Ungár proposed that eligibility be based on a list of diagnoses which would allow families to avail themselves of the subsidy automatically. Chronically ill children have already been examined by a body of experts, the ministry review is “unnecessary spending”, he said.

GKI RAISES 2019 GROWTH FORECAST TO 4.3%

Economic research institute GKI has raised its projection for this year’s GDP growth to 4.3% from 4.0% in a forecast released in June. Hungary’s economic growth probably slowed down in the second quarter less than previously expected from the exceptionally strong growth of the first quarter, GKI said, and the weather seems to have supported the farm sector more than before. Because of last year’s high level, the investment-boosting effect of EU transfers is already declining, GKI said, and the rise in household purchase power is slowing down as well. In addition, the EU’s business confidence index is at a low of almost three years, the Hungarian index stands at a two-and-a-half-year low, and the German industrial confidence index is at a five-year low, GKI added.

HUNGARY JOBLESS RATE EDGES DOWN TO 3.3%

Hungary’s three-month rolling average jobless rate reached 3.3% in April-June, edging down from 3.4% in the

previous three-month period and down from 3.6% twelve months earlier, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said. The rate covers unemployment among those between the ages of 15 and 74. In absolute terms, 155,500 Hungarians were unemployed, 4,900 fewer than in the previous period and down 9,700 from a year earlier.

The unemployment rate in the 15-24 age group stood at 10.8%, up 1.3 percentage points compared to the base period. The unemployed in this age group account for more than one-fifth of all jobless, KSH noted. Out-of-work Hungarians spent about 14.4 months on average looking for employment during the period, and 35.6 of the unemployed had been seeking work for one year or longer. The number of jobholders stood at 4,510,900 among 15- to 74-year-olds, 36,000 or 0.8% more than in the same period a year earlier. The employment rate was 60.8%, up 0.6 percentage point. The number of employed included 108,700 Hungarians in fostered work programmes and 117,200 working abroad. The number of those employed on the domestic primary labour market rose by 2.0% from a year earlier to 4,285,000, while the number of fostered workers dropped by 34.9%.

Analyst Péter Virovác of ING Bank said the unemployment rate and the number of unemployed is again at a new low, mainly on the back of improving employment amongst women. In the second half of the year the unemployment

rate could be around 3.4% and he does not expect it to fall significantly lower. Analyst András Horváth of Takarékbank said around 250,000-300,000 jobs could still be filled until the economy reaches full employment, but the remaining labour pool consist of unskilled workers or those who are difficult to employ and some form of policy intervention would be needed to get them to work.

TOXICOLOGIST: NUMBER OF ALCOHOL ADDICTS IN HUNGARY REACHES 800,000

The number of people suffering from alcohol addiction in Hungary is around 800,000, and some 30,000 die annually of alcohol-related illnesses, toxicologist Gábor Zacher told public news channel M1. Hungarians drink on average the equivalent of 14 liters of pure alcohol in alcoholic beverages every year, Zacher said. Alcohol is much greater a problem in Hungary than drugs, Zacher said. The number of drug addicts in Hungary is estimated at 20,000, and some 40 die of related conditions every year, he said.

Alcohol dependency is spoken of publicly much less than it would be necessary, he said, recommending developing an alcohol consumption strategy including a survey and plans for the future.

ALLEGED HUMAN SMUGGLER DRIVING 31 ILLEGAL MIGRANTS STOPPED IN E HUNGARY

A 54 year-old Hungarian man transporting 31 illegal migrants in a van was taken into custody in the eastern Hungarian town of Polgár, the Hajdú-Bihar County police said. Officials of the Customs and Tax Office wanted to stop a van for a random check of its cargo on motorway M3 on Monday but the driver tried to flee. After he was forced to stop in the town, twenty-nine men and two boys were found in the cargo bay, they said. The passengers were unable to present identification or travel documents. Twenty-nine of them claimed to be Afghan citizens and two Indians. The driver from Budapest is suspected of human smuggling. In the interest of investigation, police declined to disclose from which country's territory the migrants had entered Hungary.

VENGEROV GUEST STAR AT VESZPRÉM INTL AUER FESTIVAL

Russian-born violinist Maxim Vengerov will be guest star at this year's international Auer Festival to be held in Veszprém, in western Hungary, this week, the event organiser said.

Launched in 2015, the festival is dedicated to the memory of Veszprém-born Leopold von Auer (1845-1930), the world-renowned violinist, teacher, conductor and composer, Péter Kováts said.

The six-day festival will open with a joint concert by Israeli mandolinist Avi Avital and Hungary's Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra. They will perform pieces by Vivaldi, Bach and Bartók, he said. The programme on Wednesday includes a concert by the Balkan Jazz Project featuring folk music, jazz and world music pieces and Auer adaptations. Vengerov will perform works by Mozart and Tchaikovsky with the Mendelssohn Orchestra on Friday. Leipzig's male classical vocal ensemble Amarcord will recite medieval and renaissance titles and works from the Romantic times on Saturday. The festival will close with a concert by Norwegian violinist Terje Tonnesen and the Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra.